

1 Thessalonians 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

Analysis

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober—araoun mē katheudōmen hōs hoi loipoi, alla grēgorōmen kai nēphōmen (ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποί, ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν). Ara oun (ἄρα οὖν, 'therefore') draws ethical conclusion from theological truth (vv. 4-5). Since we're light-children, we must live accordingly. Katheudō (καθεύδω, 'to sleep') indicates spiritual lethargy, moral carelessness, eschatological unpreparedness—not physical sleep but metaphorical slumber. Hoi loipoi (οἱ λοιποί, 'the others/rest') are unbelievers who sleep through approaching judgment.

But let us watch and be sober (alla grēgorōmen kai nēphōmen, ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν)—grēgoreō (γρηγορέω, 'to watch/be alert') and nēphō (νήφω, 'to be sober/self-controlled') describe vigilant readiness. Watching means alert awareness of spiritual realities; sobriety means clear-headed self-control, not intoxicated by worldliness. Jesus repeatedly commanded watchfulness (Matt 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:35-37). Readiness for Christ's return requires continuous alertness, not mere intellectual acknowledgment.

Historical Context

Paul's metaphorical use of sleep/wakefulness resonates with Jesus's Gethsemane rebuke: 'Could ye not watch with me one hour?' (Matt 26:40). Spiritual drowsiness plagued the disciples then and threatens believers now. Roman soldiers posted as watchmen faced execution if caught sleeping on duty—literal death for literal

sleep. Believers face spiritual catastrophe (not loss of salvation but loss of reward, 1 Cor 3:15) if found sleeping spiritually when Christ returns. The urgency of watching increases as the day approaches (Heb 10:25).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What evidence demonstrates that you're 'watching' (spiritually alert) rather than 'sleeping' (spiritually careless)?
2. How do you maintain sober self-control in a culture intoxicated by entertainment, materialism, and instant gratification?
3. What specific practices help you remain watchful for Christ's return amid daily routines and distractions?

Interlinear Text

ἄρα	οὖν	μὴ	καθεύδωμεν	ώς	καὶ	οἱ	λοιποί	ἀλλὰ
Therefore	G3767	not	let us	as	and	G3588	do others	but
G686		G3361	G2518	G5613	G2532		G3062	G235
γρηγορῶμεν	καὶ	νήφωμεν						
let us watch	and	be sober						
G1127	G2532	G3525						

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 1:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Matthew 24:42 (Parallel theme): Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Luke 22:46 (Parallel theme): And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

1 Peter 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Revelation 16:15 (Parallel theme): Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Ephesians 5:14 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Titus 2:12 (Parallel theme): Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Revelation 3:2 (Parallel theme): Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

1 Peter 4:7 (Parallel theme): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Proverbs 19:15 (Parallel theme): Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.