

**1 Thessalonians 5: 6-8; "Let us be Sober", Sermon # 23 in the series -
"A Persevering Faith", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on September 28th, 2008, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have been looking into the subject of the Day of the Lord, that Day which should not overtake any believer as a thief. We have seen that no one will miss out on this great eventful Day where Christ will be told by His Father, "Now, My Beloved Son; now is the time for you to return." "All of your enemies have been made a footstool for your feet." "Now is the time to call Gabriel and have him blow his great trumpet and shout." "Now is the time for the last and greatest enemy, death, to be triumphed over in all the lives of all of My people." "Now is the time for all of Your saints, whom You have purchased with your precious blood to be raised from the dead and to be caught up together with You in the air." "Now is the time for the gathering together of all of My Elect and that great and awesome time of judging the World. "Now go My Son, and show them Your power and glory; show them Your wisdom in justice in the separating the precious and the vile; in knowing and establishing forever the hearts of those who watched and waited for this Day." "Go, My Son, and ride through the skies in triumph with all those who have trusted in You for the forgiveness of their sins, and have looked to you for grace which would be revealed to them on this, the Day of Your appearing." This is how I picture it in my own feeble mind. What joy will that Day bring to all those who have been sober about how they would live their Christian life! What agony it will be to those who have not been sober, and have not watched! We want to look at both sides of this subject, this afternoon, of what it means to be sober. We want to see that those who are not sober have put themselves in a very indefensible position in relation to the Day of Judgment. They will not be able to defend themselves against the Judgment which shall surely come to them from the lips of our Lord; "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness, into the fire which was prepared for the Devil and His angels. And we want to see that being sober in this life will be the best defense of the Christian on that Day. It shall be part of his armor, given to him by the Savior, to shield him from the wrath of God on that awful Day when God will judge the secrets of men's hearts, and every secret thing shall be made known.

So let us look 1st at the indefensible position of those who are not sober about the way that they live their lives. (verses 6 and 7)

"Therefore let us not sleep, as other do, but let us watch and be sober." "For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night." "But let us be sober...." To be sober, my Dictionary tells me is "to be sparing in the use of food and drink: abstemious." It is "not to be drunk." Secondly it means "to be marked by a sedate or gravely or earnestly thoughtful character or demeanor; to be serious or solemn." I think that the words in our text refer to both. The first refers to what we do in regard to the body, that we do not put alcohol or drugs into

it so that our mind loses its ability to discern things correctly. This is sinning against God and our body. And the second refers to the way that we think, realizing that living a godly life requires thoughtfulness and seriousness if we are going to glorify Him with the time that he gives us in this life. The person who is trying to please God will be a sober person. When he not, he is putting himself into a place where he is not able to prepare himself to deal with the judgments which God will bring against him for his moral stupidity, and his moral unfaithfulness. If a person is a drunkard, he is destroying his own life and contributing to the downfall of the persons under his charge. Usually a person drinks too much and becomes drunk because he wants to forget about his problems. He doesn't want to face up to the realities of life. Instead, through the use of alcohol or drugs he finds himself for a time in a world which is care-free. He has deliberately chosen this way of coping with the meaning of his life. He thinks that he is finding happiness and joy by this awful means.

But I want to turn you to a few verses of scripture to show you that this drinking and drunkenness is anything but the right way to deal with your problems, or to try to find your joys. Proverbs chapter 20, verse 1. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." Using this means to find joy or to cope with the problems and difficulties is to bring real trouble to yourself. You will find that the state that you find yourself in will be as though someone is mocking you and beating you up for doing so. Now turn over to Proverbs 23: 29. "Who has woe?" "Who has sorrow?" "Who has contentions?" "Who has complaints?" "Who has wounds without cause?" "Who has redness of eyes?" "Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine." "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper." "Your eyes will see strange things." "Yes, you will bed like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying, "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it." "When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink." This is the picture, I am saying, of a person who is really at the mercy of other people. This is a picture of vulnerability to the judgment of God and men. Will the person who drinks to be drunk escape from those judgments that are coming? He will not escape any of them.

When was Belshazzar's kingdom taken away from him? If we were to turn to Daniel chapter 5 we would find it was when he made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand." "They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone." What was he doing? He was not being sober. He was not only not being sober physically, but he was not being sober spiritually. There are no gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. "In that same hour the finger of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.'" Belshazzar had to bring in a man

who was sober in his thinking to be able to interpret the writing. He called for Daniel. In Daniel 5: 11 he says, "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God." "And in the days of your father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods were found in him." "Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel." Now this is a sober man. He is looking to God for his answers. Belshazzar, being deceived by wine, being drunk on his own pleasures and power and fame, is in the most helpless of situations. The interpretation of the writing was, "You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting." "Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans was slain."

Now this is only the prelude to eternal judgment. We need to recognize this and be sobered by it. The earthly judgments that come upon men because they are not wise or humble enough to receive the truth that they are sinners who need a Savior; those earthly judgments that come upon them because they drink and are drunken and make mistakes in judgment so that other people are affected by those bad judgments; all of this is the prelude to the eternal judgment of hell, if it is not repented of. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" This is much worse than losing any temporal earthly kingdom. "Neither fornicators, nor thieves, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards...will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6: 9) Why? Because they are not sober. They will not, and indeed they cannot, think through the implications of what their drunkenness is doing to them. What is the reason that Alcoholics Anonymous is so often resorted to by drunkards? It is because in the 10 step program it teaches them to trust in a higher power to help them to deal with this addiction. But let me tell you something. Drunkenness is more than an addiction. It is a state and condition of being in unbelief in regard to God and His word the Bible. The drunkard needs to acknowledge this as he seeks a higher power. And he needs to seek the name of the higher power if he would ever truly be freed in an everlasting sense from the unbelief of his heart which causes him to think that he can laugh in the face of adversity, laugh in the face of God, or make up his own god of pleasure and drink to save him from his problems and calamities. Let him call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and He will save him. Alcoholics anonymous will teach the drunkard to think of his addiction only. It will teach him that he can never think that he will ever be free from this addiction. It will merely be controlled by him. But the Bible calls the alcoholic a drunkard because drunkenness is a sin which needs to be repented of, and forsaken. And the only way that that can be done is to be freed, not only from the power of the alcohol, but from the power of the unbelief which has led him away from the answers which God gives in the Bible.

"Those who get drunk, are drunk at night." This is a picture of the spiritual state of the man. He has much darkness in his soul; it is the darkness of sin and ignorance. He is walking around in the night doing these things. He is destroying

his own soul and bringing himself most surely into the judgment of hell. What is the antidote to drinking? It is to be saved through calling upon Jesus to break the power of the addiction and to give the drunkard faith and hope by the powerful working of His grace. Then, it is to be as all other Christians should be; it is his duty and responsibility to be sober. This not merely abstaining from alcohol, but it is actively engaging himself to believe that Christ will give him the strength and joy that he needs to cope with his problems and find holy pleasures. Drinking, without great moderation is an unholy, sinful pleasure. But Christ gives self-control, and Christ gives true holy pleasures. They are the pleasures of a clear conscience and the joy of fellowship with Christ in all the activities and duties of life.

Now 2ndly- Let us look at the very defensible position of being sober, both in this life and on the Day of Judgment.

"But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." It is faith, hope, and love which are the defense of the Christian. They are those graces which protect the soul of the Christian just as much as the armor of a soldier protects his body. The Christian is "of the Day". The meaning of this is in the context of Christ's having risen from the dead as the Sun of Righteousness. He is the light of the World. The one who believes in Him will not walk in darkness; he will not walk in sin or practice sin; but he will have the light of life. Those who are drunk, our text has said, are drunk at night. Their whole experience is in the realm of the darkness of sin and they stumble over many things related to the truth of the word of God and they do not understand them. Because these are stern realities that seem to take the fun out of life, they reject them. They love the darkness more than the light because their deeds are evil. Because they are of the night they practice many sinful things that are not good. Their purpose is to find their meaning in life in those things which will not profit either themselves or God. Drunkenness, sensuality, boastfulness; they are those who are unkind and unloving and unthoughtful in their heart and actions. They are not sober as to eternal realities; the reality of Christ as Savior, Lord, and coming Judge; the reality of discerning God's will in His word and pursuing it with their heart. They do not see that they are hastening on to a Christless eternity, the reality of everlasting punishment, unless they find salvation in Christ and repent of all of their sins. But let us who are of the day be sober. Let us walk in the light as He is in the light. Let us be careful and thoughtful in our words and let us be eager to engage in good works to help the brethren and all men.

Let us put on the armor of God; that which will guard our heart and our mind in Christ Jesus. The pieces of spiritual armor mentioned here are the breastplate of faith and love, and a helmet, which is the hope of salvation. Faith in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ is a shield. It will keep the Christian from being discouraged and down when he becomes weary in the way of obedience. Let me read to you verses from Psalm 3 on this subject. "Lord, how they have increased

who trouble me!" "Many are they who rise up against me." "Many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God.'" "But You, O Lord, are a shield around me; my glory and the One who lifts up my head." "I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill." We see here that David found grace through prayer to see Christ as His shield. It is Christ who was his glory and ours. It is Christ who lifts up our head so that we are not ashamed, and so that we do not long remain discouraged or depressed over people who are against us as Christians. The breastplate of faith is protecting our heart. In Psalm 5, verses 11 and 12, David says again, "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever sing for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You, for You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield."

Then there is also love to be found in this breastplate which we put on. I take it that the grace of love protects our own heart, in that when we have it poured out within our heart by the Holy Spirit, we are guarded from having suspicious and unkind thoughts ruling in our hearts toward God Himself, and all the brethren. It is very possible for a Christian to come to have hard thoughts toward God because if he knows that God is sovereign, he also then knows that is God who brings all the providential ordering of circumstances in our lives; and he may not like what God is bringing to him in particular. The Christian may also become discouraged in his relationships with other Christians if the grace of God is not protecting his heart. But if he "puts on love", he then has the power to think about others in the right way. He can think about what they need to learn about doing the Lord's will, in the context of his loving them; not in terms of his being suspicious of them or thinking badly of them on a regular basis. This protects his heart from having a root of bitterness growing up in it, which would defile not only himself, but many other people. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things; love never fails." "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it." "Love is as strong as death." And this is what Christ died for; to make us strong in faith and love; to protect us in our hearts from falling into sin in relation to God and other people.

Then finally, there is also the helmet, which we are told, is "the hope of salvation." Hope really does protect our mind in the sense that we know that we have a sure hope based upon the death and resurrection of Christ on our behalf. But sometimes we are cast down because we think that God has left us to ourselves. Our enemies seem to triumph over us, and our fears overwhelm us, and our soul is disquieted within us. What do we do at those times? We must learn to do what David did in Psalm 42, verse 5. We pray and we say to God and to ourselves, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" "And why are you disquieted within me?" "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." That is putting on the helmet of the hope of salvation. It will do us good to think at those times of Christ's perfect righteousness and all that God has done for us in the past to bring us out of the darkness and into His marvelous

light. Let us go to God in prayer, praying as David did in Psalm 71: 14, "But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more." "My mouth shall tell of your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits." "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only." This will indeed protect our minds from thinking about God and men in ways which will only dishonor and do harm to them. Let us thank and praise our God and our Lord Jesus Christ that he has given us this armor, and let us put it on.