Today we enter the world of Pauline paraenesis. Paraenetic (or exhortatory) material is to be found in each of Paul's letters; it's the section of the letter where he provides concentrated guidance for his congregations.

As Roetzel tells you in his discussion of the letter form, the paraenetic section (or, as he labels it in his chart, "Ethical Exhortations and Instructions") typically follows the body of the letter. And as you know, he attempts to make that true for 1 Thessalonians as well. However, you'll recall from last time the problem I pointed out in his perception that thanksgivings are, in effect, interspersed throughout the body of the book, such as 2:1-3:8 and possibly (he says) 3:11-13 (the brief prayer that closes chapter 3).

Scholars like Malherbe and Donfried present a solid case that we should view the entirety of 1:2-3:13 as a lengthy thanksgiving. In that case, 1 Thessalonians has no "body," as Roetzel defines it (viz. "a vast and varied conversational world" that is often autobiographical and sometimes includes a report of Paul's travels). What composes 1 Thessalonians, instead, is Paul's exuberance over Timothy's report and his address of issues relevant to the congregation (the paraenesis).

Obviously, Paul learned a good deal about the situation in Thessalonica from Timothy. But there are indications that, in addition to Timothy's verbal report, Paul may have received a letter from the Thessalonians raising questions they wanted addressed. The evidence for this comes, especially, from some striking parallels between this letter and Paul's first letter to the Corinthians - indeed, there are features found only in these two letters.

In 1 Corinthians Paul reveals his sources of information about conditions in Corinth. On the heels of the salutation and thanksgiving, he expresses his outrage at what he has heard: "10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters." - Paul names his sources up front: "Chloe's people," or (more literally) "those belonging to Chloe," most likely household servants who located Paul in Ephesus (where he wrote 1 Corinthians).

Besides bearing tales to tell that disturbed Paul, they also seem to have delivered to him a letter from at least some of the Corinthians, with issues they wanted addressed. The reason we know they handed him a letter is that, again, he cites his source: "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote…" And then he takes up their first question, stated in the form of an assertion that was likely made by someone in Corinth and about which the writers asked Paul's opinion. We'll take a look at this issue both when we study 1 Corinthians and in a few minutes in
addressing one of Paul's instructions in 1 Thessalonians 4.

For now, let's notice Paul's phrase, "Now concerning" (Greek, *peri de*) for he uses this phrase as he takes up each new topic from their letter: 7.25, "Now concerning virgins...."; 8.1, "Now concerning food sacrificed to idols...."; 12.1, "Now concerning spiritual gifts...."; 16.1, "Now concerning the collection for the saints...."; 16.12, "Now concerning our brother Apollos...." He's ticking off the topics about which they had raised questions.

And yet, Paul does not always mark out new topics this way. Indeed, a couple of times between chapters 8 and 12 Paul switches subjects more abruptly. For example, he broaches a new subject in 11.2 this way: "2 I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. 3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ." - From here he launches into a discussion of the need for women to wear a covering on their head (a passage we'll consider in due course), but without any explicit indication that's the subject he'll take up next. (Notice especially the way he introduces this paraenesis, with a commendation for carrying on the traditions he had given them. We'll see him use the same tack in 1 Thessalonians.)

Then, a mere handful of verses later, he abruptly introduces a new topic: "17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it."

Note the contrast to Paul's earlier commendation: "I do not commend you." And notice that he refers to his admonitions as "instructions," the same word we'll see him use in 1 Thessalonians for directions he has given them. This is the world of paraenesis. But while Paul clearly has some reason for dispensing this instruction (since he knows their practice is scandalously at odds with it), he doesn't reveal *how* he knows this. In this case, it is most likely the messengers from Chloe's household, who were no doubt the same people from whom he learned other information for which he upbraids the Corinthians as at the start of chapter 5: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife." - Notice his language, "It is reported"; this is not something about which the Corinthians wrote to him.

And so in writing 1 Corinthians, Paul seems to have had two sources of information: word of mouth from Chloe's messengers, and a letter sent by some in Corinth.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul mentions no letter. And yet, there are features parallel to what we've noted in 1 Corinthians suggestive of a letter, or at least some formal
form of communication. Most striking are two cases in which Paul introduces a new topic with "now concerning": chapter 4, v. 9: "Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters...."; and chapter 5, v. 1: "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters...." These and the six occurrences of "now concerning" in 1 Corinthians are the only appearances of this phrase in the Pauline epistles. I suppose if we didn't have 1 Corinthians, we would conclude this is simply Paul's way of changing the topic. But the parallel with 1 Corinthians at least raises the question.

Moreover, there is an intriguing parallel between the introduction to another discussion in 1 Thessalonians and one of the responses Paul introduces with "now concerning" in 1 Corinthians. The full introduction to the new topic Paul takes up in 1 Corinthians 12 reads, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed."

Now notice the similar language Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4.13: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died." - The question raised by this statement is, were did Paul get the idea that the Thessalonians needed instruction on this topic? And Paul's discussion of this question confirms this was a burning concern in that congregation. Unless we wish to posit that Paul was telepathic, it makes sense to see this as a need expressed to Paul by the Thessalonians, parallel to the need for information the Corinthians had expressed concerning spiritual gifts.

Let's recall also that prior to bringing up subjects from the Corinthians' letter, Paul addressed an issue he knew of from other sources: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you...." Curiously, questions of sexual propriety are again the first issue Paul raises in the paraenesis of 1 Thessalonians 4: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication...." - As you know, Paul spends the next several sentences (through v. 8) addressing this issue and, as we'll see, he has strong words for anyone who fails to follow the guidelines he sets down. We'll explore Paul's address of this topic (and its parallels to 1 Corinthians) shortly, but for now it is at least intriguing that in this book, as in 1 Corinthians, an issue on Paul's front burner is sexual ethics.

These parallels, then, between 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians - unique parallels within the Pauline corpus - suggest the possibility of similar sources of information to which Paul had access in the two books: conversations with informants ("Chloe's people" in 1 Corinthians; Timothy in 1 Thessalonians) and questions from the people conveyed to Paul: explicitly by letter in 1 Corinthians, possibly by letter in 1 Thessalonians. It shouldn't be surprising that Paul does not explicitly mention a letter in 1 Thessalonians, for he only rarely reveals his sources in his letters, even though it's clear he has received inside information.

Given these indications that Paul had been informed of issues among the
Thessalonians, how does he address their concerns?

The first two verses of chapter 4 use paraenetic diction of the sort we noted in 1 Corinthians: "1Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. 2For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus."

The word translated "instructions" is the noun form of what is, in fact, a verb that the NRSV translates "in the following instructions" in 1 Corinthians 11.17. The phrase "as you learned from us" signals the use of "tradition," a word Paul explicitly uses in 1 Corinthians 11.2. While the word "tradition" is not used in 1 Thessalonians 4, there is a closer relationship between the phrase "just as I handed them on to you" in 1 Corinthians 11 and "as you learned from us" in 1 Thessalonians 4 than the NRSV's translation suggests.

While the NRSV offers a straightforward translation in 1 Corinthians, the phrase in 1Thess 11.2 could be more literally translated, "just you received from us." Both phrases are used throughout Paul's epistles for the transmission of tradition, and in both passages Paul is stressing that what he is writing is nothing new, but repeats what he has already taught them. This is a rhetorical strategy Paul uses throughout his paraenesis, in accord with the practice of other moralists. Introducing exhortation by reminding readers they already know what is being urged defuses any sense of heavy-handedness.

Notice how Paul uses this strategy several times in these chapters. To begin with, not only does he stress his instruction accords with what they have already received, but he also reminds them that they already know all this. Let's compare v. 9, where he speaks not of what they have learned from him, but of what they have learned from God - as demonstrated by the love they show to the brothers and sisters, so that they have no need for instruction. And yet, in spite of this, Paul goes on to instruct them about brotherly love.

But notice that Paul's instruction on this topic is simply that they elevate their play to the next level: "we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more." This is consistent with his opening summary highlighting what they have already learned from him, so that the only instruction they need is to "do so more and more."

Even when addressing what appear to have been issues raised for him by the Thessalonians, Paul takes the same gentle tack: "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

Paul's paraenesis comes packaged in these frequent reassurances that his readers are on the right track and just need to keep following through.

One other thing to notice about the context Paul constructs for his paraenesis
relates to the opening word of chapter 4, which the NRSV translates, "finally." While certainly the Greek word loipon can mean "finally," what we have here is not simply loipon, but loipon oun, the final word meaning "therefore." In fact, loipon itself can be used in an inferential sense, something like "in this connection," and that's likely the way this entire phrase should be understood. Paul is not sharply distinguishing what follows in chapters 4&5 from what went before but is, on the contrary, connecting them with a phrase that means something like, "given, then, what I've said before...." Or more succinctly, "Well, then." In fact, notice how Paul just as closely connects his paraenesis to the body of the letter in Romans 12.1: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters...." The paraenesis takes as its foundation what Paul has said up to this point. And, in fact, in 1 Thessalonians, links are observable between Paul's extended thanksgiving section and his paraenesis.

That is especially discernable in his instruction about philadelphia, brotherly/familial love, in 4.9-12: "9Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; 10and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, 11to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, 12so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one."

Discussions of the conduct of friendship were common among Greco-Roman philosophers and moralists, although here Paul raises the bar by speaking in terms of family-style affection, corresponding to his address of his congregation as "brothers [and sisters]." Notice how this instruction is anticipated in Paul's prayer at the end of chapter 3: "11Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 12And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you."

While it might seem to us peculiar to find as part of this exhortation to love of "the brothers and sisters" the commands "to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands," those were characteristic components of such discourses on friendship, in which the central question was how to share with each other while remaining self-sufficient (a prime virtue in the ancient world); friendship had to avoid dependence. In fact, notice that Paul speaks of the goal of this behavior being to "behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one."

Paul reflects this concern again in speaking of a gift he had received from the church in Philippi: "10I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. 11Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have
learned to be content with whatever I have.... In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress." - Notice how Paul makes his independence clear, even as he expresses appreciation for the gift the Philippians sent.

That topic arises again within 1 Thessalonians, in chapter 2, where Paul reminds his addressees of his behavior while among them: "You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." - Paul's own example of laboring so as not to be a burden to anyone is now applied to the Thessalonians, who are to show love to others but avoid a web of dependence.

A similar relationship between Paul's paraenesis and his earlier thanksgiving appears in the first topic he broaches in chapter 4: "2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; 4 that each of you knows how to control your own body in holiness and honor, 5 not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you."

What's not as apparent in English translations is that these verses are dominated by the concept of holiness via the terms "sanctification" and "holiness," over against "impurity," more literally "uncleanness." And, in fact, the final phrase "his holy Spirit" is more literally "the Spirit of him, the Holy one." Again there is a link with Paul's prayer at the close of chapter 3, where he asks that the Lord "so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints." - And by the way, the word "saints" translates a Greek word meaning "holy ones." Thus, the holiness Paul mandates in sexual behavior is connected to the theme of holiness in his prayer.

So when Paul begins his paraenetic section with "well then" he signals that his instruction is consciously built on what he has already said.

Let's take a look at the first topic Paul addresses, having to do with sexual behavior.

The word translated "fornication," porneia, can designate a wide array of illicit sexual liaisons. Its meaning here is defined by a command whose meaning isn't as clear as the NRSV suggests through its translation, "know how to control your own body." The issue is that the Greek word translated "body," skeuos, means (literally) "vessel," while the verb translated "control," ktaomai, often accents the onset of the action, such as "gain control" or "come to possess." However, since the NRSV has given us a fairly common interpretation of those words, so let's start
with it.

The center of gravity in the command is not simply control of one's "vessel," but a certain manner of controlling it: "in holiness and honor." The meaning of that is defined by the contrastive phrase, "not with lustful passion." Understood this way, Paul is commanding the readers to be sexually temperate; not to let their libido drive them.

In fact, this was a common topic in Jewish literature of the era. E.g. in the Testament of Issachar, written around the turn of the era, the patriarch boasts, "When I was thirty-five I took myself a wife because hard work consumed my energy, and pleasure with a woman never came to my mind; rather sleep overtook me because of my labor." - Notice that he took a wife because he had found ways to sublimate his libido.

Similarly, the author of the Testament of Reuben advises, "Do not devote attention to the beauty of women, my children, nor occupy your minds with their activities. But live in integrity of heart in the fear of the Lord and weary yourself in good deeds, in learning, and in tending your flocks." - Here is specific advice about how to sublimate erotic desire.

To call this asceticism would be correct, but we need to understand that it is not asceticism as we typically think of it. This was part of a much larger program, advanced particularly by the Stoics, who counseled restraint of the passions. Thus, the author of the Testament of Simeon boasts, "My heart was firm, my courage was high, and my feelings were dispassionate." It wasn't simply sexual passion, but any inordinate emotion that needed to be kept in check.

It is certainly possible that sexual self-control is what Paul has in mind in 1 Thessalonians 4, and on one level Stoic notions of restraint probably are at play here. However, what makes the interpretation of one's vessel as "one's own body" problematic is, first, Paul's comment on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7.2-4: "because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."

Not only does Paul endorse sexual unions between husband and wife, but says that marital sex is an antidote against "cases of sexual immorality," which is an expansive translation of the Greek words, *tas porneias*, involving the same noun translated "fornication" in 1 Thessalonians 4. The answer to this threat, as Paul expounds it in 1 Corinthians 7, is not self-control, but marriage, in which one's body belongs to one's spouse.

In this light, it is unlikely Paul is urging sexual abstinence in 1 Thessalonians 4, so that we need to look for another meaning for the metaphor "vessel." Moreover,
recall I said that the verb translated "control" typically accents the *beginning* of mastery: "come to control" or "come to possess." With that in mind, there is another possibility that seems a better solution to our quandary.

One euphemism used by the rabbis to speak of a woman, particularly in a sexual relationship with a man, was "vessel." Moreover, the verb translated "control" is often used in a phrase meaning "to acquire a wife," or "to get married." It may well be, then, that Paul's talk of gaining control over one's vessel is idiomatic for getting married.

Before settling on a translation for our phrase in v. 4, we should notice two other important words influencing it. One is the possessive phrase, "your own." This is one of the places where the NRSV's policy of using gender inclusive language obscures the meaning, inasmuch as the possessive pronoun here is masculine, "his own," and this is crucial to the point. Paul is addressing the *males* in the community, telling them how to behave sexually. And he underscores the possessive pronoun by preceding it with "each of you." He is focusing on the men as *individuals* in their use of something uniquely theirs.

And this correlates with Paul's warning in v. 6: "that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you."

Here again, the NRSV's otherwise laudable use of inclusive language obscures the meaning. A more strict rendering of the Greek in the first half of this sentence would be, "that he not transgress and deal covetously with his brother in this matter."

The structure of the Greek is difficult to convey, although it is partially conveyed by modifying the page layout: "For this is the will of God: your sanctification; to wit: that you abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to control his own vessel in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that he not transgress and act covetously with his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you."

Each of the clauses introduced with "that" (representing infinitive constructions in Greek) unfolds and clarifies the preceding one, which is why I have supplied "to wit" after "your sanctification." Paul applies sanctification to instruction about fornication, or more specifically, to this matter of "knowing how to 'control' his own vessel." And that can be equally explicated as a matter of not "transgressing and acting covetously with his brother." This, then, leads to Paul's summary statement, which brings him back to the topic of "holiness," the same word translated "sanctification" in v. 4.

What this means is that v. 6 is not a new command, but helps interpret vv. 4-5, even as they define more clearly what Paul means by "fornication" here.
In light of all these considerations, the most likely focus of Paul's address is adultery, so that we should render v. 4's oblique language something like, "that each of you know how to live married in honor and holiness with his own wife." The contrast to this (and what Paul warns against) is not passion with one's wife, but with another man's wife, in which case one "transgresses and acts covetously with his brother" by, in effect, using his property, which is how women were, by-and-large, categorized in the ancient world.

We've already noted Paul's exhortation to love the brethren and its affinities with such discussions among the philosophers, so let's turn to the next topic he addresses, the state of those who have died.

On first glance, it would appear that Paul is providing information they have lacked previously: "Now, we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died." - Paul seems to be ramping up to tell them something they haven't known.

It would equally appear that Paul's instruction is a full prohibition of mourning: "so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." - The starkness of this is less apparent in the NRSV's translation than in Greek, where the thrust is not "so that you may not grieve to the degree others do," but "so that you may not grieve, even though, yes, others are given to grief."

Both of these readings are, however, overstated. In the first place, the phrase, "we do not want you to be uninformed," is an epistolary cliché. We've already noted Paul's use of this phrase in 1 Corinthians 12: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed." - Paul seems to be correcting abuses in the use of them.

And Paul had already used this phrase in 1 Corinthians 10.1: "I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea." - In the verses that follow Paul develops an allegory built from stories about Moses and Israel to fashion a warning against assuming that baptism and the Eucharist guaranteed one's standing before God in spite of one's misbehavior. While Paul manipulates those stories to make a point, it is not a matter of information they hadn't known previously.

And the same seems to be true of 1 Corinthians 12.1, since in the thanksgiving at the opening of the letter Paul is gratified that the Corinthians "are not lacking in any spiritual gift," as attested by the fact that they have been "enriched...in speech and knowledge of every kind." Thus, Paul, in chapter 12, doesn't write to inform them about spiritual gifts, but to correct abuses in the use of them.

This is not to say Paul never uses this phrase to introduce new information. He certainly does so in the opening verses of his letter to the Romans: "I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented." - Given that this is his first contact with the Roman church, this cannot be anything but fresh information. However, it is just
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as clearly an epistolary device meant to accent the information than highlight their ignorance. I.e. it is more a way of saying "please note" than, "here's something you're absolutely clueless about."

Similarly, the phrase, "we do not want you to be uniformed" in 1 Thessalonians 4.13 does not likely introduce new information. It seems more likely what Paul's doing is akin to his uses of this phrase in 1 Corinthians; he's drawing attention to the full implications of things they already know. Put another way, Paul is playing out one of the desires he expresses in 3.10: "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith." - Even if he cannot be with them physically, at least he can "restore whatever is lacking in [their] faith," although "restore" is not as good an equivalent for the Greek verb as something like "supplement." And that's what Paul does here: he takes the belief he and they share and builds upon it: "since we believe that Jesus died and rose again...." One might expect Paul to move from this into something like, "we also believe that we too will rise from the dead." But instead, Paul switches to a comparison that accents God's activity: "even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died." - Underlying this abrupt shift is the emphasis in early tradition that God raised Jesus from the dead (rather than, simply, Jesus rising from the dead), and so Paul takes this tack to articulate Christian hope in terms of God's action towards them, parallel to his action with Jesus. In doing this, Paul is teasing out for the Thessalonians the implications they have not yet grasped, but is rooted in what they know: they too will be raised from the dead.

It's important to note here that Paul's aim is pastoral. Even though he speaks of putting an end to mourning like the gentiles, it is clear what he means is that in the midst of grief there is hope, since he closes this instruction with the summation, "Therefore encourage one another with these words." He is interested in equipping the Thessalonians with a message by which they can comfort each other, since it gives hope in the face of death.

Paul's next section of instruction spins off this theme by addressing the topic of "the day of the Lord," about whose timing he says they need no instruction - another epistolary convention we've seen Paul use.

The reason they need no instruction is that they already know that such times and seasons are incalculable, since the day of the Lord will come without warning, "like a thief in the night." This imagery is drawn from a tradition of Jesus' words, such as we find in Matt 24.42-44: "Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 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. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." - Paul likewise
uses that metaphor for the unpredictability of the day of the Lord.

But notice how Paul then bends the metaphor to characterize the Thessalonians: the day of the Lord will not take them by surprise, like a thief in the night, because they do not belong to the night, the time when the thief strikes, but are children of the day. Notice how the term "the day," as a contrast to the night, now bears a meaning different than it did in the phrase "the day of the Lord," even as it plays off of it.

Lest we conclude that Paul's assurance they need no instruction alludes, after all, to some sort of secret "timetable" they possess, notice that Paul turns all this language to paraenetic purpose, admonishing his readers not to sleep, which is something one does at night, thus making one (by implication) a child of the night. But then Paul rings the changes in the metaphor again by equating sleep with "sobriety," which he plays off against nocturnal inebriation.

The point is that those who, like the Thessalonians, belong to the day (as a symbol for the Christian community) need not be caught off guard by the day of the Lord if they keep their wits about them morally, not joining in the carousing of the rest, who live as though sleep walking, oblivious to Jesus' imminent return, which will come unannounced.

And Paul brings us back full circle to his previous discussion, saying the Lord Jesus Christ died "so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him" and telling the Thessalonians to "encourage one another and build up each other," even as not too many verses earlier he said that his instruction on the resurrection of the dead would provide grounds to "encourage one another."

This extended discussion of resurrection and of "sobriety" in expectation of it suggests Paul had learned that the Thessalonians' faith, which had been so vibrant, was flagging in the face of both deaths in their community and the hardship of belonging to this new religion. And so Paul finds it necessary not only to give them hope in the face of death, but also to exhort them to maintain their distinction from their society (i.e. their holiness), whether in terms of sexual deportment or, more generally, not losing their clear vision and character as "children of the light."

Paul's exuberance in the early chapters of the letter shows his belief that they had started well and were on the right track, while his paraenesis reveals that he sees them vulnerable to delusion in facing the hardships of their life in faith.