

...if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yeshua His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1Jn 1:7)

Here, once again, we see what the Scriptures teach us repeatedly, namely, that it is a renewed life, a sanctified manner of living, that essentially identifies believers in Yeshua as those who have been “reborn” unto a new life. Likewise, seeking forgiveness and repentance when a believer sins, is another essential mark of having been born again unto a new life in Messiah. One of the marks of a true believer in Yeshua is that he or she fully believes what the Scriptures teach, i.e., that if we sin and are remorseful for our wrong, then we seek God’s forgiveness, we know absolutely that He will forgive our sin and give us greater strength to overcome sin in the future.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1Jn 1:9)

**7–8 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 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.**

Paul continues to use the metaphor of “day” and “night” to describe a general life-style that is often associated with peoples’ activity in the daylight as contrasted to that which is primarily done at night. Here he adds to his metaphor of the contrast between “night” and “day” by introducing the idea of “sleep” (*καθεύδω, katheudō*). The concept of “sleep” is used as a metaphor of “death,” both physical as well as spiritual. When used to describe someone who is “spiritually dead,” it describes the person who has no regard for God and lives unto oneself, and whose life-style is therefore self-centered, seeking to fulfill their own desires with no regard whatsoever for moral or ethical standards given by God but live unto themselves.

Yeshua uses the concept of “sleep” in this way when He teaches about the final day and His return to bring all things to their final end.

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.” (Mk 13:34–37)

But “sleep” is also used as metaphor for physical death.

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Dan 12:2)

Thus, in our immediate text, Paul uses the idea of “sleep” both to describe the spiritual life of the believer, granted eternity with the Lord, contrasted with spiritual deadness resulting in eternal “death” as a metaphor for unbelievers who will spend eternity separated from God and in the woes of eternal torment.

Thus, when Paul contrasts “those who do their sleeping at night” with “those who get drunk at night,” he is contrasting believers and unbelievers, undoubtedly using drunkenness to picture those who are self absorbed, fully given over to pleasing themselves, having no regard whatsoever for honoring God. He characterizes true believers in Yeshua as those who gain strength by sleeping at night and are strengthened for the coming day to live, honoring their Lord and Redeemer. In contrast, those who carouse and “get drunk” at night are pictured as living unto themselves with no regard for the One Who has given them physical life and Who is therefore the King and Lord they should be serving.

Thus, the metaphor Paul uses in our text is a perfect illustration of those who live for their own pleasures, on the one hand, contrasted with those who seek to live to honor the Lord, and who truly desire that their lives will give honor and praise to the One Who has given them eternal life. In this metaphor, Paul once again teaches us that the life of the believer in Yeshua ought to be one which continues to grow in making all aspects of their life that which honors the One Who has redeemed them.

Paul uses similar language in his epistle to the Romans:

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the Torah. Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Rom 13:10-12)

Clearly, the contrast in our text is between “light” and “dark,” a metaphor throughout the Scriptures describing “that which is true” in contrast to “that which is false.” John uses the same metaphor in his first

epistle:

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yeshua His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1Jn 1:6–7)

*But since we are of the day...* Once again, Paul is using the metaphor of “being in the daytime” as describing those who live in the “light” of Yeshua as their true Lord and Savior, the One they wish to honor and praise in every aspect of their lives. To be people “of the day” means to have lives that are patterned after the truth God has revealed and who have been given the ability to please their Lord by living in accordance with the truth and instructions He has given them.

It should be noticed that Paul includes himself in this phrase, using the 1st person plural “we” (ἡμεῖς, *hēmeis*). In doing so he makes it clear to the Thessalonian community that all who are truly born from above, having been granted eternal salvation, are equally precious in the Lord’s sight, for all the redeemed have had the price of their sins paid for by Yeshua Himself.

Moreover, since every true believer is “of the day,” this is a perfect metaphor to emphasize that every aspect of their lives is fully known by God. Granted, God knows all things. But in our text, “day” is contrasted by “night,” which from a human perspective, contrasts what is “public” or “seen by others” with “what is done in secret, in the dark of night.” But though the unbeliever in our text is characterized as thinking that their evil is “hidden” and remains unknown, the truth is that God knows all and sees all.

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Heb 4:13)

*...let us be sober* – What does Paul mean by admonishing all who are believers in Yeshua to “be sober?” The Greek word translated “be sober” is νήφω, (*nēphō*) which means “not drunk” but also carries a metaphorical sense of “be free from every form of mental and spiritual ‘drunkenness’, from excess, passion, rashness, confusion.”<sup>1</sup> In our context, Paul’s exhortation that believers “be sober” means to be fully

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1 BDAG, “νήφω,” p. 672.

submissive to the Ruach and His leading in our lives, to be earnest in our desire to please the Lord in all things. This means being prepared to serve Him as He directs. Kistemaker puts it this way:

Let us not be lax and unprepared, but let us be prepared, being spiritually alert, firm in the faith, courageous, strong, calmly but with glad anticipation looking forward to the future day. Let us, moreover, do all this because we belong to the day and not to the night.<sup>1</sup>

... *having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.* – Paul now uses the picture of a military battle to describe the spiritual battle which exists in our fallen world. Thus, once again, as we read throughout the Scriptures, the spiritual life of the believer in Yeshua includes recognizing that we are in a spiritual battle. Granted, we are given everything we need to be victorious in this battle, but we must constantly be alert and ready to stand firm against the enemy who would like to defeat us from being living witnesses of God’s grace, power, and holiness.

Paul will use this same picture of the warrior’s “breastplate” and “helmet” again in his later epistle to the Ephesians.<sup>2</sup>

Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph 6:14–17)

In both texts, Paul relies upon Is 59:17 for the reference to the “breastplate” and “helmet,” a text that portrays Messiah as the One Who is able to bring true righteousness to those who are His.

And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede; Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him. He put on

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1 Hendriksen, Kistemaker. *New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians* (Baker, 1955), p. 125.

2 Generally Paul’s 1st epistle to the Thessalonians is dated to 49-51 CE, where as his epistle to the Ephesians is generally dated to 60-61 CE.

righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle. (Is 59:16–17)

Since the passage Paul quotes from Isaiah is clearly describing the coming of the Messiah as a warrior, clad with a warrior's regalia, it is clear that Paul likewise expects all true believers in Yeshua to be similarly "clothed" with the weapons of warfare in order to stand firm against the enemy so that, through the power of the Ruach, victory over him would be an assurance. This, no doubt, is what Paul means when he writes in his epistle to the Romans:

But put on the Lord Yeshua Messiah, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Rom 13:14)

To "put on the Lord Yeshua Messiah" means to be clothed with the same "warrior implements" as described of Yeshua Himself in Isaiah's prophecy. Thus, while in Ephesians Paul refers to the "breastplate of righteousness" here he refers to it as "the breastplate of faith and love." Indeed, the righteousness which is granted to the believer in Yeshua is the fruit of exercising the gift of faith (Eph 2:8–9) and it is that which is forever the possession of all true believers, for its qualities are "faith and love," that is, faith in God and His love which abides forever and secures the eternal life of all who are His.

...and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. This makes a perfect parallelism with the previous phrase, for the "helmet," protecting the head (which, in the ancient near east, was viewed as the source of life), is the sure word of God by which He promises eternal salvation to all who are His. Here, the word "hope" (ἐλπίς, *elpis*) is not to be understood as something one "wishes for" but, as it is often used in the Scriptures, to mean a "promise that is sure." Note this quote from Hebrews.

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope (ἐλπίς, *elpis*) both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil... (Heb 6:17–19)

So here, once again, we see the inspired word of God affirming beyond any doubt, that those who are truly drawn to God through the

gift of faith which He gives, empowered by the Ruach Himself, will never be lost but will be preserved by the Almighty Himself, so that through the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh, they will inevitably grow in their faith and become more and more conformed to the very likeness of Yeshua Himself. This process of sanctification is the very issue Paul affirms in our text.

**9–10 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.**

*For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Yeshua Messiah...* – The first thing that Paul makes clear in this text is God has not destined (τίθημι, *tithēmi*) the believer for wrath but for eternal salvation. This in no way negates the requirement of the individual to exercise faith in Yeshua. Yet it is clear that the ability of the chosen to repent and believe is given by the grace of God, for being “dead in trespasses and sin” (Eph 2:1), apart from the sovereign work of God to grant repentance and the gift of faith, no one would be saved. Though beyond our ability to fully understand and explain, the Scriptures teach that God chose all who would be redeemed even before the universe was created, as Paul makes clear in Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:3–6)

The word “destined” in the NASB, which translates the Greek (τίθημι, *tithēmi*), carries the sense of “to appoint or assign”<sup>1</sup> when it is used with people as the object of the verb. As MacArther notes:

The word “destined” expresses the inexorable outworking of God’s sovereign plan for believers’ salvation.<sup>2</sup>

1 BDAG, τίθημι, p. 1004.

2 MacArther, John. 1-2 Thess in *MacArther NT Commentary*, p. 163.

Rather than trying to fully explain the sovereignty of God in choosing the elect unto Himself, we ought to glory in the fact that He has chosen for Himself a multitude of people that no one can number, as John tells us in Revelation 7.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Rev 7:9–10)

What is more, we ought to rejoice at the fact that He has given us the grand privilege to be His witnesses to the world, giving the good news of the Gospel, and being His servants to bring about His eternal and sovereign plan.

*...obtaining salvation through our Lord Yeshua Messiah*— Note further that our eternal salvation is made actual through the complete work of Yeshua, a work which included not only His incarnation, but His death, resurrection, ascension and intercession. He paid the price for our sin in order to redeem us, and following His resurrection He ascended to the Father, there to intercede for all who are His.

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Rom 8:33–34)

*...who died for us* – Here we see, once again, that the death of Messiah as payment for sin was an actual payment, not a potential payment requiring something more than His death and resurrection. This means that Yeshua's death on the cross was an actual payment for all the sins of those who would be saved through God's work of redeeming sinners unto Himself.

*... so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.*

Here, once again, we see the absolute truth, that all those for whom Yeshua paid the price of redemption will be saved and will be saved eternally. In this verse, the English "awake" (*γρηγορέω, grēgoreō*) is used to mean "alive" while the "asleep" (as noted above) is used by Paul to denote those who have died. That "sleep" is used this way emphasizes that physical death is not the end of existence. The resurrection is a surety.