



[1 Thessalonians 5:1-9](#)

(1) But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. (2) For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (3) For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. (5) You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. (6) Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. (7) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. (8) But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (9) For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
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Like us, the [return of Christ](#) was much on the minds of first-century Christians, yet Paul tells them he felt no need to write concerning its timing. Why? Because they should have known that the [Day of the Lord](#) will come like a thief in the night. There was no point in Paul trying to outline it all, as it will happen at a time that nobody can anticipate.

However, he writes something that seems contradictory in verse 4: Since they are not in darkness, that Day should not "overtake [them] as a thief." What is actually meant is that the day of God's wrath would not *possess* them—literally, "take them over." God's wrath would not swallow them up, or the destruction of that Day does not need to *have power over them*. He does not mean that it would not *surprise* them, but as a parallel verse clarifies, "For [God](#) has not appointed us to wrath" (verse 9), even though they *will* be surprised.

Verse 6 contains the same admonition seen elsewhere to be awake, to be sober, and to watch. Though we are not *appointed* to wrath, other verses show that we can certainly still incur it if we are not taking heed to ourselves (see [Hebrews 10:26-31](#)). So we are instructed to watch—to be vigilant about our spiritual state, to have continuous and

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wakeful concern over fulfilling our part of the covenant, to be on guard against spiritual dangers, spiritual drowsiness, and deception. Those who do these things, along with [praying always](#), will be accounted worthy to escape the wrath. Simply watching down the road for a sign of the Master's return really does not prepare us for anything at all.

— David C. Grabbe

To learn more, see:

['As a Thief in the Night'](#)

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