

Are You Prepared for Persecution?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, July 4, 2010
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

“But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8—NASB-U).

“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8—NRSV).

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” (1 Thessalonians 5:8—KJV).

The Bible describes the followers of Jesus Christ as “the children of the day” and “the children of light.” The word “light” in the Bible often means “truth;” so believers should live according to the truth, which includes living honestly and in touch with reality. The Bible also calls on believers to avoid the shameful behaviors that some try to hide in the dark of night; behaviors that “the children of darkness” too often parade in the light of day.

In his letter, Paul reminds the children of light to remain sober; that is, to avoid experiences or substances that might impair their powers of reason or the ability to make right judgments. Christians should never allow their minds to become clouded or unable to properly recall and apply the Bible’s teachings to their choices. They must remain able to pray and seek God’s guidance, wisdom, and power to solve problems and take appropriate actions.

The symbolic breastplate and helmet represent the three Biblical virtues of faith, love, and hope. Christians need spiritual armor when persecutions and temptations challenge them to forsake their Lord and Savior. When tempted to quit believing in God or trusting in Jesus, the sober believer will be enabled to defend their faith – though, perhaps, not convince their attacker to believe as they do. When attacked, the sober believer will be able to call upon the Lord Jesus to help them love and pray for their enemies. When troubled, the sober believer will stay focused on Jesus and the glorious future that He has prepared for them.

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Questions for Further Thought or Discussion

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1. What evidences, if any, do we have that we are living in “the times and the seasons” of “the day of the Lord”?
2. Why do you think Paul wrote about the uncertainty of the actual day of the Lord’s coming and compared that to the coming of a thief? Can you think of other analogies that could be used today? What other events catch people by surprise that could be compared to a coming day of destruction?
3. What in the world today tempts some, who think they are Christians, to sleep instead of keeping awake and sober?
4. In what ways can Christians be certain they are prepared for “the day of the Lord”?
5. In these days, how can we “encourage one another and build up each other”? Why is this such an important thing for us to do within our church families? Think of one person you would like to encourage, pray for them, and then do or say something to encourage them and build them up.