



1 Thessalonians - Chapter Five

III. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:28 - Instruction and Exhortation (continues/concludes)

III.b 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 - The Coming of the Lord (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Five

Paul, having spoken at the end of the previous chapter concerning the resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ, proceeds to speak concerning the uselessness of enquiring after the particular time of Christ's coming, which would be sudden and terrible to the wicked, but comfortable to the saints (vv.1-5).

He then exhorts them to the duties of watchfulness, sobriety, and the exercise of faith, love, and hope, as being suitable to their state (vv.6-10). In the next words he exhorts them to several duties they owed to others, or to one another (vv.11-15), afterwards to several other Christian duties of great importance (vv.16-22); and then concludes this epistle with prayer, assurance and personal greetings (vv.23-28).

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you.

1 Thessalonians 5:1

Now concerning. Paul may be responding to a question from the Thessalonians communicated by Timothy.

The times and the seasons, that is, when the Day of the Lord will occur, something that Jesus had said would not be revealed in advance: <<***But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father***>> (Mark 13:32), and: <<***He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority'***>> (Acts 1:7). The Thessalonians' question likely arose more from anxiety than idle curiosity,

since Paul's answer reassures rather than rebukes them and seems concerned with both the 'how' and the 'when' of the Day of the Lord.

You do not need to have anything written to you. In spite of what the Thessalonians apparently think, there is no real need for Paul to write to them on this matter because they have already been taught all they need to know.

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 labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

The phrase the Day of the Lord is common in the OT Prophets. In Amos' day, the earliest known use of the Day of the Lord, the term was in popular use for the time when the Lord would intervene and put Israel at the head of the nations; but Amos, and all the prophets after him, clarify what it would mean for the Lord to visit his people: it will mean judgment upon them if they are unfaithful. It refers to the great and terrible day when Yahweh will intervene to punish the disobedient, refer to Isaiah 13:6-16, Joel 1:13-15, Joel 2:1-11, Amos 5:8-10, Obadiah 15-20 and Malachi 4:5; and to save the faithful, such as Isaiah 27:2-13, Jeremiah 30:8-9, Joel 2:31-32, and Obadiah 21. In Paul's letters it is always equated with the Second Coming of Christ.

Like a thief in the night. Throughout the NT, the thief simile suggests unexpectedness and unwelcoming atmosphere: <<*But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour*>> (Matthew 24:43-44), <<*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed*>> (2 Peter 3:10), <<*Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you*>> (Revelation 3:3), and: <<*See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame*>> (Revelation 16:15). The negative aspect is clearly present in v.4, and there is no reason to think that it is absent here. However, although some have wondered whether Paul is threatening the Thessalonians with the prospect of final judgment, it seems more likely, in view of v.4 and v.9, that he is actually reassuring believers who are insecure, perhaps as a result of the recent deaths in their midst.

When they say refers to people who are unbelievers.

Peace and security is possibly an allusion to imperial Roman propaganda or perhaps more likely to: <<*They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace*>> (Jeremiah 6:14 and Jeremiah 8:11), where similar language is used of a delusional sense of immunity from divine wrath.

Then sudden destruction will come upon them. This can be seen in the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in AD70 and will be seen again during the great tribulation as described by the prophets and in Christ's Revelation.

Labour pains is an analogy referring to the judgment and destruction on the Day of the Lord, as used in: <<*Pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labour. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame*>> (Isaiah 13:8b), and: <<*We have heard news of them, our hands fall helpless; anguish has taken hold of us, pain as of a woman in labour*>> (Jeremiah 6:24).

There will be no escape refutes the theology of those who promote universalism, i.e. that everyone eventually will be admitted into heaven. Those who reject God's message, whether they are good or bad people, will face eternal separation from God: <<*and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire*>> (Revelation 20:15).

⁴ But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief;

1 Thessalonians 5:4

But you. The Thessalonian Christians are not among the people who say 'peace and security' and upon whom sudden destruction will come (v.3).

In darkness refers to the realm of sin, evil, un-enlightenment and estrangement from God. The teaching they had received from Paul had turned them away from the darkness, just as Jesus had said it would: <<*I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles – to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*>> (Acts 26:17-18). This was the teaching of another apostle as well: <<*Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining*>> (1 John 2:8).

Surprise you like a thief. The Day of the Lord will not be a 'thief-like', unwelcome surprise for the Thessalonian Christians, as it will be for unbelievers, as noted in v.2.

⁵ for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5:5

For. Paul grounds his assurance of v.4 in the Thessalonians' status and destiny.

Children of light. This phrase is used in Jewish literature and in the NT: <<*And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light*>> (Luke 16:8), and: <<*While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light*>> (John 12:36);

of those who belong to the realm of God and his salvation: <<**He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son**>> (Colossians 1:13).

Children of the day. This phrase, which is unique to Paul, seems to link the concepts of 'light' and 'day' together. Thus, because Jesus is 'the light of the world': <<**Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life'**>> (John 8:12), Christians are children of light; but Christians are also those who are called to live a godly life as people who 'belong to the day' (v.8) and who are destined to inherit salvation on 'the Day of the Lord', when Christ, the light of the world, will return in power and great glory; refer to Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27.

We. Paul shifts to the first person plural to reinforce his confirmation and perhaps to prepare for and soften the exhortation of vv.6-8.

Night and darkness are the dominion of evil and enmity with God.

In essence Paul is saying that the world in general still sleeps in the old age of darkness but with the resurrection of Jesus a new age has dawned and those who are in Christ live in his light, a light that will dawn on the whole world at a time yet to come; a day that will catch those who still sleep unawares to their eternal cost!

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.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-7

So then. Paul gives general exhortations based on the reassurances of v.5.

Let us not fall asleep as others do. Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus, who had urged his disciples to remain awake with him in Gethsemane: <<**Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak**>> (Mark 14:38). Paul was conscious of the need to bring the same message to disciples in a different situation.

To sleep is to be morally and spiritually disengaged, and/or living without a consciousness of the coming day, whereas those who are awake are aware and prepared for the return of Christ. Paul uses the metaphors of being sober or drunk in the same way. It is not an instruction not to drink alcohol but a call to being in a state of spiritual alertness.

In typical Pauline fashion, he is not content to use a single image when several will do. The thief at night goes quite well with the need to stay awake, but actually Paul's point of staying awake belongs not so much to the danger of being burgled but with the all important difference between the old age, the age of darkness, sin and death, and the new age, the age of light, life and hope.

He thus combines two different ideas: staying awake because of the terrible things that are about to happen, for which he supplies a further well known biblical picture of a woman suddenly experiencing her labour pains; and staying awake because it will soon be dawn and time to put away the night time habits.

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.

1 Thessalonians 5:8

Breastplate and helmet. Paul is drawing on Isaiah 59:17, where the Lord is portrayed as a warrior wearing armour: <<*He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle*>>. Here Christians, as those destined to stand alongside the Lord on the last day, are called to put on his armour, which is given in fuller detail in Ephesians 6:10-20 and the associated comments.

Faith, love and hope are the triad of essential Christian traits: <<*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love*>> (1 Corinthians 13:13), with which Paul commenced this letter: <<*We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*>> (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).

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.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

For connects this verse with either vv.6-8 in general or the specific exhortation in v.8 to put on the helmet of hope. Paul restates what he said in v.4: the Thessalonians have nothing to worry about, because they are destined not for wrath but for salvation at the Second Coming.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. This statement is the main defence that a Christian has against all that the fallen world can throw at them. It is also a reminder of how they should now live: <<*And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them*>> (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Awake alludes to the concern of the living Christians regarding their destiny on the Day of the Lord, while asleep does not refer to the behaviour in vv.6-7 but alludes to the destiny of deceased Christians as discussed in 4:13-18.

Live with him. At the Second Coming, Christians will experience a new quality of life in the company of Christ.

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

As indeed you are doing. As elsewhere, e.g. 4:1, Paul seeks to avoid looking as if he is criticising the Thessalonians. As in 4:18, his purpose is encouragement and teaching the saints to practise mutual encouragement, as he also does in: <<**Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear**>> (Ephesians 4:29).

III.c 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 - Final Exhortations, Greetings, and Benediction

This final section is not a set of rules that would contradict Paul's teaching against justification by works of the law. These are more a set of moral guidelines that Christians should adopt as second nature in life in order to emulate what Jesus had taught his followers to do.

The first guideline is to accept good teaching and leadership, showing respect for those called to lead. The second is through the mutual influence of the whole community. Each individual, family or group has the responsibility to care for the needs of others. One must actively pursue what is good for others. The third is about living a life of joy and thanksgiving to God even when, and especially when, life is tough. It is about recognising the goodness of God in everything.

The first half of this letter was given over to prayer and thanksgiving to God. Paul concludes it with the same heart and mind, adding his personal greetings and a benediction for the church.

III.c.i 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 - On community conduct

Paul gives exhortations on community life and relationships. He calls on love and respect for leaders, adherence to their good teaching, and for the church to live a life that puts the needs of others at the forefront of everything.

¹² But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour 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.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Respect those who labour among you, and admonish you. The young Thessalonian community was not adequately appreciating and respecting its leaders.

Have charge of you in the Lord. The Greek term *proistēmi* here means 'rule, direct, or be at the head of', and would refer to the elders in the church whom Paul sees as having specific responsibilities of leadership, for he writes of such a one as: <<**He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it**>> (Titus 1:9). Paul sees

such gifted people as having authority to lead the church in the direction God requires them to go.

Esteem them very highly in love because of their work not only refers to the honour and respect that good leaders are due but to provide for their needs financially, recognising their value to the community of believers.

Be at peace among yourselves may suggest, though not necessarily, that there were tensions within the community.

¹⁴ And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Idlers, Greek *ataktos*, also means undisciplined or insubordinate. Some Thessalonians were shirking their responsibility to work in accord with the creation mandate: <<*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it*>> (Genesis 2:15). Paul calls on the faithful to admonish them in the Lord. Refer also to 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, and the associated comments.

Many believers had become faint-hearted due to persecution: <<*so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know*>> (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4), or the unexpected deaths, as seen in 4:13-5:11. Such people are especially in need of the encouragement of others.

Weak refers either to those with weak consciences, see 1 Corinthians Chapters 8-9, those rattled by the ongoing persecution, or those anxious about the Day of the Lord (vv.1-11). All of these people are to be helped and supported.

Be patient with all of them. People in the church are at different places on their journey with Christ and have different levels of understanding of the Bible. Those who are more knowledgeable or who are more spiritually mature are to nurture others. After all, patience is a fruit of the Spirit; see also the comments on vv.16-18, which focuses on joy.

¹⁵ See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

See that none of you repays evil for evil. It is a common human trait to lash out when hurt by someone else, but Jesus and Paul call not just for restraint but for a whole new attitude of love in such circumstances: <<*But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you*>> (Luke 6:27-28), <<*Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all*>> (Romans 12:17), and: <<*When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of*>>

all things, to this very day>> (1 Corinthians 4:12b-13), as did Peter: <<Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called – that you might inherit a blessing>> (1 Peter 3:9).

Always seek to do good to one another and to all. The heart of the Gospel message is that believers should always try to reflect the love, grace and mercy that are seen in Christ, both to their brothers and sisters in Christ, and to those outside of the church: *<<They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life>> (1 Timothy 6:18-19).*

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always. Joy in Paul's letters is a basic mark of the Christian: *<<For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit>> (Romans 14:17), and a fruit of the Spirit: <<By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things>> (Galatians 5:22-23).* It is often associated with the firm hope of the Christian, for example: *<<Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us>> (Romans 5:2-5), and: <<Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer>> (Romans 12:12).*

Pray without ceasing suggests a mental attitude of prayerfulness, continual personal fellowship with God, and consciousness of being in his presence throughout each day.

Give thanks in all circumstances. Christians are to be marked by thanksgiving: *<<Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving>> (Ephesians 5:4), <<I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me>> (Philippians 4:12-13), and: <<Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving>> (Colossians 4:2).*

For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Paul provides the strongest possible argument for his teaching here.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

Do not quench the Spirit. The manner in which the Thessalonians were extinguishing the Holy Spirit's fire is specified in the next verse.

²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22

Do not despise the words of prophets. Believers are to be open to the disclosure of God's will through fellow Christians exercising the gift of prophecy, refer to the comments made on 1 Corinthians 14:22-25. The Thessalonians apparently despised manifestations of prophecy and hence were cutting off a valuable source of encouragement and extinguishing the Spirit's fire.

Test everything. Rather than rejecting prophecies outright on the basis of inferior prophetic words, the Thessalonians need to weigh prophecies to distinguish the true from the false. Tests presumably include the prophecy's conformity with authoritative revelation, its value for edification, and its evaluation by those with spiritual discernment. Refer to 1 Corinthians 14:29-33 and the comments made on 1 Corinthians 12:10 regarding the operation of prophecy in the church.

Hold fast to what is good. In context, this most likely refers to prophecies that pass the test.

Abstain from. Paul now moves on to stress, more generally, the importance of rejecting every form of evil.

III.c.ii 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 - Prayer, assurance, and conclusion

Just as the first half of the letter ended with a pastoral prayer that the Thessalonians be marked by holiness at the Second Coming of Christ (3:11-13), this half does too. However, here Paul adds reassurance (v.24).

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.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

The God of peace. This was a favoured designation used by Paul: <<*The God of peace be with all of you. Amen*>> (Romans 15:33), and: <<*Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you*>> (Philippians 4:9), as did the author of Hebrews: <<*Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the*>>

glory for ever and ever. Amen>> (Hebrews 13:20-21). God initiated the reconciliation of Christians with himself and is now at peace with them.

Sanctify you entirely. Paul does not suggest that only a reasonable amount of holiness will suffice, it must be complete. Some believers, emphasising the boundless love, grace and mercy of God, and the doctrine of justification by faith alone, run the risk of underestimating the call to holiness, which Paul, who is after all the great exponent of God's great love and free justification, never did.

Spirit and soul and body represent the entirety of human nature. It seems unlikely that this is a tripartite division of human nature into body, soul, and spirit, where 'spirit' and 'soul' would refer to different parts; more likely Paul is simply using several terms for emphasis. The bible has similar ways of expressing the totality of human nature: <<*Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell*>> (Matthew 10:28), <<*Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength"*>> (Mark 12:30), <<*And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband*>> (1 Corinthians 7:34b).

There is no need for the Thessalonians to worry about whether they will be sufficiently holy and blameless at the coming of the Lord. God is faithful, and he will surely make it happen.

The one who calls you is faithful, Greek *pistos ho kalon*, is a wonderful phrase, undergirding the various ministries of the church and also the daily life of every Christian, whether man, woman or child. The faithfulness of God is one of the key themes of Paul's writings. He has a lot to say about the Gospel of Jesus as the Christ of God, but the most significant thing about Jesus is that in him the living God has put into effect his faithfulness to his entire creation. It is the faithfulness of God that is the glue that holds his church together and allows it to perform so much good in the world.

²⁵ Beloved, pray for us.

1 Thessalonians 5:25

Pray for us. As a committed prayer warrior himself, Paul knew the value of having other people pray for him: <<*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judæa, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company*>> (Romans 15:30-32), and for his whole team: <<*At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison*>> (Colossians 4:3).

²⁶ Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss.

1 Thessalonians 5:26

A holy kiss is a symbol of Christian fellowship and holiness, representing the intimacy and love within a close-knit family group; refer also to the comments made on also Acts 20:37, Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, and 1 Peter 5:14.

²⁷ I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them.

1 Thessalonians 5:27

I solemnly command you. As usual, having dictated his letter to a secretary, Paul wrote the final greeting in his own handwriting as an authenticating mark: <<*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

By the Lord indicates Paul's apostolic authority in issuing the command.

That this letter be read to all of them. The letter was to be read aloud to all community members, including the fainthearted and the idle. Public reading in the churches points to the authority of Paul's letters and also assumes that they were written to be understood by all believers, not just the church leaders.

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1 Thessalonians 5:28

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was recognised by the early church that Jesus epitomised God's amazing grace: <<*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."')*>> *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known*>> (John 1:14-18).

Tom Wright concludes: 'Looking back over the letter we can see how Paul brings together his personal involvement with the Thessalonians and his determination that they shall be grounded in faith, love and hope. The word of God which he preached from the beginning, through which God worked powerfully to create the church and build it up, is now to continue its work both through Paul's own writings and through the teaching of the local leaders. This will sustain them through the suffering they are already undergoing because of their allegiance to Jesus as king and lord. Paul has taken care to set before them the hope that, through the turbulent times that will come upon the whole world, God's kingdom and glory will be revealed, and Jesus himself will at last appear again to vindicate his people and bring them ultimate comfort and salvation. In holding fast to this hope, they are to allow God's work, of making them his holy people, to have its full effect'.