

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

When a great athlete is ready to compete in their sport, they have to be ready. Very little thought happens. Their actions are from muscle memory. They are in reaction mode waiting for their next move. Coaches try to steer them in the right direction, but if they haven't worked on what the coach is saying, they may not be able to adjust. If the contest has a half time or similar break, sometimes an adjustment can be made. The athlete relies on their gifts from God that are made manifest through hard work and preparation.

St. Paul uses strong images to direct the Christians of Thessalonica. They have given their lives to faith. Paul has taught them well and I'm sure many of them are what we would call intentional disciples. They are willing to give their lives for the Christian faith. They are ready for the end times. They wait in anticipation of Jesus coming again. Paul is confident that the Thessalonians will be ready for the coming of the Kingdom. Paul was inspired by an encounter with Jesus and he passes this on to the community. Paul uses common but effective images that show what this end time might be like. He said the end times would be like a thief in the night. He also used the image of labor pains. These would have been very appropriate for his time. Living in Thessalonica there would have been a fair amount of crime in a larger community. Also women often had a multitude of pregnancies as infant death was quite common. These images helped the early Christian as this letter was passed on and eventually became part of the Canon of scripture.

So what does this mean for us? We need to live our lives to the fullest. We should treat each day like it is a great gift. We need to be people of the light and avoid the darkness of sin. Like a great athlete we must live the moral life like it is second nature, but be able to seek forgiveness when we fail. We must love God and our neighbor as ourselves. Yes we even need to love ourselves despite our many failures. We need to be ready for the Kingdom. This can only be done by relying on love. Jesus Christ is our teacher and our great coach. He is with us to help us take on a world in need. Let us glory in the cross of Christ. May we all be ready to enter into the Kingdom in an instant.