



Sunday School Lesson
1 Thess. 5:1-28
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Living Right (2)



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This study brings to a conclusion the study of 1 Thessalonians with a focus on both the final sections of the paraenesis (4:1-5:22) and the letter Conclusio (5:23-28). Thus two distinct sections of the typical ancient letter are covered. Here one will find a frequent use of the imperative mood in the Greek text, reflecting both the traditional nature of paraenesis and many of the sub-genra of the letter [Conclusio](#). Thus the study provides an opportunity to examine more carefully the typical patterns of [moral admonition](#) as found in ancient letters, as well as how an ancient letter was brought to a conclusion. This is very different than modern letter writing patterns. In the Pauline collection, this will also reflect the creativity of the apostle Paul in taking ancient patterns and [modifying them](#) to suit his own purposes for each letter.

I. Context

Again, much of this material has been covered in [previous studies](#) on 1 Thessalonians. Thus, a summary of the more detailed material provided in the study on [1 Thess. 2:1-16](#) will be given here. Much of the material from the study on [1 Thess. 4:1-18](#) will be repeated here.

a. Historical

Regarding the **external history** of 1 Thessalonians, a summation of the previous study highlights the following. Paul spent several weeks establishing the Christian community in the Greek city of Thessalonica in the Roman province of Macedonia most likely sometime during AD 49 - 50. This ministry during the second missionary journey is described briefly in [Acts 17:1-9](#). The apostle was assisted by his associates Silas and Timothy; there may have been more individuals as a part of the traveling group of missionaries but these are the names we cannot be certain of. The so-called "we-section" of Acts, which begins in [16:11](#), has traditionally been understood as suggesting that Luke joined the group at Philippi. When Paul left the city of Philippi for Thessalonica he left behind a Christian community largely comprised of women as its core leaders and meeting in the home of a prominent business woman named Lydia; and he left behind a ministry that had been characterized by chaotic turbulence with the

Roman authorities including a period of time in jail ([Acts 16:11-40](#)).

The time spent in Thessalonica wasn't less chaotic, but the source of the opposition was different. Because no Jewish synagogue existed in Philippi, he wasn't opposed by his fellow Jews. But in Thessalonica the leadership of the synagogue quickly became adamant in their opposition to these Christian missionaries, Paul in particular. This was evidently provoked by the conversion of numerous prominent Gentiles, including some women, who had been worshiping at the synagogue as God-fearers. They used "gunboat style" politically motivated distortion against Paul and the newly emerging Christian community in their charges against the missionaries before the Roman authorities. A Jason who had provided a home for the missionaries during their stay there, as well as a meeting place for the believing community, caught the brunt of the opposition when Paul and Silas couldn't be found for arrest.

Paul, Silas and Timothy were forced to hurriedly leave the town and were escorted by other believers several miles to the southwest to Berea. This place proved more receptive and a believing community quickly emerged with many prominent men and women being converted ([Acts 17:10-15](#)). But the opposition Jewish leadership in Thessalonica showed up to create a furor against Paul. This forced the apostle to hastily leave in order to save his life. Believers escorted Paul to Athens for his safety.

In this ancient Greek city Paul preached the gospel but without the success at Thessalonica and Berea ([Acts 17:16-34](#)). Paul spent time,

in part, waiting for Timothy and Silas to arrive in Athens, since they had stayed behind at Berea when Paul had left there. How long Paul stayed in Athens is not clear. Luke's time marker to signal the apostle's move from Athens to Corinth is the simple "after this" (*μετὰ ταῦτα*) in Acts 18:1. Most likely Paul spent several months in the city before moving on to Corinth. But in Corinth he spent the next year and a half establishing the believing community there ([Acts 18:1-17](#)). The early phase of this ministry focused on preaching the gospel in the Jewish synagogue. But with the usual opposition by the synagogue leadership, Paul shifted his focus to the Gentiles and "set up shop" next door to the synagogue in the home of a God-fearer named Titus Justus who had converted to Christianity.

During this eighteen month ministry, Jewish opposition led to charges being brought before the Roman authorities, in particular the proconsul Gallio (Jan. 25, 51 to Jan. 25, 52). Gallio not only dismissed the charges but had the synagogue spokesman Sosthenes publicly flogged for wasting his time with irrelevant legal charges. It's not clear from Luke's account at what point this incident happened during Paul's long stay in Corinth. The importance of the incident is that it allows for a precise dating link to our time calculation methods and thus provides a window into approximate dating of the events before



and after.

When attempting to insert the material inside the letter about Timothy's travels, one has to assume a trip by Timothy from Macedonia to Athens where Paul was ([3:1-5](#)). Then Paul's deep concern to learn how the Thessalonians were doing prompted Timothy to be sent back to Thessalonica. Timothy's stay in Athens must have covered enough time for Paul to have become concerned about the Thessalonians. Sometime after returning to Macedonia, he returned back to Paul who now was in Corinth. This time Silas accompanied him to Corinth according to Acts [18:5](#).

The variable in this perspective is Silas. Whether Silas stayed in Thessalonica / Berea while Timothy traveled to Athens, or he went with Timothy to Athens and then went back to Macedonia with him is unclear. The alternative is that Silas remained in Macedonia until both he and Timothy went south to Achaia after Paul had moved on from Athens to Corinth. The latter is more appealing to me personally, and would help explain the progress that the churches in Thessalonica and Berea were making during this time. All of this traveling back and forth took place over a period of several months, perhaps upwards of a year. Logistically, during such a period of time, these two trips by Timothy between Macedonia and Achaia would have been easy to make by ship during the first century.

Thus the good report that Timothy brought to Paul about the situation of the Thessalonians ([3:6-10](#)) prompts the writing of this first letter to the church. It also explains the very positive tone that permeates the entire letter.

Issues relating to the **internal history** of 5:1-28 are very minimal at best. The paraenetical nature of 5:1-22 and the typical content of the letter Conclusio in 5:23-28 raise very few questions about events taking place inside the community of believers at Thessalonica. Paul's treatment of last things in 5:1-11 assume a basic understanding of issues related

to the second coming of Christ and thus don't suggest any great misunderstanding or controversy regarding this issue, unlike the misunderstanding about the status of believers who had died before

that event. This was treated in the previous study of 4:13-18. The materials in 5:12-28 raise no flags regarding problems in the church there.

b. Literary

The literary **genre** of 5:1-22 is [paraenesis](#) (παραίνεσις). That is, the material is comprised of admonition to specific patterns of moral and spiritual behavior.

Admonitions to specified standards of conduct can be found in the ancient Greco-Roman culture. By the beginning of the Christian era, a major source was [Stoic philosophy](#). Paul's contemporary, [Seneca](#), was an influential moral philosopher in that world. Many of his ethical admonitions are very similar to those found in the [vice](#) and [virtue](#) lists contained in Paul's writings. Yet, dramatic differences between Paul and Seneca are also present in both the parameters of and motivations for moral living.

As a literary form, paraenesis tends to be loosely structured and presented in random form rather than in carefully organized sequence. The structuring of the three areas of emphasis in chapters four and five represent a very different style of writing than is found in the previous two chapters. A comparison of the block diagrams for chapters two through [five](#) will

dramatically illustrate that difference in visual format.

The random nature of paraenesis especially comes to the surface in verses 12-22. A series of staccato admonitions many of which are not connected to one another will surface.

The **Conclusio** of the letter, vv. 23-28, follows a pattern very typical in the Pauline letters, as [a comparison](#) of these will reflect. The content of this section will vary, but repeated patterns of material will surface with sufficient frequency to identify them as sub-genra. These include Greetings, Sender Verification, Doxologies, and Benedictia, as well as other material. Two of these surface in 1 Thess. 5:23-28: Greetings (v. 26) and Benedictio (v. 28). Additionally, we note a formal liturgical prayer of blessing (vv. 23-24), a request for prayer (v. 25), and a solemn demand for the reading of the letter in the various house-churches in Thessalonica (v. 27). The implications of the various sub-genra for interpretation will be treated in the exegesis of each passage.

II. Message

The **literary structure** of 5:1-28 is relatively simple. 5:1-22 finishes out the paraenetical section that began in 4:1. 5:23-28 contains the letter closing. Inside each of these sections the sentences will further subdivide into thought patterns, which can be identified with some ease. Whether the "wish-prayer" in 5:23 should be considered as a section closing (5:1-23) or the beginning of the Conclusio (5:23-28) is the only unclear element.

a. Admonitions to right living, 5:1-22

Because of the length of this section, we are going to take a look at the subsections individually. These verses continue the moral admonitions that began in 4:1. The general theme introduced in 4:1, "[how you ought to live and to please God](#)" (τὸ πῶς ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ), undergirds not just the first unit, 4:1-8, but also the entire paraenetic section of 4:1-5:22. Additionally, the positive affirmation given to the Thessalonians in 4:1, "[as, in fact, you are doing](#)" (καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε), will resurface in 5:1-22. Thus Paul indicates that these topics are not serious problems at Thessalonica that he is addressing. Instead, they are basic issues that all Christians must address. He is simply encouraging them to make even greater progress in these areas, as he says(4:1), "[you should do so more and more](#)" (ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον). This tone and stance toward the Thessalonians, begun in 4:1, pervades the material in 5:1-22. This provides an important interpretative background for understanding the admonitions that he serves up.

First, "times and seasons" (5:1-11):

Greek NT

^{5.1}Περὶ δὲ τῶν
χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν,
ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε

NASB

1 Now as to the
times and the epochs,
brethren, you have no

NRSV

1 Now concerning
the times and the sea-
sons, brothers and sis-

NLT

1 I really don't need
to write to you about how
and when all this will hap-

ὕμῖν γράφεσθαι, ^{5.2} αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται. ^{5.3} ὅταν λέγωσιν, Εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος ὥσπερ ἡ ὠδὴν τῆ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν. ^{5.4} ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτῃς καταλάβῃ. ^{5.5} πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους. ^{5.6} ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν. ^{5.7} οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν, καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν. ^{5.8} ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας. ^{5.9} ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. ^{5.10} τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν. ^{5.11} Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε.

need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

ters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

pen, dear brothers and sisters. 2 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. 3 When people are saying, "All is well; everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as a woman's birth pains begin when her child is about to be born. And there will be no escape. 4 But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. 5 For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. 6 So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be sober. 7 Night is the time for sleep and the time when people get drunk. 8 But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation. 9 For God decided to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. 10 He died for us so that we can live with him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of his return. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

Notes:

The clear discourse marker in the sentence pre-field, "Now concerning the times and the seasons" (Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν), sets off these verses as dealing with a new topic, although the general subject of the second coming of Christ links 5:1-11 back to 4:13-18. The emphasis on this common topic, however, is very different. In 4:13-18, the issue was concerning the status of those who would not be living when Christ returns. In 5:1-11, the emphasis is upon the unexpectedness of that day, and thus the necessity of being constantly prepared for it to happen.

Also, in 4:13-18, some genuine uncertainty existed among the Thessalonians, whereas in 5:1-11 no such uncertainty about the details was present. So much so that Paul indicates that he had no real need to write in detail about the nature of Christ's return. Consequently, he provides only sparse details in word picture expression to describe the nature of that day.

Commentators have assumed -- without any real foundation -- that the Thessalonians were bothered by the delay of the return of Christ. Thus, they had posed this issue to Timothy, who then carried it to Paul for a response. But the tone of the text argues against any such assumption. Much more likely -- in my assessment -- this topic is a natural outgrowth of the preceding one. Concern for privileged status if alive at the second coming could lead to spiritual comfortableness assuming that His return was close at hand. Thus, the unpredictability of that day, which necessitates constant preparedness, needed some emphasis. The very similar topic marker in 4:9, "Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you" (Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν), doesn't signal a problem nor a question posed by the Thessalonians. Neither does it here in 5:1.

The internal thought flow, as expressed in the [Semantic Diagram](#) and [Exegetical Outline](#) in the larger internet version of this study, is fourfold. Two assertions, vv. 1a and 4a, are made with a series of justifying statements for each, vv. 1b-3 and 4b-5. This is followed by expressing three implications, v. 6, which in turn are supported by a series of justifying statements, vv. 7-10. The result of these ideas in terms of the need for using them to encourage one another is then expressed in verse 11. See the chart for summation.

One noticeable trait is that Paul continues the basic structure of putting something on the table and then providing a basis for it. This we have seen earlier in the letter; he continues to do it here.

(1) His **first assertion**, "you do not need to have anything written to you" (οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν

Thought Flow in 5:1-11

1. **Assertion:** No need to write details about times and seasons. v. 1a
Basis: Thessalonians' prior knowledge of details. (vv. 1b-3)
2. **Assertion:** Thessalonians not in darkness about that day. (v. 4a)
Basis: Thessalonians sons of light and day, not of night and darkness. (vv. 4b-5)
3. **Implication (admonition):** Don't sleep but be watchful and sober. (v. 6)
Basis: (1) Night is when evil occurs; (2) God has destined believers not for wrath but for salvation. (vv. 7-10)
4. **Consequence:** Continue using this to encourage and edify one another. (v. 11)

γράφεσθαι), concerns what he called "times and seasons" (τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν). The two time references by themselves could refer to most anything. But in this context it is clear that they designate the general nature of the situation regarding the second coming of Christ. The first word (*chronos*) stresses clock kind of time and would relate to predicting a precise date for the return of Christ. The second word

(*kairos*) stresses general traits or qualities about a period of time. This would relate to the so-called "reading the signs of the times." Thus, Paul indicates that the Thessalonians have no need for him to address any temptation to assign a date for Christ's return, nor to discuss any issue related to general signals as to when that event may take place.

The *basis for this* is set forth in a brief allusion to the nature of that coming of Christ. The Thessalonians well understood that Christ will return "like a thief in the night." This image stresses unpredictability and unexpectedness. Additionally, verse 3 further stresses that Christ's return will take place when people least expect it. But, and this is the important part -- sudden destruction will take place on the unbelieving world. That destruction will have the severity of painfulness that a mother experiences in child birth. In that world no anesthesia for the mother was given during child birth. Also, there absolutely will be no escaping it for these people. They assumed through their wealth, their military power etc. that they possessed peace and security. But all that will disappear in an instant on the day that Christ returns.

Ironically, for believers the return of Christ means a wonderful day of reunion and fellowship with the Lord himself and fellow believers (4:13-18). But for the unbelieving world it will be an inescapable day of stark terror.

(2) Thus the **second assertion** underscores the spiritual condition of the believers at Thessalonica: "you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief" (ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτης καταλάβῃ). This posi-

tive word about the spiritual insights of the Thessalonians builds off the previous image of a thief who breaks into a home during the night. First, Christ will come like a thief. Now, the day of his coming will overwhelm like a thief. The element of surprise facilitated by darkness is the point of the metaphor. But the darkness in the image symbolizes spiritual darkness in the lives of people. It's much more than simple ignorance of the teachings of the Bible about the second coming. Instead, darkness is indicative of spiritual lostness and lack of saving relationship with Christ -- of being outside the Kingdom of God. Paul asserted that this was not the situation of the believers at Thessalonica.

Why? A series of *justifying statements* follows in verse five. The two sets of two are set forth in chiasmic sequence (AB/B'A') which follow an antithetical parallelism pattern (+ / -): sons of *light*, sons of *day*; not of the *night*, not of *darkness*. Each of the two sets, light-day; night-darkness, stand as synonymous parallels. Such thought structure was common in ancient Hebrew expressions. It can be charted out as:

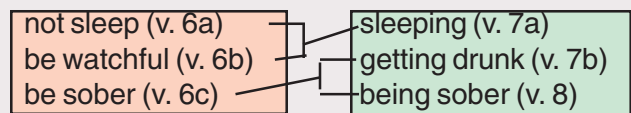


A and B are two ways of saying the same thing, just as B' and A' are. That is, light = day and night = darkness. But the second set -- B' / A' -- are the opposite of A / B. That is, night-darkness is the opposite of light-day. The chiasmic structure surfaces in the light-day-night-darkness sequence.

The second negative set shifts from "you" in the first set to "we." Although this could theoretically be understood to shift from the Thessalonians to Paul and his missionary associates, much more likely it is merely a stylistic shift to heighten contrast in the antithetical parallelism. Thus, both "you" and "we" includes the Thessalonians, with the inclusion of the letter senders in the "we" identifying themselves with the Thessalonians.

This powerful declaration about the spiritual status of the Thessalonians stands as the basis for the previous assertion that the Thessalonians are not in spiritual darkness which would imply that the day of the Lord could overwhelm them.

(3) What does this imply? With strong doubling of two inferential coordinate conjunctions (ἄρα οὖν) Paul draws out of this the admonition that believers are not to be sleeping but rather to be watchful and sober (v. 6). These three admonitions are then justified by three timeless declarations. The literary structure is helpful for interpreting these statements:



The second set, reasons (right column), stands as foundational to the first set, the admonitions (first column). The linking of these concepts as admonition / reason takes on the pattern as charted out above. "Not sleep" (-) / "be watchful" (+) is grounded in "sleeping" (-). And "be sober" (+) is grounded in "getting drunk" (-) and "being sober" (+). Also notice the positive-negative pattern: -/+ grounded on -; + grounded on -/+ basis. The shift back to "we" and expansion in the last reason in v. 8 pushes toward application in the inclusive "we" that first surfaced in verse 5b.

What we are encountering in this rather complex literary structure is typical paraenesis where positive and negative character traits and actions are carefully linked together in tight knit structure. Unpacking this structure helps make correct sense of what is being said.

For Paul the implication of Christ's coming like a thief in the night demanded spiritual preparation. This is characterized as being alert rather than asleep, and as being sober. Common sense dictated, as he builds off the metaphors, that the way to do this is to not sleep during the night as the sleepers do; to not get drunk as the drinkers do; to be sober since we live in the day and are properly dressed with a breastplate and helmet. The introduction of military dress at the end sets up the picture of a soldier preparing to defend himself in battle. The sleepers are the non-believing world as "as the rest" (ὡς οἱ λοιποῖ) in 5:6 implies. In this imagery Paul lays strong emphasis upon spiritual vigilance for believers in their anticipation of Christ's return. Nighttime means spiritual darkness and thus ignorance that exposes one to the sudden destruction on that day. Since believers live in the day with the light of salvation, we need to resist any "letting down of the guard" in being vigilant in preparing for Christ's return. The equipment God has given us for that is the breastplate of faith surrender to Christ and love for others. Also we have the helmet, which is the expectation of salvation at that day of Christ's return.

In vv. 9-10, a second set of justifying reasons are given, which point a different direction. The first set in vv. 7-8 stressed spiritual obligation as a foundation for the admonitions. But the second set, vv. 9-10, stress divine intention as the foundation for the admonitions. Notice the continuation of the "we" "us" frame of reference. The two reasons are cast in a negative / positive relationship: "God did not destine

this... but that..."

Central to this is the meaning of the verb. The Greek ἔθετο (*etheto*) from τίθημι (*tithemi*) literally means "to put" or "to place." Thus with the preposition εἰς (*eis*) the core concept is "God did not place us moving into...; rather He placed us moving into..." In English idiom the sense is "under God's authority and action, we are not headed toward..., but headed toward..." The use of "destined" by both the NASB and NRSV translations carries a lot of accumulated theological baggage from centuries of interpretation. They also imply some of the preordination concepts Paul will use later in [Rom. 8:29-30](#). But this verb is not used in any of those statements. The [Message](#) comes close to capturing the meaning with its rendering: "God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ."

What God has put believers in place for is not His wrath in eternal damnation. "Wrath" here is the same as "destruction" in 5:3. Rather, we are pointed toward the "obtaining of salvation" (εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας). This will come on the Day of the Lord. This salvation comes "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus is the one "who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him" (τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν). Thus Jesus' death enables believers to live with Him in eternity; this is our salvation.

(4) Consequence. Another implication in the sense of implied result (Διὸ) is spelled out in verse eleven. What value does this teaching on the return of Christ have? Paul's answer is a twofold admonition: "encourage one another and build up..." (παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε). The first verb, which we have already seen several times in 1 Thessalonians, stresses giving assistance, and the second verb emphasizes constructing a spiritual house in the sense of edify. The individualizing qualifier "one to one" (εἰς τὸν ἕνα) heightens the emphasis. As we have seen before, Paul saw this need as something to intensify, rather than to begin, when he said, "just as you also are doing" (καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε). This reflects the foundational tone of "abounding more and more" first introduced in the paraenesis in 4:1.

What is the connection of all this to us today? "Times and seasons" often have been a major topic of Christian discussion and debate. But rarely in the way that Paul discusses them here. And almost never with the positive impact that Paul intended. The imagery of Christ's coming being like a "thief in the

We cannot know when the Lord will return, but we must be prepared and ready for Him to return at any minute.

night" stresses suddenness and unpredictability. Growing out of that is the imperative of being constantly prepared for that day. Watchfulness is the key word for preparation. In this passage Paul did not directly spell out watchfulness. But the surrounding context of 4:1-5:22 makes the sense clear. Watchfulness is living day by day as God demands in anticipation of meeting the Lord in a great reunion and being carried by Him into Heaven.

In trying to "set dates" and read the "signs of the times" we turn away from the central obligation of preparation for and anticipation of that day. This will make the doctrine of last things the destructive and divisive Christian teaching that it has sometimes become. As [2 Thess. 2:1-12](#) will demonstrate, a misinterpretation of the nature of the day of the Lord can become quite disruptive to the community of believers. There Paul will have to point out some very generalized "signs" in order to correct a misunderstanding of his "thief in the night" image here. But those signs provide no basis for "setting dates" and speculation about supposed "signs" of the end being close by. Collectively they remind us that the end isn't yet.

The heart of preparation for the coming of Christ is obligation to live a certain way before God. One will always find it easier to speculate about dates and signs, than to live by the high standards of morality that God demands. Thus the destructiveness of date setting. The opposite extreme, which often happens today, is just as dangerous. We, even as believers, hardly ever think about the second coming. Two scattered references in this passage should remind us of the importance of knowing what that day will include. "Destruction" and "wrath" point us toward the awesome fear and pain awaiting those outside of Jesus Christ. The previous emphasis in 4:13-18 point to the positive value of living in the shadow of that day: we eagerly anticipate meeting the Lord and going home to Heaven with Him. Both the positive and negative aspects of this day poses powerful motivation toward living right before God as we await that day. To move away from awareness of the nature of this day is to lose valuable motivation for being ready and for living the way that God expects us to live. Just like spouses and par-

ents go to great lengths to welcome home a soldier from military combat, so should we in preparation

for the coming of the Lord.

Second, miscellaneous admonitions, 5:12-15:

Greek NT

^{5.12} Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς ^{5.13} καὶ ἠγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. ^{5.14} παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν, μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας. ^{5.15} ὁρᾶτε μή τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τιτι ἀποδοῶ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε· καὶ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.

NASB

12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

NRSV

12 But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; 13 esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. 15 See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

NLT

12 Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. 13 Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other. 14 Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to everyone else.

Notes:

The random nature of paraenesis comes to the surface especially strong in these verses. Three basic emphases are present here: vv. 12-13; v. 14; v. 15. Once more (cf. 4:1) the verbs dealing with admonition are used: “we urge...” (v. 12; Ἐρωτῶμεν) and “we encourage...” (v. 14; παρακαλοῦμεν).

Many are convinced, with considerable basis, that this structure signals the use of Christian teaching that had already begun taking on a fixed form and served as a part of a body of material used to help new believers and congregations understand how the Christian life was to be lived. Thus, the randomness of the material is due to a selection of elements from a larger pool of material that was deemed most appropriate for the Thessalonians. But one should avoid reading issues underneath the admonitions as the basis for selecting the chosen materials.

The first admonition urges the Thessalonians to *eidenai* (εἰδέναι) their leaders. Literally this verb means “to know” in the sense of identifying. The derived sense of “appreciate” (NASB), “respect”

(NRSV), and “honor” (NLT) is the understood meaning. Those to receive this recognition exemplified three traits: “those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you” (τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς). These people are hard working; they literally stand in front of you as examples in the Lord (cf. [1 Pet. 5:1-3](#)); and they instruct with encouragement. Additionally, the Thessalonians are to consider them *hyperekperissou en agape* (ἠγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ). That is, the Thessalonians were to consider these people very, very highly. Although most will take the threefold reference to leaders in the church, one should note that no leadership term such as minister or deacon is used here. In the early 50s leadership roles were not defined precisely, like they would come to be in subsequent decades. Thus those who worked hard, stood as examples, and provided instruction were to be esteemed in love on the basis of their work.

This injunction is followed by one admonishing the community to live in peace among themselves.

Although simple in concept, such is difficult to apply consistently among a group of people of diverse backgrounds. Note the difficulty of achieving this among Southern Baptists over the past several decades. Failure to live in peace with one another may say something important about the level of spiritual commitment we possess.

Next (v. 14), Paul exhorts (παρακαλοῦμεν) the Thessalonians to reach out to fellow members with correction and ministry. This includes admonishing the idlers, encouraging the fainthearted, helping the weak, being patient with all of them. Of major importance here is the recognition of the responsibility of the congregation to its members and in particular

those who are not the strong and robust believers. These groups mentioned here are on the fringe of spiritual life and need both correction and encouragement in order to help them develop as mature Christians.

The last set (v. 15) creates an antithetical parallelism with its “not...but” structure. Paul admonished “see to it...” (ὁρᾶτε) that no acts of revenge are allowed in the congregation. Rather, the constant commitment is to pursue what is good. This for the benefit of one another inside the congregation, and toward everyone on the outside as well. Getting back at people has no place among the people of God. Doing good to help people is the point always.

Third, more miscellaneous admonitions, 5:16-22:

Greek NT	NASB	NRSV	NLT
^{5.16} Πάντοτε χαίρετε, ^{5.17} ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, ^{5.18} ἐν παντί εὐχαριστεῖτε· τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς. ^{5.19} τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε, ^{5.20} προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε, ^{5.21} πάντα δὲ δοκιμάζετε, τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε, ^{5.22} ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε.	16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not de- spise prophetic utter- ances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.	16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all cir- cumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise the words of prophets, 21 but test ev- erything; hold fast to what is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.	16 Always be joyful. 17 Keep on praying. 18 No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 19 Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. 20 Do not scoff at prophecies, 21 but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. 22 Keep away from every kind of evil.

Notes:

Although the random nature of these admonitions continues from the preceding, a more common structure is the basis for grouping them together.

The first three admonitions -- rejoice, pray, give thanks -- each have a somewhat similar adverbial modifier: always, unceasingly, in everything, with each one in front of its verb. See the [block diagram](#), statements 76-78 for details. Being joyful, praying and expressing thanksgiving are basic Christian traits, and are to be done on a continuing basis. In the largely depressing and dismal world of the first century where wild partying was the sought after release valve for pent up emotions, people who exemplified these three traits would certainly stand out as having something very different in their lives.

The third admonition to give thanks is buttressed by the declaration this is God’s will in Christ Jesus. This understanding assumes the antecedent of “this” (τοῦτο) is the third admonition. Just as easily, the “this” could reach back to all three admonitions.

The next set of five admonitions (vv. 19-22) are

linked by thought rather than syntactical connection. The first two -- “[Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets.](#)” -- deal with utilizing spiritual resources both divine and human for understanding how to live properly. The third one -- “[Test everything](#)” - - demands a critical evaluation of the resources to determine what is genuine and what is false. The outcome of the testing is then: “[hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.](#)”

Although not entirely certain, the first two admonitions are probably linked together in that “putting out the fire” of the Holy Spirit had to do with the inspiration of the Spirit upon believers to utter words of prophecy that communicated the truths of God to the congregation. This is most likely a similar issue to that in [1 John. 4:1-3](#):

“1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

In a day before a New Testament existed in written form, believers depended upon oral transmission of the beliefs of the Christian faith. The opportunity for distortion of these beliefs was certainly present. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians to be very cautious in accepting ideas as being Christian. The testing process most likely included compari-

son to known teachings of the apostles, much discussion about the content and implications of such, and a lot of prayerful discernment regarding their genuineness.

The connection of these admonitions to us? Here an almost one-to-one correlation of each admonition exists from the “then” meaning to the “now” meaning. We still need to express the same traits and behaviors that Paul advocated to the Thessalonians.

b. Conclusio, 5:23-28

Greek NT

^{5.23} Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθείη. ^{5.24} πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει. ^{5.25} Ἀδελφοί, προσεύχεσθε καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν. ^{5.26} Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ. ^{5.27} Ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν κύριον ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς.

Notes:

Ancient letters ended differently than modern letters end. The Conclusio of ancient letters is much richer and more varied than modern letters. We typically say in an informal letter, “Love, Lorin,” or in a formal business letter, “Sincerely yours, Lorin Cranford.” Paul includes a variety of elements in [each of his letters](#) at this point.

He begins with a formal, rather liturgical prayer for God to bless the Thessalonians (vv. 23). This distinct “wish-prayer” form was found earlier in 3:11-13 and concluded the first section of the letter body, as well as transitioned into the next section. An argument could be made for a similar role for this second one in 5:24. At best it serves as a boundary marker concluding the paraenetic section of 4:1-5:22.

The first petition centers on the “sanctification” (ἀγιάσαι) motif begun in the paraenesis of 4:1-8. The

NASB

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

NRSV

23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. 25 Beloved, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. 27 I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

NLT

23 Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. 24 God, who calls you, is faithful; he will do this. 25 Dear brothers and sisters, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brothers and sisters in Christian love. 27 I command you in the name of the Lord to read this letter to all the brothers and sisters. 28 And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

petition is for God to make the Thessalonians holy in every possible way. The second petition picks up the eschatological theme so prominent throughout the letter, beginning in 1:10. With the same sense of total completeness the petition is that God would preserve the Thessalonians blameless in their total life to the day of the Lord’s coming. No trichotomous view of human existence -- body, soul and spirit -- can be derived legitimately from this poetically structures prayer petition. The threefold reference is an emphasis upon completeness parallel to *holoteleis* (ὀλοτελεῖς) in the first petition. These two petitions are buttressed on the axiom of the faithfulness of God to do what He says He will do (v. 24).

Paul then requests prayer from the Thessalonians for himself and his fellow missionaries in

Corinth. The challenges of the eighteen month ministry there as Luke describes in [Acts 18](#) make it clear as to why Paul desired the Thessalonians to pray for them.

Thirdly, Paul sent his greetings to the Thessalonians believers. He asked them to greet one another in his behalf with a “holy kiss.” In the ancient Greco-Roman world one did not greet another person with a handshake. Instead, in a manner still found in parts of Europe today, a greeting meant a kiss on the cheek of the other person. The “holy kiss” mentioned here was not a different way of kissing as a greeting. It simply meant that the greeting had a distinctly Christian tone about it. It was a spiritual brother greeting another spiritual brother etc. In that world, sending greetings possessed a level of importance for nourishing friendships that often is not true in modern American culture. I have discovered through personal experience that this importance has been maintained in most aspects of modern European culture.

Fourthly (v. 27), Paul uses a solemn oath to underscore his concern that this letter be read widely among the brothers in Thessalonica. Probably, although not certain, the shift from the “you/we” frame to the “I” signals that Paul at this point took pen in hand to write out in his own hand writing the remainder of the Conclusio as the sender verification of the entire letter. Paul was concerned that all the brothers in the Christian community at Thessalonica heard this letter read. Much had been said that everyone there needed to hear and understand. Given the likelihood of multiple house-churches by this point in time in the city, the reading of the letter as a part of the worship experience of each of those groups would help strengthen the entire Christian community.

This is the better sense of “all the brothers.” Some have argued that this means other co-workers of Paul in the region around Thessalonica who were developing other communities of faith. But the terms used here do not suggest as much.

Finally (v. 28), Paul offers his standard Benediction: “[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.](#)” Such a prayer with very similar words occurs in [virtually all of Paul’s letters](#). Thus, his letters begin and end with a prayer. Early Christian worship patterned itself initially after Jewish synagogue worship patterns with began and ended with prayer. Since Paul’s letters were intended to be read in Christian worship services, this worship structure helped make them blend into the worship experience, as well as gave

them a stronger sense of credibility to the congregations who heard them being read. Paul prayed for God’s grace in Jesus Christ to flourish in the midst of the Thessalonians.

The connection? One major item stands out: the importance of prayer. Various aspects of prayer dominate this Conclusio. We must never diminish the role of prayer in our personal lives, nor in the corporate worship experience. It stands as that vital communication with our God that positions us to better hear Him reveal Himself to us.

Christian greetings are important. Genuine friendship based on common commitment to Christ is critical. The community of faith should nourish and strengthen this bond of friendship. But it must reach out beyond the local congregation to touch other believers as well.

Gaining spiritual insight from others is also important. Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians has been read countless times by no telling how many million people over the centuries since it was first written. People continue to glean spiritual insight and help from it all over our world today. Why? In large part, because God’s breath of inspiration permeates these human words and thereby these words nourish and instruct us not just on Paul’s insight but on the basis of God speaking to us through these words. This is both the mystery and the wonder of these documents that we call the New Testament.

Greek NT

^{5.1} Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρειᾶν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι, ^{5.2} αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται. ^{5.3} ὅταν λέγωσιν, Εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος ὥσπερ ἡ ὠδὴν τῆ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούση, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν. ^{5.4} ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτης καταλάβῃ. ^{5.5} πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους. ^{5.6} ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν. ^{5.7} οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν, καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν. ^{5.8} ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας. ^{5.9} ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. ^{5.10} τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν. ^{5.11} Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε. ^{5.12} Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν

NASB

1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among

NRSV

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. 12 But we appeal to you, brothers and sis-

NLT

1 I really don't need to write to you about how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters. 2 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. 3 When people are saying, "All is well; everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as a woman's birth pains begin when her child is about to be born. And there will be no escape. 4 But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. 5 For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. 6 So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be sober. 7 Night is the time for sleep and the time when people get drunk. 8 But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation. 9 For God decided to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. 10 He died for us so that we can live with him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of his return. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up,

ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ
νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς ^{5.13}
καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοῦς
ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν
ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν.
εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.
^{5.14} παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ
ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί,
νουθετεῖτε τοὺς
ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε
τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους
ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν,
μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς
πάντας. ^{5.15} ὁρᾶτε μὴ τις
κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τι
ἀποδοῖ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ
ἀγαθὸν διώκετε· καὶ εἰς
ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας.
^{5.16} Πάντοτε χαίrete,
^{5.17} ἀδιαλείπτως
προσεύχεσθε, ^{5.18} ἐν
παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε·
τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς
ὑμᾶς. ^{5.19} τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ
σβέννυτε, ^{5.20} προφητείας
μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε, ^{5.21} πάντα
δὲ δοκιμάζετε, τὸ καλὸν
κατέχετε, ^{5.22} ἀπὸ παντὸς
εἴδους πονηροῦ
ἀπέχεσθε.

^{5.23} Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς
τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιασάτω ὑμᾶς
ὅλοτελεῖς, καὶ
ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ
πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ
σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ
παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου
ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
τηρηθεῖ. ^{5.24} πιστὸς ὁ
καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ
ποιήσει.

^{5.25} Ἀδελφοί,
προσεύχεσθε καὶ περὶ
ἡμῶν.

^{5.26} Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς
ἀδελφοὺς πάντας ἐν
φιλήματι ἀγίῳ. ^{5.27}
Ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν
κύριον ἀναγνωσθῆναι
τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς
ἀδελφοῖς.

you, and have charge
over you in the Lord and
give you instruction, 13
and that you esteem
them very highly in love
because of their work.
Live in peace with one
another. 14 We urge you,
brethren, admonish the
unruly, encourage the
fainthearted, help the
weak, be patient with ev-
eryone. 15 See that no
one repays another with
evil for evil, but always
seek after that which is
good for one another and
for all people.

16 Rejoice always;
17 pray without ceasing;
18 in everything give
thanks; for this is God's
will for you in Christ
Jesus. 19 Do not quench
the Spirit; 20 do not de-
spise prophetic utter-
ances. 21 But examine
everything carefully; hold
fast to that which is good;
22 abstain from every
form of evil.

23 Now may the God
of peace Himself sanc-
tify you entirely; and may
your spirit and soul and
body be preserved com-
plete, without blame at
the coming of our Lord
Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful
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He also will bring it to
pass. 25 Brethren, pray
for us. 26 Greet all the
brethren with a holy kiss.
27 I adjure you by the
Lord to have this letter
read to all the brethren.
28 The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with you.

ters, to respect those
who labor among you,
and have charge of you
in the Lord and admon-
ish you; 13 esteem them
very highly in love be-
cause of their work. Be
at peace among your-
selves. 14 And we urge
you, beloved, to admon-
ish the idlers, encourage
the fainthearted, help the
weak, be patient with all
of them. 15 See that
none of you repays evil
for evil, but always seek
to do good to one another
and to all.

16 Rejoice always,
17 pray without ceasing,
18 give thanks in all cir-
cumstances; for this is
the will of God in Christ
Jesus for you. 19 Do not
quench the Spirit. 20 Do
not despise the words of
prophets, 21 but test ev-
erything; hold fast to
what is good; 22 abstain
from every form of evil.

23 May the God of
peace himself sanctify
you entirely; and may
your spirit and soul and
body be kept sound and
blameless at the coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ.
24 The one who calls you
is faithful, and he will do
this. 25 Beloved, pray for
us. 26 Greet all the broth-
ers and sisters with a
holy kiss. 27 I solemnly
command you by the
Lord that this letter be
read to all of them. 28
The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with you.

just as you are already
doing.

12 Dear brothers
and sisters, honor those
who are your leaders in
the Lord's work. They
work hard among you
and warn you against all
that is wrong. 13 Think
highly of them and give
them your wholehearted
love because of their
work. And remember to
live peaceably with each
other. 14 Brothers and
sisters, we urge you to
warn those who are lazy.
Encourage those who
are timid. Take tender
care of those who are
weak. Be patient with ev-
eryone. 15 See that no
one pays back evil for evil,
but always try to do good
to each other and to ev-
eryone else.

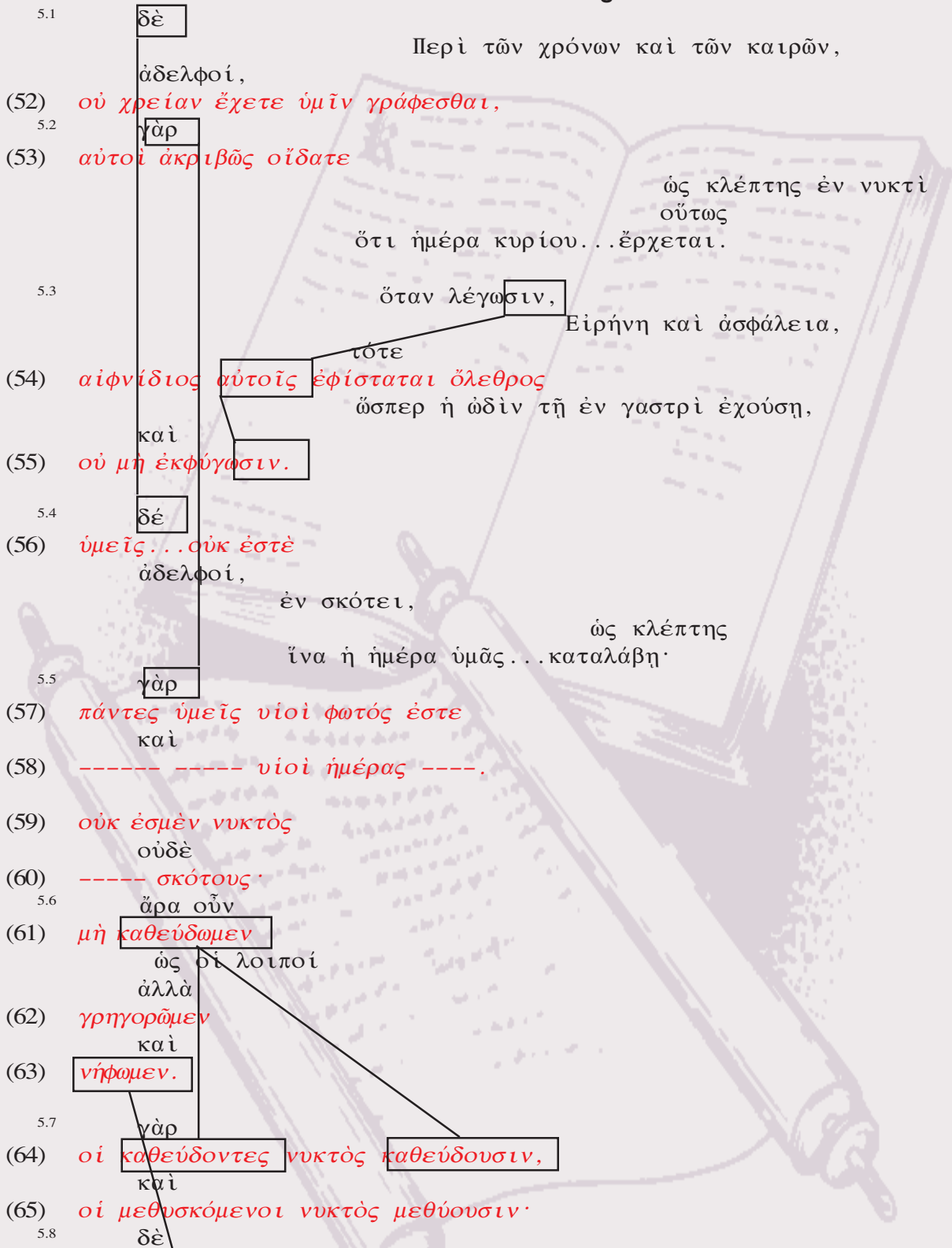
16 Always be joyful.
17 Keep on praying. 18
No matter what happens,
always be thankful, for
this is God's will for you
who belong to Christ
Jesus. 19 Do not stifle
the Holy Spirit. 20 Do not
scoff at prophecies, 21
but test everything that is
said. Hold on to what is
good. 22 Keep away from
every kind of evil.

23 Now may the God
of peace make you holy
in every way, and may
your whole spirit and soul
and body be kept blame-
less until that day when
our Lord Jesus Christ
comes again. 24 God,
who calls you, is faithful;
he will do this. 25 Dear
brothers and sisters,
pray for us. 26 Greet all

the brothers and sisters in Christian love. 27 I command you in the name of the Lord to read this letter to all the brothers and sisters. 28 And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.



1 Thess. 5:1-28 Diagram



ἡμέρας ὄντες
(66) **ἡμεῖς... γήφωμεν**
ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως
καὶ
ἀγάπης
καὶ
περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας·

5.9 ὅτι
(67) **οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς**
εἰς ὀργὴν
ἀλλὰ
(68) -----
εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας
διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
5.10 τοῦ ἀποθανόντος
ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν,
εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν
εἴτε καθεύδωμεν
ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ
ἵνα... ζήσωμεν.

5.11 Διὸ
(69) **παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους**
καὶ
(70) **οἰκοδομεῖτε**
εἰς τὸν ἕνα,
καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε.

5.12 δὲ
(71) **Ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς,**
ἀδελφοί,
εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας
ἐν ὑμῖν
καὶ
προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν
ἐν κυρίῳ
καὶ
νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς

5.13 καὶ
ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς
ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ
ἐν ἀγάπῃ
διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν.

(72) **εἰρηνεύετε**
ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

5.14 δὲ
(73) παρακαλοῦμεν ὑμᾶς,
ἀδελφοί,

(ὅτι) νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους,
παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους
ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν,
μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας.

(74)^{5.15} ὁρᾶτε
μὴ τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τινι ἀποδοῖ,
ἀλλὰ

πάντοτε
(75) τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε
καὶ εἰς ἀλλήλους
καὶ εἰς πάντας.

5.16 Πάντοτε
(76) χαίρετε,

5.17 ἀδιαλείπτως
(77) προσεύχεσθε,

5.18 ἐν παντὶ
(78) εὐχαριστεῖτε·
γὰρ

(79) τοῦτο θέλημα θεοῦ (ἐστίν)
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
εἰς ὑμᾶς.

(80)^{5.19} τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε,

(81)^{5.20} προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε,

5.21 δὲ
(82) πάντα δοκιμάζετε,

(83) τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε,

5.22 ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηροῦ
(84) ἀπέχεσθε.

5.23 δὲ
(85) Αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιασάσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς,
καὶ

ἀμέμπτως
ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ
/-----|
τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
(86) ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα... τηρηθεῖη.

(87)^{5.24} πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς,
ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.

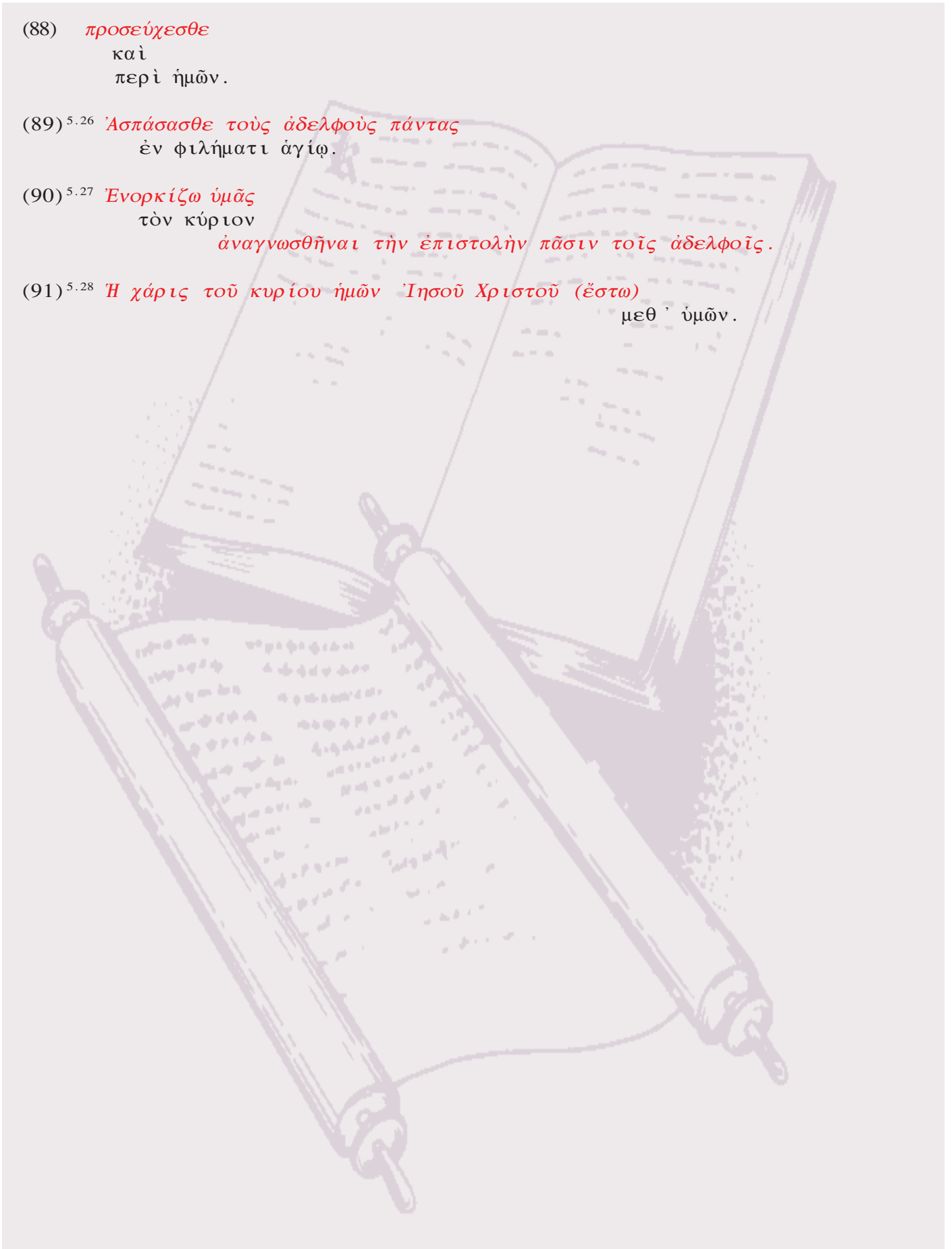
5.25 Ἀδελφοί,

(88) *προσεύχεσθε*
καὶ
περὶ ἡμῶν.

(89) ^{5.26} *Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς πάντας*
ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ.

(90) ^{5.27} *Ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς*
τὸν κύριον
ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς.

(91) ^{5.28} *Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (ἔστω)*
μεθ' ὑμῶν.



Semantic Diagram

Times & Seasons

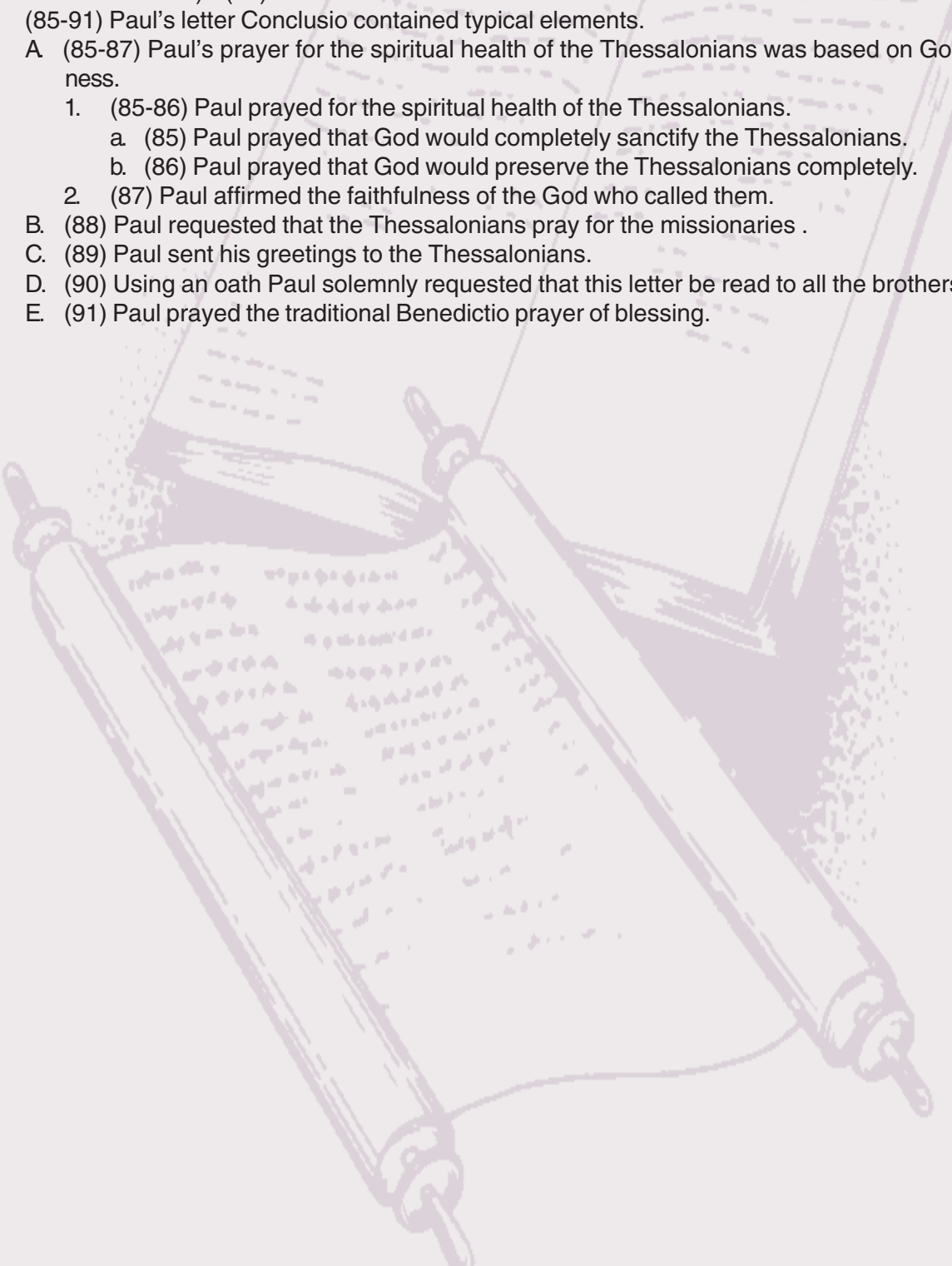
		δὲ, ἀδελφοί (5:1)			
	a-----	52	Pres Act Ind 2 P	(ὕμεις)	
1	i-----	γὰρ (5:2)	53	Perf Act Ind 2 P	αὐτοὶ (ὕμεις)
	b-----	---	(5:3)		
	a)-----	54	Fut Pass Ind 3 S	ἔλεθρος	
	ii-----	καὶ			
	b)-----	55	1 Aor Act Subj 3 P	(αὐτοὶ)	
		δὲ (5:4)			
	a-----	56	Pres --- Ind 2 P	ὕμεις	
2	a)-----	γὰρ (5:5)	57	Pres --- Ind 2 P	ὕμεις
	i-----	καὶ			
	b)-----	58	(Pres --- Ind 2 P	ὕμεις)	
	b-----	---			
	a)-----	59	Pres --- Ind 1 P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	ii-----	οὐκ...οὐδὲ			
	b)-----	60	(Pres --- Ind 1 P	ἡμεῖς)	
A	1)-----	ἄρα οὖν (5:6)	61	Pres Act Subj 1 P	(ἡμεῖς)
	a)-----	μὴ...ἀλλὰ	62	Pres Act Subj 1 P	(ἡμεῖς)
	2)-----	καὶ			
	(a)-----	63	Pres Act Subj 1 P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	(b)-----	γὰρ (5:7)			
	i-----	64	PresG Act Ind 3 P	οἱ καθεύδοντες	
	1)-----	καὶ			
	b)-----	65	PresG Act Ind 3 P	οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι	
	a-----	δὲ (5:8)	66	PresG Act Ind 1 P	ἡμεῖς
	2)-----	ὅτι (5:9-10)			
	a)-----	67	2 Aor Mid Ind 3 S	ὁ θεὸς	
I	3	ii-----	οὐκ...ἀλλὰ		
	b)-----	68	(2 Aor Mid Ind 3 S	ὁ θεὸς)	
	i-----	Διὸ (5:11)			
	b-----	69	Pres Act Imp+ 2 P	(ὕμεις)	
	ii-----	καὶ			
		70	Pres Act Imp+ 2 P	(ὕμεις)	
	a-----	δὲ...ἀδελφοί (5:12-13)			Paul's urgings
1	b-----	71	Pres Act Ind 1 P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	a)-----	---			
B	2	b)-----	72	Pres Act Imp+ 2 P	(ὕμεις)
	a)-----	δὲ (5:14)			
	3)-----	73	Pres Act Ind 1 P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	b)-----	---...ἀδελφοί (5:15)			
	a)-----	74	Pres Act Imp+ 2 P	(ὕμεις)	
	b)-----	ἀλλὰ			
		75	Pres Act Imp+ 2 P	(ὕμεις)	
		---	(5:16)		

I	C	1	a	i	76	Pres	Act	Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)			
			---	---	(5:17)	77	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2 P		(ὕμεῖς)	
	b	i	78	Pres	Act		Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)				
		ii	79	γὰρ	(Pres	---	Ind	3 S)	τοῦτο θέλημα				
	2	a	i	80	Pres	Act	Imp-	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)				
		---	---	(5:20)	81	Pres	Act	Imp-	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)			
	b	i	82	Pres		Act	Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)				
		---	---	---	83	Pres	Act	Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)			
	a)	ii	84	Pres		Mid	Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)				
	---	b)	---	---	---	---	---	---	---				
	II	A	1	a	85	1 Aor	Act	Opt	3 S	αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς		Blessing	
				---	---	καὶ	86	1 Aor	Pass	Opt		3 S	τὸ πν.κ.ψ.κ.σ
		2	b	---	---	(5:24)		87	(Pres	---		Ind	3 S)
			---	---	---	Ἀδελφοί (5:25)	Prayer Request						
B		88	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)	Creeting					
---		---	---	(5:26)									
C		89	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2 P	(ὕμεῖς)	Warning					
---	---	---	(5:27)										
D	90	Pres	Act	Ind	1 S	(ἐγὼ)	Benedictio						
---	---	---	(5:28)										
E	91	(Pres	---	Imp+	3 S)	ἡ χάρις							

Exegetical Outline

- I (52-84) Paul continued admonishing the Thessalonian believers to live the way God demands.
- A (52-70) The spiritual enlightenment of the Thessalonians made a detailed treatment of the return of Christ unnecessary.
1. (52-55) The Thessalonians didn't need detailed explanation about the unexpected return of Christ.
 - a. (52) Paul felt no need to write to the Thessalonians about times and seasons
 - b. (53-55) This was based upon the Thessalonian's understanding of the sudden return of Christ.
 - i. (53) The Thessalonians understood accurately the nature of Christ's return.
 - ii. (54-55) Inescapable destruction will take place without warning/
 - a) (54) Destruction will suddenly occur when people least expect it.
 - b) (55) Absolutely no escaping destruction will be possible.
 2. (56-60) The Thessalonians lived in spiritual enlightenment rather than spiritual darkness.
 - a. (56) Paul asserted that the Thessalonians didn't live in darkness and thus unprepared for the coming of Christ.

- b. (57-60) This was based upon the positive spiritual condition of the Thessalonians.
 - i. (57-58) Paul affirmed the genuineness of the Thessalonians spiritual understanding.
 - a) (57) The Thessalonians were “sons of light.”
 - b) (58) The Thessalonians were “sons of day.”
 - ii. (59-60) Paul denied that he and the Thessalonians were living in spiritual ignorance.
 - a) (59) Paul declared that “we” are not of “the night”
 - b) (60) Paul declared that “we” are not of “darkness.”
- 3. (61-70) The nature of the return of Christ mandates preparedness.
 - a. (61-68) Paul affirmed Christian preparedness for the second coming, in light of God’s intention.
 - i. (61-66) Paul admonished the Thessalonians based upon some timeless truths.
 - a) (61-63) Three admonitions grew out of the Thessalonians’ enlightenment.
 - 1) (61) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to not “sleep” as others were.
 - 2) (62-63) Paul gave two positive admonitions to counterbalance the first one.
 - (a) (62) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to remain awake
 - (b) (63) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to remain sober.
 - b) (64-66) These admonitions are based upon the difference between night and day.
 - 1) (64-65) The night is a time of spiritual ignorance and sinfulness.
 - (a) (64) Sleepers sleep through the night.
 - (b) (65) Drunkards get drunk through the night.
 - 2) (66) We must be sober during the day dressed with the breastplate of faith and love as well as the helmet of the hope of salvation.
 - ii. (67-68) God’s intention for believers is salvation rather than wrath.
 - a) (67) Paul affirmed that God has destined believers not for His wrath
 - b) (68) Rather God has destined believers for obtaining salvation through Jesus.
 - b. (69-70) The implication of this understanding of Christ’s return is to encourage one another.
 - i. (69) Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to continue admonishing one another.
 - ii. (70) Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to continue building up one another.
- B. (71-75) Paul gave a variety of admonitions to the Thessalonians to help them prepare for Christ’s return.
 - 1. (71-72) Paul urged harmony among the Thessalonians at all levels.
 - a. (71) Paul urged the Thessalonians to know and esteem those leaders working hard in their behalf.
 - b. (72) Paul told the Thessalonians to live in peace with one another.
 - 2. (73) Paul exhorted the Thessalonians with four spiritually helpful admonitions.
 - 3. (74-75) Paul appealed to the Thessalonians to see the higher road of good.
 - a. (74) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to not respond to evil with evil.
 - b. (75) Rather they were to always pursue good toward one another and others.
- C. (76-84) Paul declared that spiritual growth comes through following certain guidelines.
 - 1. (76-79) Paul gave a variety of admonitions to the Thessalonians.
 - a. (76-77) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to joy and prayer.
 - i. (76) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to constantly be rejoicing.
 - ii. (77) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to continually be praying.
 - b. (78-79) Thanksgiving reflected God’s will for the Thessalonians.
 - i. (78) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to be thankful in everything.
 - ii. (79) This reflected God’s will in Christ Jesus for them.
 - 2. (80-84) Paul affirmed that spiritual insight comes from drawing upon spiritual resources that have been carefully checked out.
 - a. (80-81) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to not cut themselves off from spiritual resources.

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- i. (80) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to not extinguish the Spirit in their lives.
 - ii. (81) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to not despise the words of the prophets.
 - b. (82-84) Paul admonished the Thessaonians to not naively accept everything.
 - i. (82) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to put all things to the test.
 - ii. (83-84) The outcome of testing is both positive and negative.
 - a) (83) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to hold fast to what is good.
 - b) (84) Paul admonished the Thessalonians to abstain from what is evil.
 - II. (85-91) Paul's letter Conclusio contained typical elements.
 - A. (85-87) Paul's prayer for the spiritual health of the Thessalonians was based on God's faithfulness.
 - 1. (85-86) Paul prayed for the spiritual health of the Thessalonians.
 - a. (85) Paul prayed that God would completely sanctify the Thessalonians.
 - b. (86) Paul prayed that God would preserve the Thessalonians completely.
 - 2. (87) Paul affirmed the faithfulness of the God who called them.
 - B. (88) Paul requested that the Thessalonians pray for the missionaries .
 - C. (89) Paul sent his greetings to the Thessalonians.
 - D. (90) Using an oath Paul solemnly requested that this letter be read to all the brothers.
 - E. (91) Paul prayed the traditional Benedictio prayer of blessing.