

Comments on 1 Thessalonians 5

The text of 5:1-11 continues the subject of 4:13-18, namely the Day of the Lord, or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, in connection with those who have recently deceased. The second half of this chapter is the closing statement, where Paul encourages the ecclesia to continue in Christian discipleship (v. 12-21).

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. ⁸ But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

v1-11 Regarding the Lord's time table concerning the end times, Paul does not need to write about that to them (v. 1). They know the Scriptural predictions concerning the Day of the Lord (v. 2-3). They are the children of the light, so they will not be overtaken as the children of the night (v. 4-7). As Paul and them are the children of the light, they need to be sober, unlike the children of the darkness, and use faith, love and the hope of salvation as armor against evil (v. 8). God the Father has not assigned them to divine punishment, but will save them because of His Son Jesus Christ (v. 9), who died for them, so they will all be resurrected and live with Him (v. 10). As such is the case, they should take comfort in this knowledge, and continue to help each other, the same as they are doing now (v. 11).

v1-3 is a compounded series of paraphrases from the Old Testament dealing with the Day of the Lord, as follows:

"times and the seasons", cf. Dan. 2:21, also cp. Acts 1:7.

"as a thief in the night", cf. Joel 2:9, Zech. 5:4, also cp. Obad. 1:5, Job 24:14, Matt. 24:43, 2 Peter 3:10.

"when they shall say, Peace and safety" cf. Jer. 6:13-14, Jer. 8:10-15, Ezek. 13:10-16, also cp. Micah 3:5, Isa. 30:9-11, 2 Tim. 4:2-4.

"travail upon a woman with child", cf. Isa. 26:17, Jer. 4:31, also cp. Jer. 30:6, Jer. 31:8, also cp. John 16:21,

"they shall not escape", cf. Joel 2:3, Amos 9:1, Jer. 11:11, also cp. Job 11:20, Ezek. 17:18, Dan. 11:42.

v4-7 As long as they are well behaved, then they will not suffer the same fate as those who behave badly. Paul calls out drunkenness, but is likely referring to the context of Isa. 28:1-3 and Isa. 29:9. The imagery of light versus darkness is pervasive through the Scriptures.

v8 Compare Eph. 6:14-17 for similar imagery.

v10 references the subject of 4:13-18, tying these two blocks of text together.

v11 Paul concludes the section of text from 4:13-5:10 dealing with the resurrection and the Day of the Lord and says, "OK, now that I have addressed the doctrinal issue, go ahead and keep on encouraging each other, do not be distressed over those who have died (cf. 4:13), and help each other get over the loss of their loved ones, not worrying about when and whether they will be resurrected."

¹² And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

¹⁴ Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. ¹⁵ See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. ¹⁶ Rejoice evermore. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. ¹⁹ Quench not the Spirit. ²⁰ Despise not prophesyings. ²¹ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. ²² Abstain from all appearance of evil.

v12-21 Paul's closing admonition. They should really appreciate those who are working among them (v. 12), to regard

them highly because of their hard work for them, so they will all live and work together in love (v. 13). Paul wants them to admonish the undisciplined, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone (v. 14). Do not return evil for evil, but always be good to each other and everyone else (v. 15). Rejoice always (v. 16), pray always (v. 17), give thanks always, because this is what the Lord wants (v. 18). Do not extinguish the fire of the Holy Spirit (v. 19), do not reject prophecies (v. 20), but examine everything and hold firmly to the good (v. 21), rejecting every kind of evil (v. 22).

When looking at the lists Paul presents in v. 14-21, they are of unequal numbers of elements, showing Paul was not imposing a deliberate structure on the text. Verse 14 is composed of four negative elements, verse 15 is a well-formed antithetical parallelism. Verses 16-18 are three positive elements. Verses 19-22 are then a mix of three neutral admonitions, one positive and one negative admonition. There is no clear pattern or poetry being employed here. This is an unstructured text.

v12 Paul is referring to Timothy, and whoever is accompanying Timothy. He wants them to really appreciate the sacrifice being made for them, and for them to be united together.

²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. ²⁵ Brethren, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. ²⁷ I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

v23-28 Paul's benediction on the ecclesia at Thessalonica. Paul prays the Lord will sanctify them and bring them together into the First Resurrection at the Day of the Lord (v. 23). The Lord is faithful and will do as He says (v. 24). Paul asks them to pray for him and his people (v. 25), and greet everyone there among the ecclesia with his love for them (v. 26), and to read this letter to them (v. 27). He hopes the Lord's grace will be with them (v. 28).

v23 This is a closing summary of the doctrinal content of ch. 4-5. He prays that the Lord will keep them body and soul so all of them will be united at the Second Coming.

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