**1 Thessalonians 5:9-11**

**God Has Not Destined Us For Wrath**

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***9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.***

* This morning we come to the final passage in Paul’s eschatological instruction to the Thessalonians that began back in chapter 4, verse 13, as he introduced his instruction regarding the fate of those who died before the Lord’s return and his introduction of the doctrine of the rapture of the church.
* Following his revelation of the doctrine of the rapture, in chapter 5 Paul then explains to his Thessalonian readers regarding the coming ***day of the Lord***, and the two specific events that would precede this event.
	+ The reason for Paul’s instruction on the subject of the dead in Christ, the rapture and ***the day of the Lord*** was necessitated by false teaching that had entered into the Thessalonian church regarding these three subjects.
	+ The Thessalonians were being taught . . . falsely . . . that the Lord had already returned and that they were **in** ***the day of the Lord***, and they were rightly frightened that they had missed the Lord’s return.
	+ So, to refute the false teaching, Paul addresses these eschatological issues in this letter and in his second letter, which he would write soon after.

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**God’s sovereign will on display**

***1 Thessalonians 5:9— For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ***

* So, now, reaching the final passage of this eschatological instruction, Paul begins his concluding remarks with a word of exhortation and encouragement to his readers. He says in v. 9 . . . ***for God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ***
* If you are one of those people who likes to highlight verses that explicitly teach God’s sovereignty in salvation, this is one of those verses.
	+ Here in v. 9 Paul explicitly states that ***God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation***.
	+ In effect, Paul is teaching us that **God has extended** **2 great benefits to the elect . . .**
		- **First, God has directly chosen some people, who were once condemned to suffer his wrath not to suffer His wrath.**
		- **Second, more than being spared His wrath, God has also chosen those same blessed people for salvation . . . eternal life in heaven.**
* If you were to ask unbelievers which is of greater importance to them . . . being spared the punishment of God’s wrath or the blessing of eternal life with God . . . a very large majority of them would be more interested in being spared God’s wrath. But very few unbelievers have any desire for eternal life with God.
	+ Why is this? Because they don’t know God, nor do they have any desire to know Him. In many instances, unbelievers actively oppose and hate God. And why would anyone who hates God want to spend even a moment with Him?
	+ But for us, who know God, while being rescued from the punishment of God’s wrath is greatly desired, it is the expectation and desire of an eternal life in the presence of God in glory that we long to see.
		- To experience an existence without the battle with sin is what we long to have.
		- To experience an existence in the presence of our Savior, knowing Him and being with Him, is our greatest desire.
* Here in v. 9 Paul explicitly states that **it is God who chooses to rescue from His wrath and to give eternal life.**

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* + In v. 9 Paul uses a verb that is translated ***destined*** . . . the Greek word *tithēmi* . . . which can also be translated “appointed, ordained or established.” Simply stated, the word *tithēmi* means “to put in place.”
* And an interesting thing about the verb *tithēmi* is the fact that this verb is in the aorist tense and middle voice.
	+ The use of this verb in the aorist tense indicates that God’s choosing whom He will rescue from His wrath and bring to salvation was a single event in time, not a continual choice.
		- In other words, in the sovereignty of God, in eternity past God, in a single decision in the exercise of His divine will, God ordained who would be rescued and given salvation **for all time**.
		- In other words, **God chose** everyone who would be rescued and saved before He created this world or Adam.
* The other interesting point about the verb *tithēmi* is the fact that it is in the middle voice.
	+ The middle voice indicates that the one taking the action is doing so for the benefit of Himself. So, in choosing to rescue and save some of Adam’s children, **God was doing so for His own benefit and for His own purpose**.
* Theologically, when we learn about God and His decision to send His Son to sacrifice Himself to save the elect, **the primary purpose of Jesus’ death on the cross was to glorify God.**
	+ God chose the death of Jesus Christ as the greatest of all possible ways to glorify Himself.

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**How was God glorified in the death of His Son?**

* When you think about it, that is an amazing statement . . . **the greatest of all possible ways God could glorify Himself was in the death of His Son.**
* Some people might genuinely ask . . . and unbelievers mockingly and incredulously sneer . . . “You’re telling me that God was glorified in the death of His Son??? **How was God glorified in the death of His Son?**
	+ We are taught throughout Scripture . . . especially in the New Testament . . . to **love one another**. To love someone is to see their need and their well-being as greater than your own. **What greater act of love has ever been demonstrated than Jesus Christ giving His own life to rescue us from God’s wrath?**
		- There, in His sacrificial death, is the perfect and best demonstration of love possible . . . and God was glorified in it.
	+ We see throughout Scripture of God’s attribute of **mercy** on display as He withholds punishment on those who justly deserve His wrath.
		- And in the death of Jesus Christ we see the perfect fulfillment of **God’s mercy** . . . withholding His wrath from those who justly deserve it by inflicting His wrath on His son, instead. **That is the perfect display of divine mercy . . . and God is glorified in it.**
	+ We see throughout Scripture God’s attribute of **grace** on display . . . the extending of blessing upon those who don’t deserve it.
		- **God’s grace** is on display in His dealing with Israel in the Old Testament as they continually sin against Him, and yet He does not forsake them.
		- And in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, we see the perfect demonstration of grace as God extends the offer of salvation to the most undeserving creatures, at the expense of His own Son’s life. **That is the perfect display of divine grace . . . and God is glorified in it.**
	+ Throughout the Old and New Testament we see **God’s goodness** demonstrated in His dealings with mankind. It is God's goodness that causes Him to deal kindly with all of his **creation**, even when they are undeserving of it.God's goodness and benevolence are revealed in His care for all His creatures.
		- And in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross we see the perfect demonstration of God’s goodness as He deals kindly with those men who hate Him. As 1 John 4:19 teaches us . . .

***1 John 4:19— We love Him because He first loved us.***

* If you think of all the attributes of God that you can think of . . . His **justice** . . . His **patience** . . . His **holiness** . . . His **righteousness** . . . **every attribute is perfectly demonstrated and glorified in the death of Jesus Christ.**
* So, first and foremost, the purpose of the death of Jesus Christ was to glorify God in a multitude of ways. But, **secondarily**, **the purpose of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was to accomplish our salvation.**
	+ It was only by taking upon Himself the infinite wrath and punishment of God that we justly deserve that Jesus Christ made our salvation possible.
	+ Had Jesus not suffered God’s wrath in our place, we would all still be hopelessly lost and condemned.
* But, as Paul states in v. 9, ***God has not destined us for wrath, but* He has *destined us* to receive *salvation through* the atoning and sacrificial death of *our Lord Jesus Christ***
* As we read Paul statement in v. 9 we are reminded that this is the second time in this letter that he has made the statement that believers will be rescued from God’s wrath.
	+ At the beginning of this letter, in his commendation of the Thessalonians for the reputation they had gained for their faith, Paul exhorts them with the statement in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 . . .

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***1 Thessalonians 1:9-10— 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.***

* + Now, here in 5:9 Paul again reminds his readers that ***God has not destined us for wrath, but form salvation . . .***
* But in these two statements regarding our rescue from God’s future wrath, what aspect of God’s wrath is Paul referring to? Two views are most dominant.
	+ The first view is that Paul is referring to the wrath of God that is inflicted upon the unbelievers at the Great White Throne judgment, found in Revelation 20:11-15.
	+ The second view is that he is referring to God’s wrath that is poured out upon the world during ***the day of the Lord***, as seen in Revelation 6-19.
* While both views are correct in that they describe God’s wrath, the eschatological context of 1 Thessalonians 4-5 favors the view that Paul is referring to the fact that God will spare believers from His wrath during ***the day of the Lord*** . . . the those believers who are alive when ***the day of the Lord*** approaches will be removed at the rapture and spared the wrath of God that comes upon the world at that time.

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**A reminder concerning the death of Christ**

***1 Thessalonians 5:9-10— 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us***

* Then, having exhorted his readers with the promise of God that ***God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ***, in v. 10 Paul adds a very important statement regarding the death of the Lord. In v. 10 Paul adds . . . ***who died for us***.
* When Paul states that **Jesus *died for us***, the verb ***died*** is in the active voice. And the implication of this is important for us to remember.
	+ Often times people will think of the death of Christ as Him **having been killed** by the persecution of the Jews, carried out by the Romans. **But neither the Jews nor the Romans nor Satan killed Jesus. Jesus was in complete control of all the events of His own death.**
	+ Speaking to His disciples about His death in John 10:18, Jesus says . . .

***John 10:18— "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."***

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* + The fact is, while Jesus Christ hung on the cross, He endured the infinite wrath of God in place of those whom He came to save. And when He had satisfied God’s infinite wrath, Jesus then ended His own life. His life was **not** taken from Him . . . He was **not** conquered or defeated by death. In the end Jesus ended His own life by His divine power. We read this in John 19:28-30 . . .

***John 19:28-30— 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. 30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.***

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* + We read in John 19:28 that Jesus knew that every prophecy of Scripture had fully and successfully been fulfilled. And having perfectly completed His mission, Jesus had one final prophecy to fulfill, which we read in v. 29-30 . . . the giving of the ***sour wine***.
	+ This, too, was the fulfillment of prophecy found in Psalm 69:21 . . .

***Psalm 69:21— They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.***

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* So, in Scripture we clearly read that Jesus was in complete control of all events surrounding His death. **Jesus was not killed** by some external power. It was Jesus, and Jesus alone, who determined the moment that His divine mission of rescue was successfully completed and He died.

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**The ultimate end for those who believe in Christ**

***1 Thessalonians 5:10— who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.***

* Then, having reminded us that Jesus Christ chose to give Himself to rescue us from God’s wrath and will someday bring us to be with him in heaven, in v. 10 Paul then concludes with the exhortation . . . ***so that whether we are awake or asleep* . . . in other words, whether we are still alive or have died prior to the Lord’s return . . . *we will live together with Him.***
* Here in this statement in v. 10 Paul brings this section full circle . . . coming back to his original purpose of dispelling the false teaching that those Christians who die before the return of Christ will miss out on some aspect of the Lord’s blessing.
	+ Here Paul explicitly states that ***whether we are awake or asleep . . . alive or dead . . . will all* enjoy eternal life *together with Him***.
	+ All Christians and all the faithful believers in God from all time will ultimately be reunited in heaven to eternal life with God.

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**Paul Issues 2 Commands**

***1 Thessalonians 5:11— Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.***

* Finally, in closing this section of instruction on eschatology, in v. 11 Paul ends with **2 commands for his readers . . . *Therefore*** . . . in light of what I have just stated in regard to God’s promise to rescue us from His wrath and to bring us to be with Him forever . . . ***encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.***
* Here in v. 11 Paul issues **2 present tense commands . . . that we *encourage one another* and that we *build up one another***.
	+ The use of the present tense in these two commands indicates that these are not to be one-time actions, but are to be continuous action . . . that we should strive to continually ***encourage one another and build up one another*** with the things Paul has taught us.
* And while Paul gives us two specific commands here in v. 11, these two commands are used to accomplish the same ultimate goal . . . to promote growth in Christian love, wisdom, affection and holiness.

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* + The command to ***encourage one another*** is from the Greek verb *parakaleō*, which means “to come alongside someone for the purpose of instructing, admonishing, and comforting.”
	+ The second command, to ***build up one another***, is from the Greek verb *oikodomeō*, meaning “to edify and establish in faith.”
	+ As we can see, in comparing these two commands, the first . . . to ***encourage one another*** . . . has the effect of helping to grow in faith, while the second command . . . to ***build up one another*** . . . has the effect of firmly establishing the growing Christian.

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**A comparison to 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

***2 Timothy 3:16-17— 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work***

* As we read these two commands here in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, it calls to mind the similar instruction Paul gives to Timothy in his final letter before his own death. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul teaches us that . . .

***2 Timothy 3:16-17— 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work***

* + In the 2 Timothy passage v. 16 describes what it looks like, practically, to ***encourage one another***. We ***encourage one another*** by **teaching one another, by reproving . . . meaning “to bring someone to conviction” . . . by correcting one another when there is sin or error . . . and by training in righteousness.**
	+ All four of these functions listed in 2 Timothy 3:16 are part of the process of **helping one another grow in faith.**
	+ And, as we learn in 2 Timothy 3:16, the source and authority for our **teaching, reproving, correcting and training in righteousness is Scripture, given to us by God.**
* Then, having stated the source and practical outworking of God’s word in transforming us in 2 Timothy 3:16, in 2 Timothy 3:17 Paul then states the ultimate purpose of the life-transforming power of God’s word . . . ***so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work***.

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* + Here in 2 Timothy 3:17, just as he does in the second command of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 to ***build up one another***, Paul teaches us that the ultimate purpose for all that we learn as Christians is for the purpose of **equipping the saints for every good work that God has ordained for us.**
* The metaphor that Paul uses in the command to ***build up one another*** is the metaphor of architectural construction. It describes the process that God uses to firmly build our faith upon the foundation of Christ so that it will withstand any storm that comes against it.
	+ In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul describes how our faith is built . . .

***1 Corinthians 3:10-11— 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.***

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* It’s interesting when you consider the picture that Paul paints here. With his instruction in 1 Corinthians 3 that he and others were building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, and his command in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 to ***build up one another***, **that the process of growing to spiritual maturity is best accomplished when aided by others**.
	+ In other words, it is through the assistance and investment of time of other Christians, coming alongside to encourage, correct and instruct us, that we are able to built a strong, firm building of faith.
* Imagine this . . . you wish to build a home for yourself. So you go out and purchase a piece of land and building materials and begin construction.
	+ But you know very little about construction. You’ve never done any concrete, electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, appliance installation work in your life. If you insist on doing this project by yourself it will take a long time and will probably have a lot of errors.
	+ But if your friends, who have the skills that you don’t have, pitch in and help you, the project will go much faster and will have far fewer mistakes.
* So it is with our Christian faith. Yes, we can grow without the benefit of the help of others. But there are bound to be mistakes that need to be corrected along the way.
	+ In the world that we now live in, you cannot assume that every book you pick up that claims to be a Christian book is accurate in its teaching. And if you unknowingly pick up a book filled with heresy and false teaching and don’t know that it’s full of error, you might be endangering your spiritual health. But if someone is able to guide you to a book with sound teaching, that person has done you a great service.
* This is the purpose of the Christian family. Notice in his two commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 that we are commanded to ***encourage one another and build up one another***.

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* + The relationship we have in the church is **a reciprocal relationship** . . . we are called to help, encourage and build up ***one another***.
	+ In other words, in growing to spiritual maturity we are all, in effect, building our spiritual houses and we all need the help of the brethren to supply technical expertise and “muscle” to help us in the construction.
	+ And by helping one another, we are all able to build ourselves and one another up at the same time.
* It is important to note that Paul gives this instruction in the form of a **command**.
	+ The significance of this being a command is the fact that **the instruction in these two commands is not optional**. It is the obligation of every Christian to strive to obey Paul’s instruction here. Unfortunately, this instruction is not obeyed by many professing Christians.
	+ But we have to understand that if we don’t obey this instruction . . . if we don’t ***encourage one another and build up one another***, we are, in effect, refusing to help our brothers and sisters build their spiritual house.
	+ It’s like having a specialized skill . . . like an electrician or plumber or roofer . . . and refusing to help a brother who needs your skill to build his or her house.

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***1 Thessalonians 5:11— Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.***

* But despite the fact that Paul is issuing these instructive commands to his Thessalonian readers, he concludes this instruction on a positive note by stating . . . ***therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.***
	+ With this final statement Paul makes the point that **he is not being critical of some error or insufficiency in the Thessalonians, but is only exhorting and reminding them to continue the positive Christian life they were already living.**
* The question then arises, **why then did Paul write this instruction?**
	+ The answer is that Paul did not want his Thessalonian friends to lose their zeal or fall away from the very positive Christian behavior they were already demonstrating.
* Paul’s message here is one that we all need to often hear and be reminded of. Paul’s message to us here in this passage is that we should be more diligent to invest ourselves in the lives and well-being of our Christian brethren.
	+ We should be very deliberate about engaging one another in significant Christian and theological conversation so that we all continually grow in our faith. And by investing ourselves in the lives of our Christian brothers and sisters in private conversation and corporate worship we ensure that we all grow in knowledge and faith, which is key to the health of a flourishing church body.