

1 Thessalonians 5:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

Analysis

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night—hoi gar kathedontes nyktos katheudousin, kai hoi methyskomenoi nyktos methyousin (οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν, καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν). Paul extends the metaphor: sleeping and drunkenness belong to night (darkness, evil, ignorance). Nyx (νύξ, 'night') represents the present evil age before Christ's return ushers in eternal day. Both sleep (spiritual lethargy) and drunkenness (loss of self-control) characterize those 'in darkness.'

The contrast between night-people (who sleep, get drunk, live carelessly) and day-people (who watch, stay sober, live vigilantly) mirrors the contrast between unbelievers and believers. This isn't moralism (believers are better people) but eschatology (believers live in light of coming day). The verse also carries literal application: drunkards typically drink at night, concealing behavior in darkness. But Paul's primary meaning is metaphorical—unbelievers live as if in perpetual night, ignorant of approaching day. Believers live as if dawn is imminent, because it is (Rom 13:11-12).

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture featured heavy drinking, especially at nighttime symposia (drinking parties). Jewish tradition also associated drunkenness with night, as respectable people drank moderately during day. Paul uses this cultural norm

metaphorically: spiritual drunkenness (worldliness, carelessness) belongs to the kingdom of darkness. Isaiah prophesied: 'They are drunken, but not with wine... for the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep' (Isa 29:9-10)—spiritual stupor plaguing those who reject truth. Believers must avoid both literal drunkenness (Eph 5:18) and metaphorical intoxication by worldly values.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What forms of 'drunkenness' (loss of self-control, intoxication by worldly values) tempt you despite being a 'child of day'?
2. How does living in light of Christ's imminent return affect your participation in activities that 'belong to the night'?
3. What evidence demonstrates that your life is oriented toward 'day' (Christ's return) rather than 'night' (present evil age)?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	γὰρ	καθεύδοντιν	νυκτὸς	καθεύδοντιν	καὶ	οἱ
G3588	For	sleep	in the night	sleep	and	G3588
G1063		G2518	G3571	G2518		G2532
μεθυσκόμενοι			νυκτὸς	μεθύοντιν·		
they that be drunken			in the night	are drunken		
G3182			G3571	G3184		

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:13 (Parallel theme): Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

2 Peter 2:13 (Parallel theme): And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

1 Corinthians 15:34 (Parallel theme): Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

Acts 2:15 (Parallel theme): For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

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

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