

# 1 Thessalonians

## Chapter 5

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. <sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

**5:1** *times and dates.* See Ac 1:6–7. There have always been some Christians who try to fix the date of our Lord’s return, but apparently the Thessalonians were not among them. (CSB)

The classical Gk word for “time” (*chronos*) referred to stretches of time, whereas the word for “seasons” (*kairos*) referred to a point in time, in the sense of the right time. Paul, however, made no such distinction. He was saying that he does not need to write to the Thessalonians about the time aspect of the second coming. (TLSB)

Many people are very concerned about knowing just when Christ will return. Some religions have even been founded by men or women who said they knew when the Lord’s coming would take place. New prediction continue to be put forth by those who overlook what Scripture says about “times and dates.” (PBC)

**5:2** **KNOW VERY WELL** – More literally, accurately, having been carefully instructed on that point by Paul. (Concordia Bible)

*day of the Lord.* See 1Co 5:5. The expression goes back to Am 5:18. In the OT it is a time when God will come and intervene with judgment and/or blessing. In the NT the thought of judgment continues (see Ro 2:5; 2Pe 2:9), but it is also the “day of redemption” (Eph 4:30); the “day of God” (2Pe 3:12), or of Christ (1Co 1:8; Php 1:6); and the “last day” (Jn 6:39), the “great Day” (Jude 6) or simply “the day” (2Th 1:10). It is the climax of all things. There will be some preliminary signs (e.g., 2Th 2:3), but the coming will be as unexpected as that of a thief in the night (cf. Mt 24:43–44; Lk 12:39–40; 2Pe 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15). (CSB)

In the OT, this refers to the Day of Judgment, in which the righteous will be vindicated and Yahweh will make an impartial judgment. In the NT, with the recognition of Jesus as Lord, the function of final judgment is attributed to Him. Therefore, here it refers to the day in which Christ will be revealed in glory to vindicate His people and judge the world in righteousness. (TLSB)

**THIEF IN THE NIGHT** – Suddenly and at an unexpected time. It is God’s will that men should live in constant preparation for it. All overcurious computations for the purpose of fixing its exact date are vain and profitless. (Concordia Bible)

Sudden and unexpected. It is important to be alert, looking forward to the Lord’s coming. (TLSB)

**5:3 WHILE PEOPLE** – The wicked, who are living in careless security. (Concordia Bible)

*destruction.* Not annihilation, but exclusion from the Lord’s presence (2Th 1:9); thus the ruin of life and all its proud accomplishments. (CSB)

Implies utter and hopeless ruin and despair for those who put their hope in this world rather than in Christ. St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “Do not, while present prosperity smiles upon you, forget its certain end, lest adversity without end succeed it” (*SLSB*, p 56).

*suddenly.* Paul stresses the surprise of unbelievers. He uses a word found elsewhere in the NT only in Lk 21:34 (“unexpectedly”). (CSB)

The appearance of the Lord will be announced in a flash and a twinkling of an eye by the voice of the archangel and the trumpet blast. Once this has begun there can be no preparations by unbelievers in order to escape their ruin in God’s judgment. It will be too late. (PBC)

*labor pains.* Here the idea is not the pain of childbirth so much as the suddenness and inevitability of such pains. (CSB)

Just as a woman who is in labor pains can’t escape those pains by changing her mind and deciding she doesn’t want to be pregnant, so they will have no chance to turn back. (PBC)

*not.†* An emphatic double negative in the Greek, a construction Paul uses only four times in all his writings. An alternate translation would be: “In no way will they escape.” (CSB)

By human reason and strength, no one can escape God’s righteous judgment and scrutiny (Ps 139:7–10). Only those sheltered in Christ will escape God’s wrath, which will come upon all those who have broken His righteous Law. (TLSB)

**5:4–5** *day ... night*. Used figuratively. As people walk in the light of the sun, so all those who walk in the light of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, are children of the day. (TLSB)

**5:4** YOU, BROTHERS – Christians. (Concordia Bible)

*darkness*. Believers no longer live in darkness, nor are they of the darkness (v. 5). See Jn 1:5; Ac 26:18. (CSB)

The Day of Judgment will come suddenly to Christians and unbelievers alike; but the contrast which the apostle brings out is this, that only the latter will be surprised by it. Christians are watchful, open-eyed, alert; they do not know when the last day is to come, but they are wide awake to any signs of its coming. This fact is brought out by the apostle in describing the state of the Christians: But you, brethren, are not in darkness that the day should surprise you like a thief; for you all are children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness. (Kretzmann)

The darkness of ignorance and sin. They had been enlightened by the reception of the truth. (Concordia Bible)

The people who say, “Peace and safety,” are in “darkness.” They really don’t know what is going on. They ignore the fact that their sins make them enemies of God. They do not have the peace they imagine. They do not realize that their unforgiven sins must bring judgment of a just God on them. They have a completely false sense of security. (PBC)

*thief*. See note on v. 2. (CSB)

Surprise you in an unprepared state, as a thief does. (Concordia Bible)

**5:5** In Semitic languages (such as Hebrew) to be the “son of ” a quality meant to be characterized by that quality. Christians do not simply live in the light; they are characterized by light. (CSB)

The expression “sons of” simply expresses a very close relationship with a person or object. (PBC)

THE LIGHT..OF THE DAY – This double expression emphasizes that the Thessalonians had learned so much about the gospel and were so active in spreading it, that they surely were not people who knew or cared little about the Lord’s coming. Therefore, it was unthinkable that the last day would find them unprepared like those who lived in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief. (PBC)

**5:6** *asleep*. Unbelievers are spiritually insensitive, but this kind of sleep is not for “sons of the light.” (CSB)

Not death, but a life in sin, which is a life in darkness. Those in Christ, the light of the world, are awake and sober. (TLSB)

Live in stupidity and carnal security; unmindful of and uninfluenced by the great truths of the gospel. (Concordia Bible)

To insure their preparedness, Paul urges the Thessalonians to put a lot of distance between themselves and their unbelieving neighbors. (PBC)

*be alert*. Lit. “watch,” which is in keeping with the emphasis Paul is placing on Christ’s coming (cf. Mt 24:42–43; 25:13; Mk 13:34–37). (CSB)

Instead of being unconcerned like one who is drunk, Christ wants His followers to await His coming in full possession of their senses. The believer knows all that the last day means for him, and he knows it will be a great day for him. (PBC)

*self-controlled*. A contrast with the conduct mentioned in v. 7. (CSB)

We can be alert and self-controlled by putting on our God-given armor. (PBC)

As we know that will call us to judgment, but cannot know when, we should be always ready, and so live that whenever called we may give our account with joy, and not with grief. (Concordia Bible)

**5:7** **THOSE WHO SLEEP... GET DRUNK AT NIGHT** – As the natural night is the time when men indulge in natural sleep and drunkenness, so they who live in the spiritual night of ignorance and sin may be expected to give themselves up to spiritual sleep and dissoluteness. But not so we, who are of the day, as the apostle proceeds to show. (Concordia Bible)

Commonsense basis of Paul’s figurative language. (TLSB)

The alcohol dulls their senses and for a time they become totally unconcerned about those problems. (PBC)

*breastplate ... helmet*. Paul also uses the metaphor of armor in Ro 13:12; 2Co 6:7; 10:4; Eph 6:13–17. He does not consistently attach a particular virtue to each piece of armor; it is the general idea of equipment for battle that is pictured. For the triad of faith, hope and love see note on 1:3. (CSB)

The military imagery used here is based in both the OT and the NT, and particularly in the Roman army. Paul advises the Thessalonians to guard their faith and love in Christ

and His promises in the Gospel so that they may withstand all kinds of spiritual assaults. (TLSB)

*hope*. Confidence. (TLSB)

**5:9** *appoint*. God's appointment, not man's choice, is the significant thing. (CSB)

God's purpose is the salvation of all people. He does not want anyone to be lost. The faith active among the Thessalonians was the proof that He destined them for salvation. John Chrysostom: "Do not despair of yourself, O man, in going to God, who has not spared even His Son for you. Faint not at present evils.... Neither should we fear, if we were going to a judge who was about to judge us, and who had shown so much love for us, as to have sacrificed his son. Let us hope therefore for kind and great things" (*NPNF* 1 13:363). (TLSB)

*wrath*. See note on 1:10. (CSB)

God did not "appoint us to suffer wrath." That is, it was not God's will or plan that sinful man should be sent to hell and there "suffer" eternally the punishment of His "wrath." No God wanted to rescue us from the terrible situation we had brought on ourselves by our sins. (PBC)

*salvation*. Our final, completed salvation. (CSB)

That is evident from their having believed in Christ. Those who believe in Christ and obey His commands show that they are elected to eternal life and are heirs of heaven. (Concordia Bible)

**5:10** *died for us*. Christ died as our substitute. As the blameless and holy Son of God, He did not deserve to die. But out of love for us, He who was holy died on our behalf so that we may be free from the wrath of God due to our sin (2Co 5:21). After paying the debt of our sin, He rose from death. (TLSB)

*are awake or asleep*. That is, "live or die"; or, if the sense is moral, "are alert or carnal" (see v. 6). (CSB)

Physically dead or alive. (TLSB)

Be found among the living or the dead. (Concordia Bible)

*with him*. To be Christ's is to have entered a relationship that nothing can destroy. (CSB)

**5:11** *build ... up*. The verb basically applies to building houses, but Paul frequently used it for Christians being edified. (CSB)

The Thessalonians can help one another grow spiritually by love. (TLSB)

Well may the apostle therefore add: Wherefore encourage one another, and let each one edify the other, even as you also do. While Paul's fine courtesy and tact acknowledge the progress which has been made by the Thessalonian Christians in this respect, he does not hesitate for a moment to urge them forward toward further comfort and edification. Exuberant energy, joyful hopefulness, willing steadfastness must characterize the Christians at all times. (Kretzmann)

**5:1–11** After describing the future glory of those who have died in Christ, Paul now proceeds to tell the Thessalonians about the coming Day of Judgment in which the Lord will give His final verdict. Let us walk in holiness and righteousness so that we may not be ashamed when our Lord appears to judge our work. The Lord who has chosen us for salvation and died for us will be on our side on the final Day of Judgment. • Lord, help us to recognize that there is a Day of Judgment for us. May the work and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ be our defense when You come to judge the living and the dead. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *Final Instructions*

**<sup>12</sup> Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. <sup>13</sup> Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. <sup>14</sup> And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. <sup>16</sup> Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup> pray continually; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup> Do not put out the Spirit's fire; <sup>20</sup> do not treat prophecies with contempt. <sup>21</sup> Test everything. Hold on to the good. <sup>22</sup> Avoid every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. <sup>25</sup> Brothers, pray for us. <sup>26</sup> Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup> I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. <sup>28</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

**5:12** *those who work hard among you.* Not much is known about the organization and leadership of the church at this period, but the reference is possibly to elders. (CSB)

These leaders protected and cared for the congregation voluntarily out of love for the Lord. Some see an overlap with the function of elders. However, the passage does not use an official designation or title. (TLSB)

**5:13** *because of their work.* † Not merely because of personal attachment or respect for their high position, but also in appreciation for their work. (CSB)

Leaders were to be honored not because of their status but because of their service in the spirit of Christ's teaching (cf Mt 23:11). (TLSB)

*Live in peace.* The words apply to Christian relationships in general, but here they probably refer especially to right relations between leaders and those under them. (CSB)

**5:14** *those who are idle.* Loafers. It seems that some Thessalonians were so sure that the second coming was close that they had given up their jobs in order to prepare for it, but Paul says they should work. (CSB)

Reproving those who neglect their daily duty of work and live on the support of others is not only the responsibility of the leaders but the whole community of believers. (TLSB)

*the timid ... the weak.* These are to be helped, not rejected, by the strong (cf. Ro 14:1–15; 1Co 8:13). (CSB)

Congregations consist of different groups of people. (TLSB)

*be patient.* Patience is a fruit of the Spirit manifested in love: "Love is patient" (1Co 13:4). A Christian loves not only the strong but also the weak and the fainthearted. (TLSB)

**5:15** *pays back.* Retaliation is never a Christian option (cf. Ro 12:17; 1Pe 3:9). Christians are called to forgive (see Mt 5:38–42; 18:21–35). (CSB)

We must be helpful to others, even to those with whom we may not agree. (TLSB)

Closely connected with this is the thought that Christians should be on their guard at all times, lest someone pay back an evil, an insult in kind. It is essential that believers leave vengeance to the Lord. In short, they should always aim at that which is good, not only in the midst of their own congregation, but also toward others, toward all men, in fact. These are fundamental principles for proper Christian conduct, which every Christian will do well to heed; for it is only by the most assiduous pursuit of the virtues here mentioned that headway may be made in Christian sanctification. (Kretzmann)

**5:16-24** At the beginning of ch 5, Paul reminds his readers that the Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly (vv 1–5). But his tone is loving, and he invites his audience to be prepared rather than scared. After all, we are children of the light, made so by Christ, the true light who was to come into the world, to whom John bore witness (Jn 1:6–9). That is why we can, in our text, "rejoice always" as we await our Lord's return. Whereas the verses before our text encourage us to

keep the peace until our Lord returns, the verses following encourage us to pass the peace, both through greetings and through readings of this letter. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Beginning at 4:13 Paul speaks about the *coming* of the Lord. Paul tells the Thessalonians to comfort each other with this doctrine. Beginning at 5:1 Paul speaks about the *day* of the Lord. This section is similar to last Sunday's text, 2 Peter 3:8-14. Twice Paul likens the day of the Lord to the coming of a thief, verses 2 and 4. In verses 1-11 Paul admonishes his hearers to sober living. Just as he told his hearers to comfort each other with reference to the coming of Christ (4:18), so he advises them to comfort each other with reference to the day of the Lord (5:11). In verses 12-15 Paul gives some additional directives concerning Christian living. This brings us to our text. (Buls)

**5:16-18** Joy, prayer, and thanksgiving form a unity. Even though God has other purposes for us, this triad is certainly His will for us. (TLSB)

**5:16** BE JOYFUL ALWAYS – Enjoined to the hope in the Lord. Joy is also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). (TLSB)

In this world we know much of sorrow, frustration, adversity, and guilt, and yet we are told to rejoice. Paul knew that affliction and deep joy may go together (2 Cor 6:10). He could rejoice in tribulation (Rom 5:3; Acts 16:25). He and the Thessalonians knew the truth of Jesus' promise that "no one will take away your joy" (John 16:22). Jesus carried his cross in joyful determination, bent (literally) on the world's salvation. Joy is fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). The present tense calls for a continual attitude of rejoicing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

In verses 16-18 we have present tense imperatives. In all three cases either an adverb or a phrase precedes the imperative. The commentators point out that verses 16-18 comprise a unit. The "for" clause at the end of verse 18 covers three, not just one, verse. "At all times" and "to be joyful" immediately reminds us of Philippians 3:1: "rejoice in the Lord!" (Buls)

Surely the phrase "in the Lord" here at 1 Thessalonians as it is plainly stated at Philippians 3:1. It is not easy to give this phrase its grammatical significance. Likely it is causal: "because of the Lord." Perhaps it also denotes manner: "by trusting in the Lord." Faith in Christ underlies the imperatives in verses 16-18. (Buls)

At Matthew 5:11-12 where Jesus speaks about the innocent suffering of a persecuted Christian. He says: "Rejoice and exult because your reward is great in heaven." The joy of a Christian is truly paradoxical. There is so much sorrow, frustration, and adversity in life. And then there's also the guilt of a Christian who is told to rejoice. (Buls)



This verse implies that the Christian should listen to the Lord who says: "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." The Christian needs the promises of the Gospel just as a baby bird constantly needs to be fed. (Buls)

Morris: Paul had learned that affliction and deep joy may go together, 2 Corinthians 6:10, and could rejoice in tribulations, Romans 5:3, Acts 16:25. So he can counsel perpetual rejoicing even to a church which was suffering so greatly. They had learned the truth of His words 'your joy no man taketh from you,' John 16:22. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22. (Buls)

Rienecker-Rogers calls our attention to the fact that the present tense, of this imperative, calls for a continual attitude of rejoicing. Faith in Christ causes a Christian to think more of the Lord than of difficulties; more of spiritual riches in Christ than of earthly poverty; and, more of the glorious future in heaven than of the uncertain present and the unhappy past. (Buls)

Lenski: The joy of the Christians is the product of the whole Gospel and of the salvation that is theirs in Christ. Earthly joys fade after brief moment; our joy of salvation never fades. Yet we need to be told, ever to rejoice; for we let so many little adversities beset and even darken our joyfulness. (Buls)

Whenever Jesus told people not to be afraid He always gave them the reason. Whenever the pastor tells people to rejoice at all times he should give them the reason, nothing but Gospel. (Buls)

"Rejoice always" expresses the tone of sanctified living as we wait for our Lord's return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**5:17-18** Ceaseless praying and endless thanking round out the trilogy of sanctified encouragements. Paul also provides the "why" for the above encouragements: because it is the will of God in Christ Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**5:17** For the practice of continual (or regular) prayer see 1:3; 2:13; Ro 1:9–10; Eph 6:18; Col 1:3; 2Ti 1:3. (CSB)

We cannot verbally pray at all times, but it is possible to be in the spirit of prayer and ever ready to pray. "The Lord's Prayer has also been prescribed so that we should see and consider the distress that ought to drive and compel us to pray without ceasing" (LC III 24)> "We should ask that through the same Spirit and His grace, by means of the daily exercise of reading and doing God's Word, He would preserve in us faith and His heavenly gifts, strengthen us from day to day, and keep us to the end" (FCSD II 16). (TLSB)

Rienecker: The word 'continually' was used of that which was continually and repeatedly done; e.g. the uninterrupted necessary payment of hard taxes; the continual service or ministry of an official; a continual uninterrupted cough. (Buls)

Morris: The word Paul uses here, which expresses devotion, the God-ward look, rather than a verb which would fasten attention rather on one's need. (Buls)

Lenski: The verb is used only in the full sacred sense of turning to God, in worshipful forms. (Buls)

Both Jesus and Paul were men of prayer. both told us to pray at all times. Paul says that here in our text and at Ephesians 6:18. Jesus said it too. For example, see Luke 18:1 which Jesus speaks of the necessity of praying always and not getting weary of it. And Jesus had Paul faithfully followed their own injunction of constant prayer. Were they actually engaged in verbal prayer at all times? No. (Buls)

Morris: It is not possible for us to spend all our time with words of prayer on our lips, but it is possible for us to be all our days in the spirit of prayer, realizing our dependence on God for all that we have and are . . . Where there is such an inward state it will find outward expression in verbal prayer. (Buls)

As a flower always facing the sun, so the Christian, by faith, is turning toward God. Christians are conscious of their dependence on God. Their rejoicing and prayer life go together. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The apostle does not merely urge regularity in the practice of prayer, but he wants our hearts always to be disposed toward prayer, always in the mood to make all our wants known to Him who never fails His children. (Buls)

A constant, persevering attitude of prayer is undergirded by a compelling conviction that God has commanded us to prayer and has promised to hear us. Look at the whole parable at Luke 18:1-8. (Buls)

**5:18** As in verse 16, Christians are differentiated from the natural man. Because of what God has done, they are continually thankful whatever the circumstances (cf Eph 5:20). (CSB)

GIVE THANKS – No circumstance in life is an excuse for not being thankful. God's mercy never ceases, therefore we should never cease thanking him. We praise God both when he gives and when he takes away. Worldly people are discontent even when they live like kings. Christians are thankful even when they live in the dumps. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)  
Morris: Like the preceding two, this one (thanksgiving) springs from the great central truth of the Gospel. (Buls)

Lenski: The explanation of this 'all' is found in the 'all' of Romans 8:28, all of which cooperate for good to God's children, and thus call forth our thanks to God. If everything actually conspires to do us good, how can we do otherwise than always rejoice? (Buls)

And now we proceed to the second clause in verse 18. We have an explanatory "for" which means "you see." Most commentators agree that the antecedent of "this" is the three imperatives which precede, not just the last one. The fact that this pronoun is singular shows that the three injunctions are a unit. They stand and fall together. All three proceed from faith in Christ. The Christian lives his life by faith in Jesus. Galatians 2:20. (Buls)

Lenski: God wants us to rejoice always, to pray ceaselessly, to give thanks in everything. (Buls)

Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Incidentally, no prayer should be offered without thanksgiving, express or implied; every petition should be accompanied by thanksgiving, for the gift will surely be forthcoming if the prayer is made in faith, according to the will of God. (Kretzmann)

IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES – "In all circumstances" is more effective here than to say "at all times." No circumstance in life is an excuse for not being thankful. We think here of the verse which occurs about a dozen times in the Old Testament: "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever." God is good in the sense that He is merciful. That mercy never ceases. Therefore, we should never cease to give thanks. Even at funerals. Even in deep adversity. Midst his great adversities Job said: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21. Thanksgiving is closely associated with prayer. Philippians 4:6. (Buls)

WILL FOR YOU – Paul earlier told the Thessalonians that sanctification is God's will for them (4:3). Here, it finds expression in their joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. (TLSB)

We quote several versions. TEV: "This is what God wants of you." NIV: "This is God's will for you." JB: "This is what God expects you to do." (Buls)

The phrase "in Christ Jesus" is not so easy. We note that this phrase is typically Pauline. TEV understands it to mean the faith relationship: "This is what God wants of you, in your life in Christ Jesus." JB evidently understands it to mean the strength which Jesus gives: "This is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus." It seems that AAT understands it to mean that the will of God is made

known in Christ Jesus: "Whatever happens, thank God, because that is what God in Christ Jesus wants you to do." (Buls)

By the way, AAT limits "this" to the third injunction. We cannot improve on what Morris observes. (Buls)

Morris: Nor only is it in Christ that the will of God is revealed. It is in Him that there is given power to men to enable them to live according to that will. . . . The use of the compound name 'Jesus Christ' reminds us of both the deity and the humanity of our Lord. (Buls)

Thus far, in verses 16-18, we have instances of what we call the third use of the Law. According to this use, God guides and leads us as to His will toward us. But, if the preacher preaches these verses correctly, the reaction of the part of his hearers will surely be: "Lord, I rejoice, pray and give thanks so half-heartedly. There is so much which I have not done. I have fallen far short of what you will for me." Paul surely realized this. And that is why he added the verses which follow, especially verse 23. The preacher must be very sensitive toward the confession of sins by his hearers. The Law makes no one better. The Law does not motivate. The Law does not make alive. Only the Gospel does these things. (Buls)

**5:19-22** After providing his readers with three dos, Paul addresses three don'ts: don't quench the Spirit, don't despise prophecies, and don't give in to evil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**5:19** *Spirit's fire*. There is a warmth, a glow, about the Spirit's presence that makes this language appropriate. The kind of conduct Paul is opposing may include loafing, immorality and the other sins he has denounced. On the other hand, he may be warning against a mechanical attitude toward worship that discourages the expression of the gifts of the Spirit in the local assembly (see v. 20). (CSB)

Fire symbolized the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 2:3-4). Some connect this phrase with "prophecies" in verse 20, as if Paul is advising the Thessalonians not to put out the spiritual gifts working among them. However, the meaning is more general, including any behavior that grieves the Holy Spirit, such as idleness and immorality. (TLSB)

All versions except NEB render "Spirit" as "the Holy Spirit." NEB translates: "Do not stifle inspiration." From this passage and Ephesians 4:30 we learn that the Holy Spirit can be resisted, as Stephen plainly states at Acts 7:51. Here only in the New Testament the verb "to quench" is used metaphorically. (Buls)

Bruce: The verb 'quench' is related to the figure of fire used in various places, for example Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; 12:49; Acts 2:3; Romans 12:11, to denote the Holy Spirit or his activity. (Buls)

Does the way the present imperative is used here mean that they should *cease* quenching or does it mean that they should not *make a habit* of it? Morris prefers the former and Bruce the latter. The translations are no help here. (Buls)

Another question: is this verse speaking about ecstatic gift, for example, speaking in tongues, etc., or is it speaking about the daily ethical work of the Spirit in a person's heart? Bruce prefers the former. Morris the latter. Likewise Lenski. We prefer the view of Morris and Lenski. (Buls)

Morris: The ecstatic view seems to be reading a lot into the words of this verse. There is no other evidence that can be cited. In the view of the very general character of the expression it may be well to understand the term more generally. Loafing, immorality, and other sins about which Paul has had occasion to warn his friends will quench the Spirit in a person's life, and result in the loss of spiritual power and joy. (Buls)

Lenski: The writers of this epistle are here not referring to the special miraculous charismata, such as speaking with tongues, inspired prophetic utterances, healings, and the like. They are here writing about the ordinary and regular work of the Spirit, and not about his extraordinary, miraculous manifestation. All that verses 12-18 contains, and all that follows in verses 20-22, deals with nothing exceptional. Such quenching occurs when the fervor that the Spirit kindles in us is greatly lessened, or put out altogether, by fleshly, worldly objections. Many a noble, generous, godly impulse thus dies without producing fruit in action, or brings only a fraction of what it might produce. (Buls)

The Spirit will not leave a person he has brought to faith, but such a person can snuff out the Spirit's fire through unbelief. Fire is an appropriate metaphor because hardship strengthens faith just as fire refines metal by burning off impurities. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

**5:20 prophecies.** For the gift of prophecy see Ro 12:6; 1Co 12:10, 28; 13:2; 14; Eph 4:11. For the function of prophecies see 1Co 14:3. (CSB)

One translation has "God's Word." This understanding fits well with the broader context of the Third Commandment. A deaf ear turned inerrant Scripture puts out the Spirit's fire. Swapping diligent study of the Word for easy life empties a soul of meaning, purpose, and life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

Some Thessalonians might have valued the spectacular gifts (e.g., tongues) more than prophecy, Prophets in both the OT and NT exhorted and spoke God's will for their specific situation and for the future. (TLSB)

Again we have a prohibition. The same question, with reference to the type of action of the verb, applies here as in verse 19. It is not easy to make a decision on this point. (Buls)

"Treat with contempt" or "despise." On the word "prophecies" we have a question which is related to the meaning of verse 19. Does it mean a special ecstatic gift or does it mean simply the Word of God? Beck's AAT is worth reading here and at 1 Corinthians 14. He consistently translates this noun "the Word of God." For our text he has: "Don't despise God's Word when anyone speaks it." We agree with this and also his understanding of this noun in 1 Corinthians 14. Lenski prefers this interpretation here. Morris makes a general statement which is of help here. (Buls)

Morris: The essence of prophecy as the early church understood it appears to have been that the Spirit of the Lord spoke to and through men. (Buls)

And with reference to the Thessalonian situation he says: (Buls)

Morris: If we are to conjecture it seems more in accordance with what we know of conditions in this church to associate the despising of prophecy with second-advent speculations. (Buls)

Some people, and there are Christians among them, do not like to hear about the day of the Lord, the last day. Perhaps Paul is referring to the members of the congregation speaking the Word of God to each other. Christians sometimes despise the Word of God spoken by their peers. But though we do not know the exact situation of this verse, we do not that it says: "Do not despise God's Word." That is a mouthful. (Buls)

**5:21** *Test everything.* The approval of prophecy (v. 20) does not mean that anyone who claims to speak in the name of the Lord is to be accepted without question. Paul does not say what specific tests are to be applied, but he is clear that every teaching must be tested—surely they must be in agreement with his gospel. (CSB)

Consistency with the Gospel message would be one test. Another test is the prophet's testimony to Christ; will for their specific situation and for the future. (TLSB)

The verse begins in Greek with an untranslated "but." This assumes at least a partial reference back to verse 20. If that is so then the meaning is: "But don't be gullible about everything which is said. You yourselves must test it." Paul means

either to approve or reject after testing. Note that the Nestle-Aland Greek text margin note refers us to 1 Corinthians 14:29. That assumes that ecstatic prophecy is meant. We do not think so. We agree with Rienecker-Rogers. (Buls)

Rienecker-Rogers: Here 'everything' is unlimited and refers to 'all things whatsoever.' (Buls)

Some think that verse 21<sup>a</sup> points forward to 21<sup>b</sup> and verse 22. Even Bruce, who prefers the ecstatic interpretation. (Buls)

Bruce: It is possible, however, that this clause goes more closely with the following one than with the preceding one. (Buls)

Lenski: 'Everything' that might affect their religious life. These two commands (21<sup>b</sup> and 22) complete the order to test everything. (Buls)

Morris: All things must be tested. And not simply tested, but accepted wholeheartedly or rejected decisively as a result of the test. (Buls)

JB renders 21<sup>a</sup>: "Think before you do anything." That's a paraphrase, but a very interesting one. How often don't we act before thinking, much less testing! How sinful we are! At this point one should read 1 John 4:1, a good parallel passage. We need to teach our people in such a way that they themselves can test the spirits. There are so many false prophets around. (Buls)

The call is to be less gullible about what people may say. In our sinfulness, we often do not even thin – to say nothing of test. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

HOLD ON THE GOOD – The use to kalov, which denotes that which is inherently and intrinsically good. The sense of katachete is "keep on clinging to."

And now we come to the two imperatives in 21<sup>b</sup> and 22. If one reads the Greek aloud one hears the verbal correspondence in the imperatives. (Buls)

"The good" denotes that which is inherently or intrinsically good as opposed to a good which is merely beneficial. "Hold on" means "keep on clinging to." (Buls)

NEB renders 20-22 thus: "Do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind." In comparison, here is JB: "Never treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything--hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil." NEB limits "all" to prophetic utterances. JB makes it more general. We prefer the latter. "All things" includes the Word of God but is not limited to it. It is both ethical and doctrinal. (Buls)

1 John 4:1 “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

**5:22** AVOID EVERY KIND OF EVIL – Avoid every kind or form of evil every time it appears. Evil sometimes comes in subtle forms. Avoid all forms of evil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

This refers to every kind of evil, including false prophetic utterances. “The Holy Scriptures alone remain the judge, rule, and norm. According to them – as the only touchstone – all teachings shall and must be discerned and judged” (FC Ep Sum 7) (TLSB)

"Avoid" is present tense middle imperative: "keep yourselves from." The prepositional phrase can mean either: "From every *appearance* of evil" (KJV) or "From every *kind* of evil" (TEV, NIV, AAT). RSV, NKJV, JB, and NASB attempt to strike a middle course: "every form of evil." "Evil" here means "that which is actively evil." Meditate on this verse. It is very strong. How often we disregard it! How easy to yield to the subtle kinds and appearances of that which is evil! How sinful we are! (Buls)

Please read 5:1-22 at this point. How much and how many sins we have to confess! And though God is gracious and merciful in Christ Jesus, we still sin much daily. And therefore the Apostle, who was aware of our sinfulness, adds a prayer, verse 23, which turns into a promise, verse 24. (Buls)

**5:23** A typical prayer. (CSB)

GOD HIMSELF – Morris renders the first Greek word in this verse as "but" and remarks "It is only in God that the Thessalonians will be able to do what they have been asked." That might be so but no one else, so far as we know (including the translations) takes the first word that way. NKJV and NASB translate: "now may the God of peace, etc." (Buls)

"Himself" makes the word "God" emphatic. This stresses the fact that He alone can accomplish this. What kind of God is He? The God of peace. He is the God who is known by Christians primarily for the Gospel which gives peace of conscience. (Buls)

The mandate for sanctified living is actually accomplished by God himself. Note again the trilogy of areas affected by sanctification: spirit, soul, and body. The preacher would do well to remind his audience of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Justification (being declared righteous) precedes and causes sanctification (doing righteous things). The One who declares us blameless for the sake of Christ is also the One who will keep us blameless. Notice that we will be “kept” (*tērēthein*) blameless by God. That is, we have



already been made blameless; we are holy because of what Christ has already done on the cross and given us in Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*God of peace.* A fitting reference to God in view of vv. 12–15. But Paul often refers to God in this way near the end of his letters (see Ro 15:33; 16:20; 1Co 14:33; 2Co 13:11; Php 4:9; cf. 2Th 3:16). (CSB)

He is the God who is known by Christians primarily for the Gospel, which gives peace of conscience. He effects this peace by not only willing our redemption, but also our sanctified living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

**SANCTIFY YOU THROUGH AND THROUGH** – Sanctification is the practical result of God's peace-giving work in our life through the Holy Spirit. God's sanctification of us through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, extends to our whole person – we are sanctified thoroughly. Complete sanctification will be ours in eternity. (TLSB)

We have two aorist optatives in this verse, both are called either complexive or constative, which means the same thing. This use of the aorist stresses the action as a whole. "Sanctify" here means "to set aside for a specific purpose." The purpose is holiness of living as is plain from the remainder of the verse. "Whole spirit" means "in your entirety." Our sinful nature is constantly attempting to reserve a little corner of the heart for the sinful flesh. That won't do. (Buls)

Verse 23 might be considered an example of Hebrew poetry. The second part of the verse repeats, strengthens, and amplifies the first part of the verse. If that is so, the second part of the verse could start with "namely." Note the chiasmic arrangement of individual elements in the two clauses. The tripartite description of man here cannot be used in the interest of so-called trichotomy, as opposed to dichotomy. (Buls)

*your whole spirit, soul and body.* Paul is emphasizing the whole person, not attempting to differentiate his parts. (CSB)

The entire person outside and inside, should be sanctified. A description of a human being, however, is not limited to these three categories. (Cf Mark 12:30). (TLSB)

Morris: Paul is not at this point giving a description of the nature of the human constitution. He uses this graphic form by way of insisting that the whole person, not some part only, is involved. (Buls)

Lenski: Where, as here, spirit and soul are distinguished, the spirit designates our immaterial part as related to God, as capable of receiving the operations of

the Spirit of God and of His Word; while soul designates this same immaterial part in its function of animating the body also as receiving impressions from the body it animates. (Buls)

Bruce: The distinction between the bodily and spiritual aspects of human nature is easily made, but to make a comparable distinction between 'spirit' and 'soul' is forced. Few could care to distinguish sharply among the four elements 'heart,' 'soul,' 'mind,' and 'strength' of Matthew 12:30 (amplifying the threefold heart, soul, and might of Deuteronomy 6:5). (Buls)

The verb agiadzo means "to set aside for a specific purpose." The purpose for which we are set aside is holiness of living. Our sinful nature is constantly attempting to reserve a little corner of our heart for the sinful flesh. Paul emphatically counters this with the words through and through. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

KEPT BLAMELESS - The goal of being blameless may not be reached in this life, but sinners/saints in this world will be righteous, holy, and acceptable in the sight of God at Christ's parousia. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

The second coming of our Lord will culminate our Christian journey here on earth. Those who are sanctified by faith in the Lord will be like the wise virgins who had their oil lamps ready when the bridegroom came (Mt. 25:1-13). Cf 1 Thess. 4:13-18. (TLSB)

On the word "blameless" look at Luke 1:6 and Job 1:8. It does not mean "sinless." The words are a description of the life of a Christian who is living in no conscious sin. When Satan accuses a Christian of sin, the Gospel must be applied immediately. Look at Romans 8:33-34. (Buls)

COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST – Commentators and translators struggle with the meaning of the "in" phrase in this verse. For example, KJV reads: "unto the coming of our Lord." This is reflected in JB: "for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Others consider it temporal. For example AAT: "when our Lord Jesus Christ comes." (Buls)

Morris: It is clear from earlier passages that the thought of the Parousia loomed large in the thinking both of the apostles and their converts. They were looking for the coming of the Lord. Paul is thinking of a sanctification which continues at the Parousia. (Buls)

Lenski: Our being preserved now is 'in connection with' Christ's Parousia. If there were no Parousia, then this preservation would be pointless. (Buls)

Kretzmann: This goal may not be reached in this life, but at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ all the believers, clothed in the righteousness and holiness of their Redeemer, will be acceptable in the sight of God. (Buls)

Morris: The prayer is not that they may be kept until the coming, but that, at the coming, they may be preserved. (Buls)

Bruce: The writers' prayer is that their converts may be preserved entirely without fault *until* the Parousia and be so found *at* the Parousia, when they will be perfected in holiness. (Buls)

Lest these remarks leave the reader in confusion we suggest that he read the parallel passage at Philippians 1:6. When my sins bother me I should remember Psalm 23:4-6. Before we leave this verse a few quotes. (Buls)

Bruce: 'The God of peace' as in Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; Hebrews 13:20; 2 Thessalonians 3:16. The sum total of gospel blessings can be expressed by 'peace.' Notice the verse points to God as the source of all. (Buls)

Lenski: Here sanctification refers to the whole work of God, which follows the kindling of faith in our hearts. (Buls)

Bruce: The importance of sanctification in the practical area of sexual life has been emphasized in 4:3,4,7, where it is implied that sanctification, in all areas of life, is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, 4:8. (Buls)

**5:24** Paul's confidence rests in the nature of God (cf. Ge 18:25), who can be relied on to complete what he begins (see Nu 23:19; Php 1:6). (CSB)

God has called us and is calling us through His Word. The initiative is from Him. From God's calling in His Gospel, we can know that He has elected us unto salvation. (TLSB)

Whereas v 18 directs our attention to the "why" of Paul's encouragements and expectations, v 24 directs our attention to the "how." The same God who called us into his family will keep us until our Lord's returns. This again draws our attention to justification. He who is faithful also was faithful on Calvary. He who will do it has in fact already done it on Calvary. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

ONE WHO CALLS...WILL DO IT – This is the present tense of kalon which means the Lord continually calls us, to justify us and to sanctify us. His purpose is to keep us ready for the Second Advent. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

We quote two thought provoking translations: "He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful" (TEV). "You can depend on Him who calls you--He will do it" (AAT). (Buls)

Kretzmann: For the comfort of the Christians, who feel their own insufficiency all too well, the apostle adds: Faithful is He that calls you, who will also do this. (Buls)

Note that "calls" is in the present tense. The Lord calls me constantly. He uses the Gospel to call me, to justify me, to sanctify me, to get me ready for the Lord's coming. (Buls)

**5:25 PRAY FOR US** – Paul reveals humility by requesting the intercession of others on his behalf. (TLSB)

**5:26** *all*. Paul sent a warm greeting to everyone, even those he had corrected. (CSB)

*holy kiss*. A kiss was a normal greeting of that day, similar to our modern handshake (cf. Ro 16:16; 1Co 16:20; 2Co 13:12; and a "kiss of love," 1Pe 5:14). (CSB)

**5:27** *I charge you*. Surprisingly strong language, meaning "I put you on oath." Paul clearly wanted every member of the church to read or hear his letter and to know of his concern and advice for them. (CSB)

Not a contradiction of Mt 5:34, but an appeal for the Thessalonians to act as responsible persons to the Lord by executing this request. (TLSB)

*letter read to all the brothers*. Paul knows that communication, particularly that of the Gospel, is central for people to be saved and be formed in Christ (Rm 10:14). Therefore, he emphasizes that the written word be heard by all. (TLSB)

**5:28** Paul always ended his letters with a benediction of grace for his readers, sometimes adding other blessings, as in 2Co 13:14. (CSB)

Instead of using the customary secular ending for "farewell," Paul closes his Letter with a grace benediction—just as he had started it. (TLSB)

**5:12–28** Paul gives both his final instruction about leadership and a benediction. Christians should support and encourage one another. We should respect the elders and leaders of our congregations because of their work for the Lord and the whole people of God. The Lord Jesus, by humbling Himself to the point of washing His disciples' feet, showed to us the love He has for all believers. • Lord, give us Your heart and mind so that our life may be blameless, respecting and loving others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. (TLSB))