

“We Are Children of Light”

11-16-14

From the headlines: Alexander Putin put on notice to end Ukraine crisis. Yemen Shi'ites capture key district from Al Qaeda-35 dead. Appeals court rejects religious challenge to Obama Care. ISIS beheading, stoning, and crucifying Syrian residents. The Days in which we live are Evil and Dark!

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5. Paul writes of the darkness of the days before the final judgment on the last Day. Even though there's growing darkness because of sin, we are Children of Light bringing Jesus Christ into a darkened world. Verses 1-5, *“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.”*

People think they've got life by the tail - plenty of money to live on, insurance to guard against any unexpected disasters, good health, and relatively few conflicts or problems. They believe they've found and achieved heaven on earth. But they won't be ready to meet Almighty God, because they've focused all their attention on finding earthly happiness.

Even though that's the way the world is living, as Children of Light, walking by faith in Jesus Christ, we have Nothing to Fear! Centered on Him alone, we're different than those around us. They should see the Light Of Jesus shining through us.

I've had the opportunity lately to be with people who are ending life. As God's children, called His own in the waters of Baptism, they're facing their end with peace because they know where they're going! As His, that's exactly how it should be for us!

But the world isn't seeing what we see in God's Word. It's not something people see as necessary for life. We need to actively be alert and know what is in God's Word and how it tells of the blessings of God now and the ultimate blessing He has prepared for us in heaven. That's the message we're called to share. It changes us and the way we look at life. It's the reason that no matter what's happening to us, we can have peace!

As people who are to live differently, Paul tells us that God gives us special equipment to carry out this task. He gives us armor. Look at verse 8, *“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”*

As Children of Light, put on the Breastplate of Faith and Love. Faith is the confidence that God will do whatever He promises. Love is faith in action, living each day as an expression of thanks to God for all He's done for us. We also need to put on the Helmet of Hope of Salvation. The hope of salvation is what sustains our faith and love and encourages us to grow.

We know the End is Near. But without the certain hope that we'll be raised from death to live eternally in glory, our faith would be meaningless! Equipped and

energized by this armor we can resist the temptations of the devil. We can encourage one another to live differently than the unbelieving world.

Look at verse 11, *“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”* We need to encourage one another and build each other up. We’re not alone on this journey. As fellow believers, we’re in it together! First, we have a solid foundation of God’s Word that proclaims the salvation won for us on the cross of Jesus Christ.

Because we’re together built on Him, we can handle the storms, that trials, tribulations, and difficult situations that this life throws at us. We are given strength through the power of God’s Word at work in the encouraging words spoken by fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

One special brother in Christ is Billy Graham. Billy’s now 94 years-old, and has Parkinson's disease. In January, leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, invited this favorite son to a luncheon in his honor. Billy initially hesitated to accept the invitation because he struggles with Parkinson's, but the Charlotte leaders said, 'We don't expect a major address. Just come and let us honor you.' So he agreed.

After wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham stepped to the rostrum, looked at the crowd, and said, "I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who has been honored by Time magazine as the Man of the Century. Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train, when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger.

When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets but it wasn't there. He looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it. "The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it.'

"Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket. "The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are; no problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.' Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going."

Having said that, Billy Graham continued, "See the suit I'm wearing? It's a brand new suit. My children, and my grandchildren are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and one more occasion.

You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. But when you hear I'm dead, I don't want you to immediately remember the suit I'm wearing. I want you to remember this: "I not only know who I am. I also know where I'm going." May your troubles be less, your blessings more, and may nothing but happiness, come through your door. "Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil - it has no point."

May we, as Children of Light, continue to encourage one another and build each other up so we might all stand at the Last Judgment and declare with confidence that heaven is ours because of our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!