Pictures of the End Pt. 2

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. We'll continue to look and see how this New Testament letter unfolds.

We're looking in verses 1 to 11 that we started the second letter. We started the second letter.
In verses 1, 2, and 3, we looked last week at pictures of the second coming. And he communicates some things about the second coming with a couple of pictures.
The first that we looked at was a picture of a thief in the night. Verse 2, you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.
Meaning it will come at a time when people are not expecting, when people are not paying attention. The other picture of the second coming that's given for us is a picture of labor pains.
[1:36] Verse 3, sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape. Most of the earth, when Christ came in his first coming, most of the earth did not pay much attention.

Though there had been prophecies and though the word of the Lord had been given, most ignored.
As Christ began his public ministry, though John the Baptist was raised up by God to point the way to Jesus and say, Behold the Lamb of God, the one who takes away the sin of the world, most ignored.
When Christ was crucified, though he was there dying in our place, fulfilling prophecies of the Old Testament and of his own prophetic messages, most ignored him.
And the few who did care were there to cheer on his public execution. In much the same way, after the days of the tribulation begin, during those times, while the earth itself will experience cataclysmic judgment.
And there will be a period of great revival as well. At the same time, simultaneously, you will have days of great revival and you will have cataclysmic judgment.
[3:03] But by comparison, by proportion, most will not care for the things of the Lord. And like a thief in the night and like labor pains, things that come on suddenly and increase in intensity, we saw a picture of the second coming.

The second thing we looked at in verses 4 to 8 are pictures of how to live in light of the second coming. And this is really what I think too few believers think about.
We're getting a little bit of this from both sides because our text in 1 Peter 4 on Sunday mornings for a couple of weeks coincides with this in 1 Thessalonians 5 about how we are to live.
So much of discussion that takes place and teaching and study that takes place about the end times focuses on areas and nuances of difference or distinction or debate.
But too rarely do we consider how we're supposed to live in light of the second coming. The prophecy of the second coming is not there first and foremost so that we would win an argument.
[4:18] It's there to show us and help us and teach us how to live in light of that. And so we looked last week at some pictures of how to live in light of the second coming.

First, he says to live, verse 4 and 5, in the light, not in darkness. Verse 6, live being awake, not asleep.
And then verses 7 and 8, live in sobriety, not in drunkenness. Go back to verse 8 with me for just a moment.
But since we belong to the day, let us be sober. Of course, this ties in again with where we are in 1 Peter 4 on Sunday mornings, where it tells us in verse 7, the day of the Lord is at hand.
And therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded. And I do want you to make sure that you're catching this intentional emphasis in the New Testament that when God's people consider the

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second coming, when we consider the return of the Lord, that is supposed to cause us to live a certain way.
[5:34] And as I referenced this morning, one of the mistakes people made in 1 Thessalonians, in 2 Thessalonians specifically, that has to be corrected, or that there were some who thought that living in light of the second coming meant that they needed to just ignore their regular responsibilities.

And that has to be corrected. And so when we consider how are we to live in light of the second coming, we are to live in a sober state, meaning that we have our senses about us, that our mind is clear, that we are faithful in the regular things, in the small, non-heroic ways that we are called to live, we are to be faithful, to live as those who are in the light, not as those in the darkness, to live as those who are awake, not as those who are asleep, and to live as those who are sober and clear-headed, not as those who live in drunkenness.
Let's continue on, and we'll see a third set of pictures, and this is pictures of how to engage in battle in light of the second coming. Part of what we are to do is to engage in battle, and we see this with two pictures, verse 8, 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.
Two pictures are given to us of how we are to engage in battle in light of the second coming. First, put on the breastplate of faith and love, and then second, for a helmet, the hope of salvation.
Now this sounds familiar, because this sounds a lot like what we read in the book of Ephesians, when we consider the armor of God. And we understand that when it talks about a breastplate, that we're talking about covering our vital organs, our heart and our lungs, and other vital organs.
[7:46] We're familiar with police officers wearing a bulletproof vest. We're familiar with those who play catcher in baseball or softball, wearing a chest protection, because if you get a fastball in the arm, it may hurt, but it's not dangerous to your health.

But if you take a fastball or a foul ball to your chest, and it's unprotected, that could be deadly. If you take a bullet to the hand, it may be painful, but it's not going to take your life.
If you take a bullet to the chest, it likely will. And so, with that thought in mind, the Scripture says, put on the breastplate of faith and love.
Breastplate weighed 20 to 30 pounds. It was used to protect the warrior from the attack of a sword or of a tossed javelin. It was generally a sleeveless shield.
They would wear some kind of a scarf around their neck to protect their neck from being injured by it. These breastplates would be made of heavy linen or molded metal, oftentimes made of iron or bronze.
[9:07] And when you think of a breastplate of faith and love, you're absolutely supposed to be thinking in your mind the metaphor, the picture, the illustration of a soldier.

That we are to live as those in a spiritual battle. And I think one of the things that we often can miss when we consider our life and how we're to live in light of the second coming is we often forget that we are to live as those engaged in a spiritual battle.
And so, metaphorically, we're told here to put on this breastplate of faith and love. We are to be living in, abiding in, faith and love.
So we're to be awake, sober, in the light, and living as a soldier.
Now let's think for just a minute about these two elements that we are supposed to cover our heart with. Faith and love. That we're to have faith in God, faith in His Word, faith in His promises, faith in His plan, faith in His character.
[10:27] We're to have love toward Him, and then as a response of that, love toward each other. Just as we studied this morning, keep on loving each other earnestly.

We studied in 1 Peter 4 today. And isn't it interesting that in both passages, two different books of the Bible, two different human authors, both passages telling us that when you consider the return of Christ, that it should cause us to live a certain way.
And both passages telling us that one of the ways that we are to live is to be sober-minded. And both passages telling us that with a sober mind, with clear thinking, that what should be evident from us is love.
Now that's not hard to explain because the Bible ultimately has one author, the Holy Spirit. But in 1 Thessalonians 5 and 1 Peter 4, in both occasions, when you live in light of the return of Christ, we are called to be people of love.

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love for Christ and love for His people. When we think of the return of Christ, it's supposed to make us more loving.
[11:53] Now, I don't know what your experience is with conversations and debates and discussions about eschatology, but rarely would I call those conversations loving.

They're sometimes hostile, definitely passionate, heated. But understand, biblically, when we think of the return of Christ, biblically, it's to cause us and compel us to live out our love, first for the Lord and second for each other.
You're familiar with Matthew 22, Teacher, which is the great commandment of the law, and he said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your soul and with all your mind. This is how we're to live.
We think of what He's revealed to us in His Word and we are to live a life of love. We're to put faith and love over our chest as though a breastplate.
Now, what does a breastplate do for the soldier? It defends them from attacks that are being launched at them. Somebody comes after them with a javelin.
[13:08] Somebody comes after them with a sword. Somebody fires a rock or stone at them. That breastplate was their defense against the attacks of the enemy.

And this is the picture Scripture gives us that we are to put on. In light of the return of Christ, our protection, our shield is not violence, is not anger, is not hatred.
Our protection and our response to an enemy is faith and love. We are to be people who live in faith and love.
What would be the opposite of that? What would be to walk in fear and hatred? Do you see the world exhibiting signs of fear and hatred?
It's all around us, isn't it? But that's not the way believers should live. In fact, we protect ourselves by making sure we are living in faith and we are living in love.
[14:21] Now, you can relate to this. You know what it's like if you let your heart dwell on things that anger you and you let your heart dwell on things that tend to make you anxious and nervous.

It doesn't take long for your whole being to be consumed with fear and anxiety or your whole being to be consumed with anger and hatred. Our protection in this world against those things is to live with the covering of faith and of love.
Look at the end of verse 8. There's a second picture. And for a helmet put on the hope of salvation. And we don't need to do much understanding here of what a helmet does.
We get it. We know what a helmet does. It protects the head. Same thing. If you take a fastball to the shoulder, it may sting. It may bruise.
You've got no long-term ramifications. You take a fastball to the head without any helmet on, it can cost you your life. And so, before you step into the batter's box, you make sure you have on a helmet.
[15:30] You've got to protect your head. Well, just as we have to protect our heart metaphorically, so we have to protect our mind. So we cover ourselves with faith and love, and then we protect ourselves with a helmet of our hope.

Specifically, our hope of salvation. salvation. This is all in the context of the day of the Lord. So the question is, are things on this earth going to get exceedingly difficult?
And the answer is yes. Is persecution, is affliction the norm for the people of God throughout history?
Yes. Are those things going to increase in intensity, in duration, as we get closer and closer to His return?
The Bible says resoundingly, yes. What is our hope? Our hope is that we will be with the Lord. It's the salvation He gives us.
[16:43] Now, in one sense, if you're a believer today, you have salvation. In another sense, biblically, we are those who are being saved.

In one sense, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved. You have today, you possess everlasting life. You have eternal life. And yet, we are being saved in the sense of your salvation will be realized in its fullest when you take your last breath and are welcomed to be home with the Lord.
And when you think about the end, whether it's the end of your life or the end of all things at the return of Christ, ending this church age, ending the things up until His return, our hope is in the

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salvation Christ brings.
This is why believers are to be described with these words, faith, love, and hope. Now, if you're having deja vu and thinking, I keep thinking I'm hearing things twice, 1 Thessalonians 5 and 1 Peter 4, that's true, and now you're having deja vu again, thinking, didn't we just hear this?
Yes, this morning, Joey read 1 Corinthians 13, where it speaks of three things that abide, faith, hope, and love.
[18:14] These are the things that are to describe how believers live. In light of the return of Christ, we live in faith, not fear.

We live in love, not hatred. And we live in hope, not despair. When you consider the fact that Christ is coming again, when you consider the fact that evil and sin will be done away with, when you consider the fact that God will deal with all unrighteousness, all evil, all wickedness, when you consider the fact that believers are promised in eternity with the Lord, when you consider the fact that the Lord said, I will come again, that where you are, that where I am, you will be with me. When you consider the fact that He has said the dead in Christ haven't missed on anything, they're going to rise first, that together, we will be caught up with Him in the air. When you consider the fact that when you read all the Bible says about the eternal state, Revelation 21, no more sorrow, no more death, that should cause us to live with faith and with love and with hope.
And so these three words that we see here that are pictures of how we engage in battle, what's the warfare of the Christian? It's faith, hope, and love.
I want to make sure you understand this in this context because the picture here is absolutely of a soldier. You're putting on a breastplate. You're putting on a helmet.
[19:57] You're going into battle. But you're not going into battle with swords and knives. You're not going into battle with revenge.

We live our life. We fight our spiritual battles with faith and hope and love. That's how we're to live. 1 Corinthians 13, these three things remain, faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love, we read this morning. And at first, reading, that sounds a bit strange.
I mean, we know that love is important, but how is love the greatest of these? After all, by grace through faith are you saved? In Hebrews 11, without faith, it's impossible to please God.
Well, I think we understand it this way, that when we die and we go to be with the Lord, our faith becomes sight. Our hope becomes reality.
[20:59] And what remains forever and forever is our love. And we will love the Lord more when we meet Him face to face than we ever have before.

We will understand just how great our salvation is more at the point of our death than we do today. So how do we fight our battles?
With faith, with hope, and with love. Incidentally, turn back to chapter 1 in this same letter here, verse 3.
It's just worth noting here. Remembering before our God and Father Your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Same three things again. Faith, hope, and love. So picture the second coming. Deal with it being likened to a thief in the night and labor pains.
[22:05] How we're to live in light of the second coming is to live in the light, not the darkness. To live as those who are awake, not asleep. Live as those who are sober, not in drunkenness.

Pictures of how to engage in battle until the second coming is to be a spiritual soldier. Living out faith, hope, and love.
And then, in verses 9, 10, and 11, we get one more set of pictures related to the day of the Lord. And these are pictures of eternal destinies.
Again, there are two pictures given. Verse 9, for God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
These are the two pictures. There are those at the Lord's return who will experience wrath and others who experience salvation. God has not destined us for wrath.
[23:09] Christian, this is about the best news we could consider tonight. That God has not destined us for wrath. Romans 8, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

But do understand that while believers are not destined for wrath, unbelievers absolutely are. When you think in terms of how do we live in light of the second coming, part of what, so one of the

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pictures of how we live is to live as those with sobriety.
One of the things that should sober us up, keep us living with a sense of sobriety, is the reality that praise God, we're not destined for wrath, but those who reject the gospel absolutely are.
And that ought to be a part of our prayer life and a part of our understanding. And sometimes you say, well, this unbeliever is so harsh and so cruel and so mean, how can I possibly live in faith and hope and love when I'm around them?
You do it by reminding yourself of what your eternal destiny is. For you, it's salvation, but for them, unless they repent, is wrath. It is the recognition of the reality of wrath that should cause us to live in sobriety and to be patient and to be gracious.
[24:44] We are not destined for wrath. Here's what we're destined for, to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 10, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with Him.

This is a very important thing to understand, that for the believer, we are to live with the beautiful awareness that the Lord is always with us.
Paul says this very similarly in the book of Philippians, chapter 1. He says, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.
In other words, he says, for me to be given the gift of breath when I wake up is for me to know Christ, to honor Christ, to enjoy fellowship with Christ.
and if I were to die, that would be gain, because at death, absent from the body, present with the Lord. So even at death, the believer is with the Lord, and now we're with the Lord without sin and without shame and without the effects of living on a fallen planet.
[26:04] So to live as Christ is to know He's with me, and to die is gain, because I go to be with Him. In 1 Thessalonians 5, he says, we are with, we have salvation, those who died for us, or He died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we're going to be with Him.

The believer's got to go through life understanding that part of our blessed assurance is knowing that we are with the Lord and He is with us no matter what.
So to live is Christ, to die is gain. So back to Philippians, Paul, who through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is working this out in his letter to the church there, says, I am hard pressed between the two.
I'm hard pressed to consider which would I prefer, and the two, the two options are for Him to remain in the flesh to be alive or to depart and go to be with the Lord.
He knows that to depart and be with the Lord is better because he says to live as Christ die is gain.
But he says, it seems to be for your good and for your benefit for me to remain in the body.
[27:32] In other words, Paul says, as I think of my life and the reality of my salvation and the promise of heaven, he says, a part of me longs to stay here to be with you, to serve you, to minister with you, to be a part of Christian battle with you.

Another part of me longs to depart, to let my life come to an end and to go and to be with the Lord knowing that if he is given breath and stays on this earth, it's all about Christ with us and Christ in us and if he were to depart and to go to be with the Lord, it would be all about him going to be with Christ.
So either way, the believer can't lose because our salvation brings us union with Christ. Now these aren't just theoretical, theological ideas.
These are things in the Scripture that are supposed to teach us how to live. In other words, we need to think about these things.
You ought to think about the fact that if you're given breath tomorrow, that that day should be all about you living for the honor of Christ. And if you don't, you've experienced gain.
[28:56] You ought to think about your parents and your grandparents and your friends that every day you get to enjoy their company and their friendship is a great blessing and it's a way to give thanks to Christ.

But when your loved one takes a last breath and goes to be with the Lord, if they're a Christian, they experience great gain. That doesn't take away our grief, that doesn't take away our sadness, that doesn't take away our tears, but it absolutely ought to impact how we walk through those seasons.
Which is why the Bible says we don't grieve as those without hope. The hope of salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5, is the same thing that tells us in the New Testament how we are to grieve.

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Christians grieve, but we grieve in hope. Hope. Even in Romans 8, when it talks about the Lord is going to one day make all things new, Romans 8 says, even creation itself, which was subjected to futility, in hope.
So when you look at the fact that the Lord is coming again, that gives us hope. When you look at the fact that a believer who takes their last breath goes to be with the Lord, that gives us hope.
[30:15] Even when you think about what's going to happen with the new heavens and the new earth, that is supposed to give us hope. So all of these things, the Bible teaches us about the end times, all of it is to be instructive in how we live today.

People of faith, hope, and love. And in verse 11, therefore, so because of all this, in light of all of this, having said all of this, therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing.
Now, if you think that sounds familiar to you, it should because that's how he ended chapter 4, verse 18. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.
So biblically, what does Christian encouragement look like?
Christian encouragement is founded on the fact of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and the reality that he's coming again.
[31:46] And as we consider the second coming of Christ, we are to encourage one another with these words and build each other up with these words.

So, on this earth, you may or may not have all of your biggest dreams come true.
you may or may not ever get your dream job. You may or may not ever be recognized for how hard you've worked or what you've accomplished.
You may or may not ever have the relationships and the friendships that you've always dreamed of. But in light of the fact the Lord is coming again, in light of any disappointments you may face in this life.
The characteristics that should be true of us is that we live as people of faith, hope, and love. And because of that, we seek to constantly encourage each other.
[33:09] Namely, in chapter five, encourage each other by remembering that Christ is coming again, and we will not receive wrath, but we obtain salvation.

This is the greatest encouragement that you can give to another brother or sister in the Lord. This is why our conversations when someone is hurting or grieving, we don't want to be flippant, we don't want to be trite, we don't want to ignore their suffering, but we absolutely should encourage them and build them up with the truth of what undeniably will be there for every single believer, and that is when we meet the Lord, we will have everything our hearts have ever longed for.
And he says encourage each other with these words, build each other up with these things. We talked, it's been a number of months ago when we were in the gospel of Mark, but when someone prays to receive Christ, I really feel strongly that the way that people speak of that needs adjusted. Typically, when a teenager, child, adult, whatever it is, typically when the somebody confessed their sin and prays to receive Christ, typically the first response we say are things like, I'm so proud of you.
Congratulations. What a great thing you've done. I know what we mean by that, and we want to celebrate with them, and we want to help them, but if our encouragement were to be a bit more biblically precise, our first words are not, I'm so proud of you, look what you've done.
[35:14] Our first word should be, praise the Lord who saved your soul. And I don't think that's a matter of semantics.

I think that's a matter of theology. Who's the first to receive the credit and the glory glory for for the salvation of your son, your daughter, your grandson, your granddaughter, your friend, your co-worker.
If we were honest, our first words we speak are typically congratulating them the same way we would if they showed us a report card with straight A's.
where they phoned us and said, I got a promotion. And I think our first words ought to be that in light of the second coming, there are two destinies, wrath and salvation.
When someone knows Christ as Savior, the greatest thing we can say is praise God who has saved your soul.
[36:46] That's not about semantics. That's about understanding salvation. And by the way, while I'm on it, if somebody says I've got straight A's, I kind of think our first thought still ought to be with

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the Lord because it's the Lord who gave us life and a mind and strength.

Deuteronomy says, do not forget the Lord in your wealth. It is the Lord who gave you power to make and earn wealth. In other words, everything we have, everything that we achieve ultimately as a believer, we understand that without the blessing of God, we could do nothing.
Well, how would it be that we could reorient our mind from what just sounds and feels normal to what is more biblically, theologically precise?
And the Bible's answer is to think of the Lord's return. That when the Lord returns for his people or when you take your last breath and you stand before the Lord, do you think your first words will be congratulating yourself for what you've done?
or do you think in stunned worship you will bow before the King of Kings?
[38:34] See, thinking about the end times is not about winning a debate. Biblically, it's about reorienting your perspective to help you to live.

Not just to be prepared to die, but to be free to live. And the way that we do that is verse 11. Encourage each other and build one another up by focusing on the reality of wrath and salvation. and the fact that in Christ we are not destined for wrath. As we close, let me invite you to turn to Hebrews 10.
10. I'm really wanting and trying to labor to show you the layers in scripture of how overlapping the teaching of the Bible is on these things.
[40:00] Verse 24, let us consider how to stir up one another, that's what we just read, to love, that's just what we read, and this morning, and good works, not neglecting to meet together.

We could say a lot about that, but just understand in context here, we don't neglect to meet together. Why is it, verse 25, that we're to meet together?
It's because, verse 24, we want to stir each other up. so we don't neglect to meet together, verse 25, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, so we just read in 1 Thessalonians 5, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
That sounds a lot like 1 Thessalonians 5, 11, doesn't it? As you consider the day of the Lord drawing near, what should we do?
Well, should we say that if the day of the Lord is drawing near, Sunday school is not that important, the day of the Lord is drawing near, I mean, church is fine, church is good, but our time is short, we've got to do all these other things, or the day of the Lord is near, that's scary, that's frightening, maybe we ought to live in anxiety, no, what does it tell you in verse 25, meet together, and the more you consider the day drawing near, encourage each other, help each other, build each other up, stir each other up to love and good deeds, how should we live in light of the second coming?
[41:58] by gathering together regularly, and the more we consider the day drawing near, the more we encourage each other with the blessed hope and assurance that by grace through faith we do not obtain wrath, but we have been given salvation.

And you can't think of those things and say, look what I have done. You will consider those things and say, how great is the grace of our God.
And that's how we build each other up. And that's how we encourage each other. together. And that's why we meet together, and all the more, as we see the day drawing near.
Lord, we are grateful for your word tonight. We see in these various texts we have looked at this morning and today, the blessed truth that we can live in faith with hope, with love, that we can consider the end of all things and not live with fear, but with joyful worship, giving thanks for what you have obtained for us.
May we, with a focus on your Son, encourage each other and build each other up and never forsake the assembling together all the more as we see the day drawing near.
[44:09] In Christ's name. Amen. God bless. You're dismissed. You're dismissed.

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