

Topic	Lifestyle of Hope
Reference	1-Thessalonians 5:1-11
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Speaker	Ps Massimo Gei

Lifestyle of hope is a lifestyle in which we continuously walk towards the light and even though sometimes it might seem dark around us, we focus on the light which is ahead of us. We know there is a finish line, we know that victory has been won, we know that light will come and we have that in mind and we keep on walking towards that light.

### **BE AWARE:**

**1** Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. **2** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** 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.

There are two things that he wants us to be aware about. First thing is that judgment is coming, eventually judgment will come and you can’t escape and the second thing is that we have no idea when it is going to come. We have no idea when the Lord is going to return.

Throughout history we have people over and over and over again proclaiming that they know when the apocalypse is going to come. They know when the world is going to end, that means we see media, newspaper about blood moons that means the world is going to end, we see astrophysicist saying because the stars are arranged in a certain way that the world is going to end. There are just people throughout history keep on telling us that the world is going to end and they seem to be able to read some signs, even though the scripture clearly says here we have no idea and we shouldn’t be concerned about it. We have so many people predicting the end of world, which is really contrary to which scripture says.

**1** Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

People concerned themselves with the when rather than with, like what is going to happen. He is saying here to be aware of something that the Day of the Lord is at hand that is something we have to focus on, not when the Judgment will come, but that judgment will come. In the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord is a judgment language, evaluation of our souls and our position in Christ eventually is going to come and here we have two imageries that he has put here. He has put one imagery of like a thief in the night. That means we have no idea when and the

second imagery is like a woman in childbirth, having labor pain, so it means it is a definite coming. So when judgment is coming, we have to consider ourselves, how we are living our lives, are we aware of it. The promise of a future evaluation is the best means for present motivation.

If you school exams at the final end year, knowing that exams will come, it makes you study today. If we would know when Jesus will come, we will probably procrastinate until the very last days and then we will give our life to Jesus, but we can't do that because it is not about just getting an A or doing something performance and see when you give your life to Jesus, what in a transformation and internalizing our faith. Studies show that if you do last minute cram, you might be able to pass your exams but you don't internalize the information and if you don't remember it down the line, it won't change who you are, it won't shape your character, it would change your being, you will still be the same person you were before who just temporary knew some information but did not change his life in accordance to it.

Another reason that we do not know the date and time is because of pretense. I remember when I was a young kid I use to go around, asking my parents, every time they went out of the house, when are you coming back? And the reason was not because I so dearly miss them, it was a completely different reason, I was pretending to be a little good sheep, but actually I was a wolf. Because all I want to do is do whatever nonsense I could do during the whole day and then clean up the mess half an hour before they come and pretend to be a good boy, studying my exam, but we know that, because I have been pretending the whole day, the next day when the exam came I still failed, because it was just a pretense. I was just pretending.

When it comes to Christian faith, we cannot pretend. My parents might have been fooled because they couldn't see what happened during the day, but eventually they knew when my grades came out. But God knows whether you are just here to pretend or real transformation is happening in your heart. So there are couple of reasons, why we do not know the time, but we have to know that judgment is coming and it is going to surprise some of us. It says here in the text,

**3 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.**

It is kind of like one day this pop quiz will come and I was the person who always failed the pop quiz, because I was never ready, I was never prepared. The classes which I did really well in were the classes where I knew that every week the teacher will do a test then I would prepare for it. The problem is with our Christian faith there won't be a pop quiz, there will be a pop final exam. We do not know when judgment is going to come. We just know it is going to come like a thief in the night, but it is definitely going to come, just like every pregnant woman will get

labor pains judgment will come. The question is, are we aware of that, are we aware of the coming judgment, are we living our lives in light of the coming judgment that we have no idea when it is going to come, it could come tomorrow, it could come in a thousand years, I have no idea.

From the beginning of the gospel it says, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. It is an eminent return, we are in the last days, it could come any time. You must know one thing, be aware because that is the only way for us to eliminate or get rid of judgment is to put our faith in Jesus Christ. Are you aware of that and are you doing it now, because the day of salvation is today, we cannot procrastinate, we cannot pretend, we have to face the fact that evaluation will come and we have to search our souls today. Are we living in the light of that? We don't want to be caught thinking that everything is okay and jolly good in our lives because we have ticked the checkbox of coming to church. There are lot of people here who thinks there is going to be peace and security but they will be surprised and you have to evaluate your life.

#### **BE AWAKE:**

**4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.**

He uses the language of darkness and night and it is even true for today. Most of our debauchery happens at night. Somehow when the sky goes dark, all our sins come loud. It is something natural about us humans. We do a lot of nonsense when we think nobody can see and the problem is God always sees. So we can't escape that but it is strange that we do all this nonsense in the dark. That means when it comes to drinking, partying, sins of lust usually happen in the dark and at night, but he says we are not children of darkness, we are children of the light. We are supposed to be awake. Now the word awake here means, we have to be alert, we have to be watchful, we have to see what's happening, we are not just be aware of judgment but be awake of how judgment is coming and be awake and see who here in this room, who here in our communities, who here in our neighborhoods is not saved. Be watchful, be alert. Temptation is going to come, we have to be watchful and alert.

Primary what the text is speaking into here, hey! Jesus is going to come, are you ready, are you awake, are you watchful, are you prepared for it, but there are many different ways that we have to look at our lives of whether we are awake or whether we are asleep.

There are so many reasons, why in this world we can be intoxicated. It is not just alcohol and drugs, but we can be intoxicated with things of life. We can be intoxicated with watching too

much TV. Many of us are put to sleep because we eat too much. There are many reasons why we are distracted of the things of God and ignoring the things of God and putting our faith on the worldly things and the question is, are we intoxicated with our money. Is all that we strive for is getting that another fix of the another paycheck. Being intoxicated with prosperity and wealth that it consumes all our lives. Recently Desiring God came out with an article. It says that, *one thing which is just as dangerous as pornography is prosperity because it will consume you.* Your life will be about it.

What is getting us high, what is making us drunk, what is distracting us, what is putting us to sleep and my question to you is when you are in your offices and you see your colleague who doesn't know Jesus are you asleep or are you awake. When you are in your neighborhoods, who do not know Christ, are you asleep or are you awake. When people in your community are sick, are suffering, are going through depression, are you encouraging them, are you awake, are you praying for them or are you asleep. Because it says here, brothers and sisters we are not children of darkness, we are not asleep, we are awake. We need to be watchful, we need to be alert. When temptation comes, are we awake or are we asleep.

### **BE ARMORED:**

So many times we led down our guards. We are not ready for when temptation comes. He is saying here, not only you have to be aware, not only do you have to be awake but you have to be ready for battle. This is not peace and security, we are in the midst of a spiritual battle and if you are living your life aware and awake you will realize that we are in the midst of a battle. Scriptures tells us that the devil is roaring around like a lion seeing who he can devour. As we are trying to live our life faithfully, temptation will come. Are we guarding ourselves, are we putting on the armor.

**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.**

So he is asking us to do two things, to guard your hearts and to guard your mind. Are we guarding them both? The way we are doing this, here he says is by putting on the armor. In the Old Testament there is the armor of God all over the place, specifically in Isaiah 59 verse 17, you will see how Isaiah talks about the armor of God and you will have the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation there. The breastplate of righteousness or here in this text is the breastplate of love and faith. We have to protect our thoughts and we have to protect our feelings, because these are the things that will come and attack in the first place, because we will live our lives in according to what we think and according to what we feel. So we have to protect them. how do you protect them? He is saying here, well guard them and guard them with faith. Guard your heart with faith, now it is not just faith but it is faith in Jesus Christ, faith is not going to save us, faith in Jesus will save us and we have to be very specific about that.

The only way we will have righteousness is by placing our faith into one who then purchased righteousness for us on the cross. We are all sinful people, we have all fallen short of the glory of God, we are all due to judgement the only reason that we can escape judgment is by putting our faith in Jesus Christ who lived the life we should have lived. He lived a perfect life and who then died to death we should have died, on the cross for us as a substitute for us, taking all our sins. So by placing our faith in Him, we receive righteousness. So we protect our hearts by having faith.

*What is faith?*

Hebrew 11 says it best, faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. Faith is putting your trust in something you cannot see, things hoped for. So it is not a knowing fact, it is just trusting Jesus in the midst of doubt, in the midst of difficulty, putting your faith in him and his work.

The second thing here is that he talks about is protecting your heart with love. Now I tell you it is a different kind of love than the love of the world. The love of the world is a completely different kind of love than the love that you get from Jesus Christ. Many of us are intoxicated by the love of the world. Things that promise you love, for example. The world tells us that if we look good, we will be loved. The world tells us that if we have money we will be loved. The world tells us if we have common interest with somebody else, we will be loved. The love of the world is a because of kind of love. You will be loved because of your beauty, you will be loved because of your wealth, you will be loved because of your affinity. That's the world of love. It is a conditional love. You have got to meet this conditions to able to be loved. The love of Jesus Christ is a completely different kind of love. It is a 'in spite of' kind of love. It is an unconditional love. The Bible tells us that in the midst of our rebellion, in the midst of us not performing, in the midst of us not meeting any of the conditions, while we were in rebellion, while we were sinners, God so loved the world that he sent his only son to die for us. It was an in spite of our fallen condition kind of love and it is a kind of love that is unconditional. That means, if you are here and you have never experienced the love of Jesus, you can come to him today as you are. There is nothing about yourself that you have to change today to come and experience the Love of Jesus Christ. Now he doesn't want you to stay the way you are, He wants you to slowly walk out of darkness into the light that will change your life, but to come to him today there is no condition.

Jesus laid down his life for all of us, so you guard your heart not with a because of condition kind of love, you guard your heart with an unconditional in spite of kind of love. And it is so important because in moments of darkness, in moments of weakness where we feel that we have not performed, where we feel that we are falling and we are not worthy, we can think of that unconditional love and realize that Jesus loves us just the same today. If He could love us while we were sinners how much more now that we are his children can He love us. That's why we

have to guard our hearts with, so that we don't fall into temptation, but we stay immersed in the love of God.

It says that we have to guard our minds with the helmet of hope of salvation. Hope is so different, the hope of Jesus that we have is so different then the hope of the world. The hope of the world is wishful thinking. The hope of Jesus is a completely different kind of hope. It is an assurance of something which has been fully achieved by Jesus Christ. I think one of the good verse to describe what the hope that we have in Christ is here in 1-Peter 1:3-5

**3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

The love shows that he has died for us. The hope shows that he has risen again. That's good news. That's the hope that we have is completely accomplished for us by Jesus Christ, not only is there for us, not only will be get there, it is guarded for us by God Himself. God is guarding it for us, He is holding us there. It is not by our strength that we will get there, it is by his strength that we will get there and it says here, it is unfading, undefiled and imperishable. That's the hope that we have and we got to guard our minds with that, because so many times we live in defeat. We think that our present sin defines us, but we got to remember that what defines us is the love of Jesus Christ, is the hope that we have, the accomplished work of Jesus is just we think on. That's what keep us walking even though we might be in a tunnel that look so dark, we know that victory is achieved and one force we keep on walking towards that victory and that's what it means to have assurance of faith. To know that it is not your mess ups that is going to define whether you are going to make it to heaven or not, but no it's the victory of Jesus and your faith in Him and trusting in His love and having that hope is going to deliver you into His presence.

### **BE ASSURED:**

**9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.**

Now when it says here whether we are awake or asleep, he is not talking about the same asleep as we talked earlier on whether we are vigilant and watchful, he is talking about whether we are dead or alive. You are no longer children of wrath, you are now children of light, you have now obtained the salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus on the cross has won the victory for us, history has already been written. Through reading scriptures we know we are like the ones who know how the game is going to end. So regardless of how our situation and life looks like today, we know victory will be ours. That is the assurance that we have, that's how Christ has saved us, not just from final judgment, but he has freed us from thinking about tomorrow,

because tomorrow is secured and the only way to freely live in today is being free from tomorrow, and because we are free from tomorrow, we can truly live for him today.

*So what does the lifestyle of assurance look like?*

The first thing is we are able to risk, because victory is won, we are able to risk it all for his glory. We don't have to hold back any of our time, any of our talents, any of our treasures, no we can go all out because victory is won. We can go and try things for your kingdom and even if it fails it is okay, victory is won. Second thing is we can look foolish. It is okay for us to look foolish for Christ because finally again we have overcome and when we follow Christ, when we are awake and aware we put on those battle armors, a lot of times we do look foolish. When we go out into our colleagues in the workplace and try to talk with them about Jesus, we might look foolish. When we invite our neighbors to our house and talk to him about Jesus Christ we might look foolish. When we don't take job promotion that keeps us away from our family and our ministry we might look foolish. When we don't take that business deal because we would have to bribe somebody, yes we might look foolish, but God says what is foolish to the world is the wisdom of God and one great writer once said,

Noah looked foolish when he was building an ark and there was no rain that the Israeli army looked foolish when they were running around Jericho seven times and blowing trumpet, David looked foolish when he came against Goliath with a sling and five stones, Peter looked foolish when he was in the middle of the oceans and stepped out onto the water, that Jesus looked foolish when he was hung on the cross, wearing a crown of thorns, but history has revealed to us that the foolishness of the world is the wisdom of God, because history tells us that Noah escaped the flood. History tells us that the walls of Jericho came down. History tells us that David defeated Goliath, that Peter walked on water and that Jesus was crowned king of all kings. When we have a lifestyle of hope, when we have assurance, we are able to do and take risks and we are able to look foolish for God because the foolishness of the world is his wisdom.

So lifestyle of hope, let us be assured that the victory is his and let us be free from worry and anxiety. Jesus said, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will bring its own trouble, we don't have to worry about tomorrow because he has fixed our tomorrow for us. He has guaranteed there is an unfading imperishable future guarded for us and there is nothing that can separate you from it. No heights, no depths, no angels, no demons, nothing created, nothing can separate you from the love of God. He holds you there.

Lifestyle of assurance, let us not live in the defeats that we have. Many of us fail in different areas at different times and different ways, the reality is that we still have darkness and we are still sinful creatures and we will fail but when this helmet of salvation, looking at the hope that we have and living a life of assurance is that even though you might have temporary failures that failures don't define you. Jesus's victory on the cross defines you and it is especially important for us people who have habitual sins that keep getting us down. We have repented of it

yesterday and today we do it again. We repent again and tomorrow we do it again and these are the things that defeat us. That makes us lose hope, we pray, we pray, we ask for people to help us but yet that sin keeps on cropping into our lives but here is the good news. One day you will be free completely from that sin.

A mark of true repentance is persevering repentance, continual repentance, not letting that defeat of today define who you are. Now you can get up again with the strength, putting your mind in the right place, putting your right in the right place, you can get up again and you can try again, you can come to Jesus, ask for forgiveness again and he will give it to you as you continue to fight the battle, continue to get armored up, continue going your victory is assured. You are defined not by your defeats but you are defined by the victory of Jesus Christ. You are Christian, you have his name, you are washed clean by his blood, not by your performance, not by how well do you do but how well he did. He has purchased your righteousness and that's the identity that you are going to live in and that's the identity we have as Christians. So we don't let the defeat of yesterday define our tomorrow. The hope that we have defines our tomorrow.

It is hard to do this alone. So often we forget, so often we get distracted, so often we are unaware of the situations we are in, so often we are asleep and we miss out, so often we let down our guards and so often we have doubts and we lose our thoughts of assurance and we let the moment define us. That's why we need to do this in community, it says here

**Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you were doing.**

The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone, a lifestyle of hope is a lifestyle in community. We have to assist one another in doing this. When somebody is down we go and we pull them up. If somebody is in despair, we preach them the gospel, we give them hope again. We somebody is sick we pray for them. When somebody needs encouragement we encourage them. When somebody is in sin we admonish them. When somebody is struggling we are there and walking side by side with the. We have to assist and encourage one another.

There are two things that we need to do to be able to encourage somebody. The first thing is that we got to be in that person's life. I can't encourage you if I do not know you. If I am I not in somebody's life, if I don't their problems, their pains, their weaknesses, their struggles, the place where they are living on the guards, the places where they are asleep, the places where they have no hope, places where they are struggling in a spiritual battle, if I do not know that I can't encourage them. I can give them general conversation, I can give them general truths but I can't encourage their hearts. I can't hold their hand or walk with them. For us to be able to encourage one another which is a command here, we have to be in community.

The second thing we need to do to encourage one another is we got to be in community with God. We got to know God, I cannot encourage you if I do not know God, because if I encourage you just for worldly things, I am encouraging you with temporary things, things that will fade, things that will perish, things that will do not last. I will encourage you with because of and not



in spite of. I will encourage you with conditional love and not unconditional love. I got to be in here and there is no greater encouragement than here in scripture. If today, I have said anything which encourages you is because I am in the scripture because I am preaching scripture, because hopefully these are not my words, hopefully these are the words of scripture that are coming to you today. There is nothing more encouraging than the Word of God, because it is the only thing that can save us, it is the only thing that can change an unrepentant heart, it is the only thing that can give you a new heart. It is the only thing that can give you a new hope. It is the only thing that can give you the gift of hope. So let's encourage one another through the Word of God, so we got to know people, we got to know God, we got to know the finished work of God and we got to know God's word and that's how we encourage one another.

#### **SUMMARY:**

- Being aware that judgment will come. Being aware that we cannot escape it. Being aware that it will suddenly come.
- Being awake, being watchful, being vigilant, is being aware of your surroundings, being aware of who do not know Jesus. If we are a sleeping church, 97% of Kuala Lumpur will go to hell. We have to be awake and as we do that we know that spiritual battles will come.
- As we walk towards the light, there is going to be somebody trying to pull us back into darkness, so we got to armor ourselves, we got to put on love, faith and we got to put on hope. We got to protect our thoughts, we got to protect our hearts, we got to put on the breastplate, we got to put on the helmet.
- We got to live in the hope that we have and the assurance that we have that Jesus has won the victory, so we can go out and take risks, we can look foolish and know that our defeats don't define us but the victory of Jesus defines us and to have a lifestyle of hope is to assist another to help lift that life.