

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS IN A GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT

Craig S. Keener and Keldie Paroschi

Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, USA

Introduction

Figurative wakefulness and literal sleeplessness are both a part of New Testament vocabulary and thought world. Jesus often spends the night in prayer, even after a late night of teaching and healing (Mk 1.32-35; Lk. 6.12; cf. Mt. 14.23).¹ Paul and Silas are found praying and singing at midnight, despite unfavorable circumstances in jail (Acts 16.25).² Paul also lists sleepless nights among his sacrificial sufferings for his churches (2 Cor. 6.5; 11:27; cf. 1 Thess. 2.9; 2 Thess. 3.8).³ The language of figurative wakefulness is used in

1. ‘One might expect that, after his day and night of strenuous activity in Capernaum (see 1:21–34), Jesus would want to sleep late, but instead he gets up early the next morning and goes off to pray in the wilderness without awakening his disciples (1:35)’ (Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB, 27; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], p. 203).

2. That Paul and Silas are still awake at midnight could be attributed to, in addition to the praise specified in 16.25, their wounds, the crowded jail, and the uncomfortable stocks (cf. Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary. Volume 3. 15:1–23:35* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014], pp. 289-90). For more on conditions in Greco-Roman prisons, see Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 123-27, 195-202.

3. Scholars disagree whether Paul’s sleepless nights were voluntary, referring to Paul’s missionary endeavors and his manual labor to sustain himself (cf. Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], pp. 472-73, 809; Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* [NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press,

the Gospels (cf. Mt. 24.43-44; Mk 13.33-37; Lk. 12.35, 39-40; 21.34-36; Jn 9.4; etc.) and in the epistles (cf. Rom. 13.11-13; 1 Cor. 16.13; Eph. 5.8-14; 6.18; 1 Thess. 5:6-8; 1 Pet. 5.8). In the Gospels, such vigilance is called for in preparation for the parousia,⁴ while in the Pauline epistles the language is used for the spiritual alertness that believers should have while living in the present age of darkness in anticipation of their final eschatological redemption.⁵

Amidst the various discussions on literal and figurative wakefulness, however, one must keep in mind that such language is rooted primarily in the daily rhythms and experiences of life in antiquity. Discussions on how to interpret metaphorical vigilance language in the New Testament is often limited to assessing it in light of metaphorical wakefulness in Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.⁶ Those who do mention sleep and wake cycles in antiquity do not cover the historical background in depth.⁷ Attempts to discern the nature of Paul's sleepless nights often fail to consider how his audiences would have envisioned his experience. This article therefore focuses on the range of reasons for sleeplessness in antiquity, thus providing a more detailed historical background for envisioning New Testament passages that refer to figurative wakefulness and literal sleeplessness.

2013], pp. 152, 269), or due to external circumstances such as the unfavorable conditions during his imprisonment in Philippi (cf. LN 23.73).

4. D. J. Graham, 'Watchfulness', *DLNTD*, pp. 1199-1200. The Gospels concretely exemplify failure to watch by the sleep of Jesus' closest disciples at Gethsemane (Mt. 26.40-45; Mk 14.37-41; Lk. 22.45-46).

5. David S. Dockery, 'Watchfulness', in Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 812.

6. See e.g. the oft-cited monograph by Evald Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1963), which focuses on figurative wakefulness in Qumran and early Jewish literature in order to understand the similar motif in the New Testament.

7. See e.g. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 2018), pp. 837-41.

Deliberate Wakefulness

Before modern lighting, sleep schedules often followed sunlight. Sleeping at night and being awake during the day were considered universal customs.⁸ Night, then, was properly for sleeping.⁹ For example, the ancient author Silius Italicus describes the soothing benefits of sleeping at night in his famous poem *Punica*: ‘Night, the mother of sleep [lat., *nox somni genetrix*], had eased the hearts of men of their troubles.’¹⁰ Yet both literally and figuratively, and for various reasons, some valued wakefulness.

While it was customary to sleep during the night, some nocturnal wakefulness was deliberate—and not all of it was for edifying reasons. Evening banquets, for instance, sometimes lasted long into the night.¹¹ All-night parties also appear in connection with weddings¹² and festivals.¹³ Thus, we read in many texts of people partying into the night, walking home drunk in the dark, and so forth.¹⁴ To leave a night banquet so late that the person would come across another who had started the day early, however, was unusual.¹⁵ Such should not be the practice of Christians, who are exhorted to ‘keep awake (*γρηγορῶμεν*) and be sober (*νήφωμεν*)’ in contrast to ‘those who get drunk (*οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι*) ... at night’ (1 Thess. 5.6-7). While ‘drunkenness as such is *not*

8. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 4.88-89; Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.8.

9. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.81; Fronto, *De Fer Als.* 3.8-9 (cf. *Ad M. Caes.* 1.5.1); Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.1.1.

10. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 15.612-613 (Duff, LCL).

11. E.g. Alciphron, *Paras.* 10.3.46.2; Statius, *Silv.* 2.4.6; Seneca the Younger, *Lucil.* 95.21; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.37; Rom. 13.12-13; 1 Thess. 5.7; see further Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 189.

12. Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.8.

13. Xenophon, *Eph.* 5.1, 7; Libanius, *Description* 5.6, 9.

14. John E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 201, citing Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 3.12; Propertius, *Elegies* 3.10.25-26; 4.8; Petronius, *Sat.* 73.6; 78.6-7; cf. John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (LEC, 2; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 119, following Donald Sperber, ‘On Pubs and Policemen in Roman Palestine’, *ZDMG* 120 (1970), pp. 257-63.

15. Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 69.18.

Paul's point',¹⁶ he is clearly using imagery connected to immoral nighttime activities to make a point about how believers should distinguish themselves from unbelievers in their way of life and eschatological perspective.¹⁷ The more nuanced meanings of 'staying alert' or 'being constantly watchful' for γρηγορέω,¹⁸ and being 'level-headed or self-controlled' in thought and behavior for νήφω¹⁹ can further demonstrate that Paul is concerned with active and engaged wakefulness on the part of the believers, rather than merely staying physically awake and sober.

All-night revels were often subject to ridicule or criticism.²⁰ One who partied till midnight and, having drunk too much, could not get up the next morning was often derided.²¹ Thus lazy banqueters (and even a few people considered efficient in their daily business) might spend most of their night in banquets, sleeping over the hangover until noon.²² Staying up as late as one wished and sleeping in as long as one wished were considered marks of excessive leisure, though tolerable for rulers,²³ the retired,²⁴ and those on vacation.²⁵ Some Jewish sages contended that morning sleep would exclude a person from the coming world.²⁶

16. Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), p. 194. Emphasis original.

17. Fee, *First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, pp. 192-95.

18. See s.v. γρηγορέω in J. Diggle et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), I, p. 315.

19. See s.v. νήφω in J. Diggle et al. (eds.), *Cambridge Greek Lexicon*, II, p. 315.

20. E.g., Seneca the Elder, *Controv.* 2.1.15; Philo, *Cher.* 92-93; Suetonius, *Jul.* 52.1; *Tib.* 42.1; *Tit.* 7.1; Libanius, *Description* 6.6. Partying at night could be said to dull the senses (Livy, *History of Rome* 39.15.9).

21. Lucian, *Hermot.* 11.

22. Plutarch, *Alex.* 23.5; Seneca the Younger, *Lucil.* 83.14, who would have normally considered this behavior lazy (see also 122.1-2); cf. Seneca the Elder, *Controv.* 1.pref.8); Aulus Gellius, *Noc. att.* 7.10.5; Philo, *Cher.* 92-93.

23. *m. Ber.* 1.2; Hilary Le Cornu and Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Academon, 2003), p. 93.

24. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 3.1.4; 7.3.2; Pliny held a generally high view of the privileges of retirement (4.23.3).

25. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 9.36.1. In this passage, Pliny woke about sunrise, per his habit, but remained in bed afterward.

26. *m. 'Abot.* 3.10.

But not all nocturnal activity was condemned, including in early Christianity. Activities such as staying up after dark to write letters or speeches by lamp light were not attributed to laziness.²⁷ Some Greek and Roman intellectuals²⁸ and Jewish teachers studied at night,²⁹ especially those who had to work during the day.³⁰ Greek sages might stay awake for contemplation,³¹ while Jewish thinkers might do so to devote themselves to the study of Scripture.³² A biographer who mentions that Pythagoras was awake at night hastily explains that this was due to his attention to astronomy, not partying.³³ One could also stay up late to catch up with old friends or family after a long absence,³⁴ or to communicate as much information as possible before a departure. Thus Luke reports how Paul stayed up until late into the night with believers in Troas before his departure the following morning (Acts 20.7, 11).³⁵

27. Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 4.5.3; James Ker, 'Nocturnal Writers in Imperial Rome: The Culture of *lucubratio*', *CP* 99 (2004), pp. 209-42 (speeches and books; see also Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.3.26). But people more often studied in mornings (Vitruvius, *arch.* 6.4.1).

28. Cicero, *Att.* 7.7; 13.26, 38; Plutarch, *Dem.* 8.4; 12.5-6; Galen, *Hygiene* 308K; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.11.591 (1.21.518, however, seems to view it as unusual [and one worked by night so he could study by day; see Valerius Maximus, *Factor.* 8.7.ext.11]).

29. E.g., 1QS 6.6-7; *t. Shab.* 1.13; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 3b; *Ber.* 43b, bar.; 'Erub. 18b, 65a; *Tamid* 32b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 7.4; *Exod. R.* 47.5; *Lev. R.* 19.1; *Num. R.* 15.16; S. Safrai, 'Home and Family', in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974-76), II, pp. 728-92 (745); cf. Jn 3.2.

30. S. Safrai, 'Education and the Study of the Torah', in *Jewish People in the First Century*, II, pp. 945-70 (964-65).

31. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.30.

32. Ps. 119.55, 148; 1QS 6.7-8; *Gen. R.* 17.5; *ARN* 29A.

33. Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 25.112. On other occasions he could avoid food, sleep and movement (3.16).

34. *Jub.* 31.24.

35. For the traditional Middle Eastern custom of nocturnal discussion applied to Paul's sleepless nights, see E.F.F. Bishop, 'The "Why" of Sleepless Nights', *EvQ* 37 (1965), pp. 29-31.

Many insisted that a disciplined person should rise early.³⁶ For Roman aristocrats, for example, business started early in the morning and ended at noon.³⁷ Jesus prayed early, though presumably to have time alone with his Father before others' demands on his time would start (Mk 1.35).

Sometimes people associated avoidance of unnecessary sleep with what they considered healthy self-discipline and hard work.³⁸ Thus, Pliny the Younger praises the diligence of his uncle and namesake, Pliny the Elder, for his 'capacity to manage with the minimum of sleep. From the feast of Vulcan [August 23] onwards he began to work by lamplight, not with any idea of making a propitious start but to give himself more time for study, and would rise half-way through the night; in winter it would often be at midnight or an hour later, and two at the latest. Admittedly he fell asleep very easily, and would often doze and wake up again during his work' (Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 3.5.8).³⁹

Some sources warn against excessive sleep as a form of laziness.⁴⁰ Students often dozed during dull lectures, arousing their instructors' dis-

36. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 52.1, where he writes he rises at the first hour, about seven in the morning, which is apparently late for him; cf. Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Histor.* 3.2.15.

37. E.g., Horace, *Ep.* 2.1.103-105; Plutarch, *Quaest. rom.* 84; *Mor.* 284D. See further discussion, with different sources, in Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire* (4 vols.; trans. Leonard A. Magnus, J.H. Freese and A.B. Gough; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1908-13), I, pp. 86-93; Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire* (ed. Henry T. Rowell; trans. E.O. Lorimer; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 151.

38. Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 9.64.2; Livy, *History of Rome* 23.18.12; Sallust, *Bell. Cat.* 5.3; 27.2; 54.4; *Bell. Jug.* 85.33; Seneca the Elder, *Controv.* 1.pref.17; Velleius Paterculus, *Hist. rom.* 2.41.2; 2.88.2; Musonius Rufus's lecture 18B (Cora E. Lutz, 'Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates', *Yale Classical Studies* 10 [1947], pp. 3-147 [120 (line 4)]); Silius Italicus, *Punica* 9.4-5; Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Histor.* 3.2.15; Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.3; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 3.5.8-9; Pseudo-Crates, *Ep.* 19; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 16.69; 28.153; 32.226; Libanius, *Maxim* 1.4, 10, 13, 17; 2.12; *Encom.* 5.12; *Anecdote* 2.10; 3.30-31, 35; cf. sleep wherever needed in Philostratus, *Heroikos.* 27.11; 33.41.

39. The translation is from Radice (LCL), p. 175.

40. E.g. Sallust, *Bell. Cat.* 13.3; Livy, *History of Rome* 23.18.12; Prov. 6.9-10; 10.5; 20.13; 24.33; *Syr. Men.* 67-71.

may.⁴¹ Such practices were sometimes punishable. The penalty for falling asleep in an assembly of the Qumran community was expulsion from the assembly for thirty days and a reduction in food for ten.⁴² Rabbis were more apt to arouse drowsy audiences with merely striking statements,⁴³ but a particularly hot-tempered Greek sophist might strike the student physically to awaken him.⁴⁴ The tyrant Nero reportedly punished Vespasian for falling asleep during Nero's singing.⁴⁵ In 2 Thessalonians, Paul reproaches some of his readers' idleness and laziness and exhorts them to follow his example of working 'night and day' so that he would not be a burden to others (2 Thess. 3.6-8).⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that in this case staying awake to work during the night is presented positively in contrast to laziness.

In a previous letter to the Thessalonians, the same reference is made to working 'night and day', this time in connection to the amount of work Paul must have undergone in order to be self-sufficient and preach the gospel at the same time (1 Thess. 2.9).⁴⁷ Tentmakers and leather workers such as Paul (σκηνοποιός; cf. Acts 18.3; 1 Cor. 4.12) usually worked long hours, and while artisans such as leatherworkers were generally higher in income and status than peasants, they were still looked down on by the elites for their so-called degrading work.⁴⁸ Considering the difficulties of his trade, along with the ad-

41. Fronto, *Eloq.* 4.3.

42. E.g. 1QS 7.10; 4Q266 (fragment 18; columns 4.5-6).

43. E.g. the story of R. Judah ha-Nasi in *Cant. R.* 1.15.3; 4.1.2. Sometimes readers also complained that particular works made them laugh or put them to sleep (e.g. one speaker in Tacitus, *Dial.* 21).

44. Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.8.578, whose narration suggests that most understood that this was too harsh; hearers sometimes did fall asleep.

45. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.4.

46. Fee notes that the Greek νυκτός καὶ ἡμέρας is 'a genitive of time (= during the day and night), rather than "all night and day"' (*First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, pp. 329-31).

47. 'As the present participle ἐργαζόμενοι ("working") implies, their working night and day was done simultaneously with their preaching of the gospel' (Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], p. 104).

48. On the social status and income of leatherworkers, see discussion in Keener, *Acts*, pp. 2722-28; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 23-29.

ditional ‘work’ of preaching the gospel, which for Paul would have been his primary concern, one can imagine the level of sleep-deprivation and exhaustion that Paul must have suffered for the sake of the gospel. Most scholars consider Paul’s references to sleeplessness (*ἀγρυπνίαις*; cf. 2 Cor. 6.5; 11.27) to be allusions to his manual labor ‘night and day’ in order to sustain himself.⁴⁹ The noun *ἀγρυπνία* is found only in these two passages in Paul in reference to literal sleeplessness.⁵⁰

Various other forms of work demanded sacrificing sleep periodically and working in the night as well as the day. Libanius, for example, suggests that merchants prosper by such activity⁵¹ and warns that counselors and especially kings should not spend the entire night sleeping.⁵² Sailors depend on their ships’ helmsmen to stay awake.⁵³ Aristocrats could expect free persons to sleep more than slaves.⁵⁴ Shepherds needed to guard their flocks at night.⁵⁵ Although sleep was necessary, people recognized that some sorts of tasks required vigilance.

Spiritual vigilance is a common theme throughout the New Testament. Jesus urges his disciples to watch and pray so they do not fall into temptation (Mt. 26.41). The theme of prayer and watchfulness as a way to resist the devil

49. But cf. LN 23.73, who consider Paul’s sleeplessness to be due to difficult external circumstances such as his imprisonment in Philippi.

50. The noun *ἀγρυπνία*, always used in the plural in reference to literal sleeplessness, is the opposite of *ὑπνος*, which is almost always used of literal sleep in the New Testament (cf. Lk. 9.32; Jn 11.13; Acts 20.9), with the one exception of a metaphorical usage in Paul’s exhortation that “the hour has come for you to wake [*ἐγερθῆναι*] from sleep [*ἐξ ὑπνου*]” (Rom. 13.11). The related verb *ἀγρυπνέω* is used elsewhere in the New Testament in the figurative sense of spiritual watchfulness (see below). In classical literature, the adjective *ἀγρυπνος* can also apply to ‘passing the night outside’, as well as ‘sleepless’ or ‘wakeful’. D. Sängler, ‘ὑπνος’, *EDNT*, III, pp. 400-401; s.v. ‘ἀγρυπνία’, *BDAG*; s.v. *ἀγρυπνος* in J. Diggle *et al.* (eds.), *Cambridge Greek Lexicon*, I, p. 13.

51. Libanius, *Anecdote* 3.24.

52. Libanius, *Maxim* 1 (citing Homer, *Il.* 2.24); 2.12; night was suitable for planning (*Maxim* 1.10, 17).

53. Libanius, *Maxim* 1.13; 2.8.

54. Musonius Rufus’s lecture 18B (see pp. 118 [line 36]-20 [line 4]); Fronto, *De Fer Als.* 3.6.

55. Gen. 31.39-40; Lk. 2.8; cf. Acts 20.28; Alciphron, *Farm.* 18, 3.21.1; Philostratus, *Heroikos* 4.3.

was modeled by Jesus himself (Mt. 4.1-11) and is also found in Paul and Peter (Eph. 6.10-18; 1 Pet. 5.8).⁵⁶ Spiritual vigilance in the Synoptic Gospels is especially important in preparation for the parousia, mentioned both in Jesus' teachings (cf. Mk 13.33-37; Lk. 21.34-36) and parables (cf. Mt. 24.32-51; 25.1-13).⁵⁷ In the Pauline epistles, believers are called to be watchful and alert while living in the present age of darkness, but also anticipating their final eschatological redemption (cf. Rom. 13.11-13; 1 Cor. 16.13; Eph. 5.8-14; 1 Thess. 5.6-8).⁵⁸ James and Revelation also use the vigilance theme to rebuke spiritual lethargy and to call for preparation for the coming of the Lord (Jas 5.7; Rev. 3.2-3; 16.15).⁵⁹ In such contexts, the verb *γρηγορέω* is the most commonly used, predominantly in exhortations, both literal (cf. Mt. 26.38, 40, 41; Mk 14.34, 37, 38) and figurative (cf. Mt. 24.42; 25.13; 1 Cor. 16.13; 1 Thess. 5.6; 1 Pet. 5.8; Rev. 3.2, 3).⁶⁰ Less common is *ἀγρυπνέω*, which is only used of figurative vigilance and wakefulness (cf. Mk 13.33; Lk. 21.36; Eph. 6.18).⁶¹

The image of vigilance through the night applied especially to guards, particularly frequently in military contexts. Soldiers might march through the night to prepare a surprise attack,⁶² although this left them more vulnerable themselves the following night.⁶³ Certainly the sleep of guards or others ex-

56. Dockery, 'Watchfulness', p. 812.

57. Dockery, 'Watchfulness', p. 812. Cf. Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness*, pp. 78-132.

58. Cf. Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness*, pp. 25-59; Fee, *First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, pp. 192-95; Moo, *Letter to the Romans*, pp. 837-42; Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), pp. 324-33; Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 1336.

59. Graham, 'Watchfulness', *DLNTD*, p. 1199.

60. J.M. Nützel, 'γρηγορέω', *EDNT*, I, pp. 264-65; cf. *s.v.* 'γρηγορέω', BDAG; A. Oepke, 'ἐγείρω, κτλ', *TDNT*, II, pp. 338-39. Note that *γρηγορέω* is used with the meaning 'to be alive' in contrast to *καθεύδω* 'to be dead' in 1 Thess. 5.10.

61. *s.v.* 'ἀγρυπνέω', BDAG; Sängner, 'ύπνος', *EDNT*, III, p. 401.

62. Cf. nocturnal attacks in Gen. 14.15; 2 Kgs 8.21; 2 Chron. 21.9; Jer. 6.5; 2 Macc. 8.7; Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Histor.* 4.13.4 (cf. 4.13.8-9); 7.9.16; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.80; 3.23; Suetonius, *Otho* 8.2; Plutarch, *Oth.* 3.3.

63. Justin, *Epit. hist. Tr. Pomp.* 13.8.5. For lack of sleep weakening an army, see also Justin, *Epit. hist. Tr. Pomp.* 24.8.12; hypothetically weakening a ship's pilot, Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 77/78.7.

pected to be vigilant often caused grave trouble;⁶⁴ the slaughter of sleeping enemies is so widespread in ancient texts that it can be considered a literary motif.⁶⁵ Warfare typically ended at night,⁶⁶ making night attacks all the more unexpected and deadly.⁶⁷ Failure in vigilance could lead to enemies breaking in, or the besieged breaking out.⁶⁸ Since entire units and armies could be destroyed through their failure to adequately keep watch,⁶⁹ the attentiveness of sentinels was essential.⁷⁰

64. E.g. Alciphron, *Farm.* 18, 3.21.1, 3; Philostratus, *Heroikos* 25.14 (citing Homer, *Od.* 10.31).

65. E.g. Homer, *Il.* 10.465-514; Vergil, *Aen.* 9.314-366 (though cf. 9.375-445); cf. Homer, *Il.* 10.326-327; Plutarch, *Cam.* 33.4; 1 Sam. 26.12.

66. Homer, *Il.* 2.387; 7.282; 8.529-530; 11.209; 14.259-261; Arrian, *Anab. Alex.* 1.19.2.

67. Homer, *Il.* 10.100-101; Arrian, *Anab. Alex.* 1.4.1. The same was true for midday attacks when guards might take naps (Thucydides, *Hist.* 6.100.1; Polybius, *Hist.* 9.17.3; Josephus, *Ant.* 7.48).

68. E.g. Homer, *Il.* 10.309-312, 416-421; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.47.1; 7.11.2-3; 9.34.4; Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 3.55.1; 19.95.5-6; Vergil, *Aen.* 9.314-366, 375-445; Livy, *History of Rome* 24.46.4; 36.23.10-36.24.6; 44.33.8-9; Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 58.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.356, 370; *Life* 405; Polybius, *Hist.* 1.19.12.

69. Homer, *Il.* 10.309-312, 416-421, 471-497; Euripides, *Rhes.* (probably genuinely Euripidean, though this is hotly debated; see Gilbert Norwood, *Greek Tragedy* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1960), pp. 291-95); Thucydides, *Hist.* 4.32.1; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.6.35; Polybius, *Hist.* 11.3.1; Vergil, *Aen.* 9.314-366, 375-445; Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 3.55.1; 19.95.5-6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.47.1; 7.11.2-3; 9.34.4; Livy, *History of Rome* 24.46.4; 36.23.10-36.24.6; 44.33.8-9; Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 58.1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.48; Plutarch, *Cam.* 23.6; 33.4; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.356, 370; *War* 6.68-69; *Life* 405; cf. Polybius, *Hist.* 3.67.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 5.20. For the taking of cities thus, see e.g. Thucydides, *Hist.* 2.2.3; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 7.5.21; Polybius, *Hist.* 7.15.6; 7.18.1-10; Plutarch, *Cam.* 35.3; for escape from cities thus, Polybius, *Hist.* 1.19.12.

70. E.g. Xenophon, *Cyr.* 3.3.28; 5.3.44; *Anab.* 4.5.19; Livy, *History of Rome* 24.28.2; 24.37.4; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.76; Fronto, *Ad Verum Imp.* 2.1.19. For the night watch, see also e.g. Polybius, *Hist.* 14.3.6; for texts praising soldiers staying awake for the army's good, Homer, *Il.* 10.159, 164; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 9.4-5; Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 73.3-5; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.50; for faithful servants watching for masters, Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1-25. The captain of the temple guard could beat any guard he found asleep (*m. Mid.* 1.2).

Long before Rome's military supremacy, camp discipline demanded severe punishment for guards who fell asleep on duty. Thus guards who failed to keep the killers out could face scourging and/or beheading,⁷¹ and they might thus understandably protest vociferously that they did not fall asleep.⁷² Punishments could be so dreadful that some Assyrians who fell asleep at the night watch allegedly deserted to the Indians to escape it.⁷³

Among Romans, if a soldier was found asleep during the night watch all those endangered by his negligence would strike him with hands or stones; if he survived he was permanently banned from his country.⁷⁴ When a Roman garrison fell asleep and was nearly captured, the captain of the guard was hurled over a cliff the next morning.⁷⁵ Less severely, the captain of the Levite temple guard could beat any guard he found asleep.⁷⁶

Paul mentions his working night and day, perhaps suggesting labor that begins before sunrise (1 Thess. 2.9; 2 Thess. 3.8).⁷⁷ The phrase 'night and day' or 'day and night' appears widely in ancient sources. Because day follows night in Jewish convention (cf. Gen. 1.5, 8), scholars often contend that 'night and day' is the more Jewish convention, whereas 'day and night' is more typical of gentiles. Some evidence may suggest this tendency, but it is hardly consistent. 'Night and day' appears four times in the Old Testament, once in Mark, three times in Luke–Acts and five times in Paul; it also appears in various other Jewish sources.⁷⁸ 'Day and night', however, appears not only

71. Euripides, *Rhes*. 812-819.

72. Euripides, *Rhes*. 825-827.

73. Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 2.18.8.

74. Polybius, *Hist.* 6.37.1-6; see further Florence Dupont, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (trans. Christopher Woodall; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 126; cf. punishments, often lethal, after investigation of 'any misdemeanour on watch' in Yann Le Bohec, 'Vigiliae', in Hubert Cancik et al. (eds.), *New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (15 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2002–10), XV, p. 408. An officer who failed in properly making rounds of the night watch was also subject to punishment (Valerius Maximus, *Factor.* 8.1 [see condemnation 6]).

75. Plutarch, *Cam.* 27.2, 5.

76. *m. Mid.* 1.2.

77. Cf. Wanamaker, *Epistle to the Thessalonians*, p. 104.

78. *1 En.* 82.8; *Sib. Or.* 4.13; *4 Ezra* 9.44; Philo, *Plant.* 118; *Her.* 164; *Abr.* 155; *Ios.* 86; *Mos.* 2.122; *Spec.* 1.156; 3.17, 39; *Virt.* 6; *Praem.* 151; Josephus, *Life* 11; *Ant.* 2.274; 7.367; 16.260; *War* 1.492; 5.274; *Apion* 1.164.

in Hellenistic Jewish sources⁷⁹ but also in more traditional ones.⁸⁰ The Greco-Roman evidence is also mixed, sometimes noting ‘day’ first⁸¹ but on other occasions starting with ‘night’.⁸² The contrast some commentators make between Greek and Jewish usage is thus exaggerated.

In either sequence, ‘day and night’ is what some would call a merism,⁸³ a combination of opposites suggesting the whole (e.g. Gen. 1.1; Deut. 6.7), thus in this case, ‘continually’ or ‘all the time’. This phrase appears both in biblical⁸⁴ and Greco-Roman literature.⁸⁵ In addition to being a figure encompassing the whole, the phrase is also used hyperbolically, such as in Acts 20.31

79. 2 Macc. 13.10; Josephus, *Ant.* 5.60; 6.223; 12.347; 13.217; *War* 3.174; 5.31; 6.301; *Exod. R.* 47.5; twenty-seven times in Philo (e.g. *Opif.* 56, 80; *Conf. Ling.* 151; *Migr.* 111, 157).

80. 1QS 6.6; 1QH^a 16.30; 18.17; 4Q389 (fragment E.2); 4Q412 (fragment 1.10); 4Q508 (fragment 41.2); 11QT 57.10; *1 En.* 18.6; 24.1; 72.22, 37; 104.8; *2 En.* 11.2; 13.1; 16.7; *Jub.* 6.4 (cf. 25.2).

81. Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 38/39.9.1; Cicero, *Fam.* 14.3.2; *Att.* 7.9; *Handbook on Electioneering* 44; *Vat.* 11.26; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.74; Pseudo-Quintilian, *Decl. Maior.* 299.5.

82. E.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.25.70; Horace, *Sat.* 1.1.76; Velleius Paterculus, *Hist. rom.* 2.41.3; Libanius, *Topics* 5.5; Porphyry, *Marc.* 10.177-178.

83. For this sense of merism, see e.g. John H. Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 71; August H. Konkel, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), p. 273, though this is not the technical ancient rhetorical definition (on which see R. Dean Anderson Jr, *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures, and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian* [Leuven: Peeters, 2000], p. 70).

84. Gen. 1.14-18; 8.22; Deut. 28.66; 1 Kgs 8.29, 59; 2 Chron. 6.20; Neh. 4.9; Est. 4.16; Ps. 1.2; 32.4; 42.3; 55.10; 121.6; Isa. 27.3; 28.19; 34.10; 38.12-13; 60.11; 62.6; Jer. 9.1; 14.17; 16.13; 33.20, 25; 36.20; Lam. 2.18; Hos. 4.5; Zech. 14.7; cf. *3 Macc.* 5.11; Mk 5.5; Rev. 12.10; 14.11; 20.10. Often this language applied to the pillar and cloud (Exod. 10.13; 13.21-22; 40.38; Num. 9.16; 14.14; Deut. 1.33; Neh. 9.12, 19; cf. Ps. 78.14; Isa. 4.5). Cf. also *4 Ezra* 9.44; *Exod. R.* 47.5.

85. E.g. Cicero, *Att.* 7.9; *Fam.* 14.3.2; *Vat.* 11.26; *Tusc.* 5.25.70; Vergil, *Georg.* 3.341; Horace, *Sat.* 1.1.76; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 1.604; Musonius Rufus’s lecture 11 (p. 84 [line 10]); Arrian, *Anab. Alex.* 7.11.4; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.74; Menander Rhetor, 2.3; 384.29-30; Porphyry, *Marc.* 10.177-178; Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.3.4 (working night and day); 1.53.1; Josephus, *War* 6.301. Cf. ‘neither darkness nor day’ in Silius Italicus, *Punica* 6.562.

(‘Therefore be alert [γρηγορεῖτε], remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day [νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν] to admonish every one with tears’),⁸⁶ since it is impossible that Paul literally warned everyone continually without sleeping.⁸⁷ Had the author intended all day and night, he would have used the accusative; the genitive can mean ‘during the night and day’, hence for parts of them.⁸⁸ Paul may have been active during part of the night and most of the day, and he does speak of ‘sleepless nights’ (2 Cor. 6.5; 11.27); but we need not think of supernatural sustenance that rendered sleep unnecessary! Urban laborers normally worked from dawn till sundown, apart from their midday siesta,⁸⁹ so long hours were not unusual during daylight.

Involuntary Sleeplessness

Less celebrated was wakefulness that was involuntary. Sleeplessness was a potential subject of lament.⁹⁰ Some texts mention individuals who simply ex-

86. As Duane F. Watson, ‘Paul’s Speech to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20.17–38): Epideictic Rhetoric of Farewell’, in Duane F. Watson (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (JSNTSup, 50; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), pp. 184–208 (203), points out (citing for hyperbole *Rhet. Her.* 4.33.44; Longinus, *Subl.* 38.1–6; Cicero, *De or.* 3.53.203; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.67–76; Demetrius, *Eloc.* 2.124–127). On this figure, see further Anaximenes of Lampsacus, *Rhet. Alex.* 11, 1430b.16–19; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.139; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.7; Galen O. Rowe, ‘Style’, in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 121–57 (128); Anderson, *Glossary*, pp. 122–24; see e.g. Philostratus, *Heroikos* 48.11; *Cant. R.* 1.15.3. One should, however, avoid hyperbole in propositions and other places where literal language was expected (*Rhet. Her.* 2.20.32).

87. Cf. the son who spends ‘night and day’ in banquets and brothels (Seneca the Elder, *Controv.* 2.1.15): this means that he does this during night and during day, not that he commits all 24-hour days to these activities.

88. Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 31.

89. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), pp. 25, 28, 61.

90. Statius, *Silv.* 5.4.

perienced difficulty sleeping at night,⁹¹ including the emperor Augustus.⁹² Suetonius reports that the emperor could sleep only seven hours, often waking three to four times during the night. When waking, Augustus often needed ‘readers or story-tellers, and when sleep came to him he often prolonged it until after daylight’ (*Aug.* 78.1-2).⁹³

Ancient literature attests a wide variety of causes for involuntary sleeplessness, similar to the significant array of difficulties people may experience today. Physical maladies such as sickness (see discussion below on medical sources), hunger,⁹⁴ indigestion from heavy foods⁹⁵ or hardships in general⁹⁶ could lead to sleeplessness. Since idleness during the day could be thought to contribute to sleeplessness, being physically active during the day was said to help relieve it.⁹⁷ On the other hand, being excessively busy and devoted to work could limit sleep.⁹⁸ Sleep could also be withheld deliberately as a form of torture.⁹⁹

91. Fronto, *Ad Am.* 2.2.

92. Suetonius, *Aug.* 78.1-2. By contrast, Suetonius considers the emperor Claudius’s nocturnal wakefulness and daylight dozing (*Claud.* 33.2) a lack of moderation resembling his banquets (33.1) and sexual activity (33.2).

93. The translation is from Rolfe (LCL), I, p. 243. Regarding Augustus, Suetonius continues: ‘He detested early rising and when he had to get up earlier than usual because of some official or religious duty,’ he would spend ‘the night in the room of one of his friends near the appointed place. Even so, he often suffered from want of sleep, and he would drop off while he was being carried through the streets...’ (*Aug.* 78.1-2; see Rolfe (LCL), I, pp. 243-45). For reading to a king to lull him back to sleep, see also *Est.* 6.1.

94. Libanius, *Invective* 6.16.

95. Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 3.13, reflecting wider Pythagorean perspectives.

96. Xenophon, *Anab.* 3.1.11; 7.6.36; Arrian, *Ind.* 34.7; *Gen.* 31.40; perhaps 2 *Cor.* 11.26-27; Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.2.3.

97. *m. Ab.* 3.4.

98. Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 13.

99. Aulus Gellius, *Bell. afr.* 7.4.4; Cicero, *Pis.* 19.43; Valerius Maximus, *Factor.* 9.2.ext.1.

At other times, insomnia reflected emotional distress. It could be caused by mourning,¹⁰⁰ love-sickness¹⁰¹ or jealousy.¹⁰² Some love charms mandated that the object of affection be unable to sleep until she consents.¹⁰³ Insomnia could also stem from anxiety,¹⁰⁴ which in turn could stem from matters such as vice¹⁰⁵ or guilt.¹⁰⁶ Sleep-inhibiting anxiety could also stem from concern for others.¹⁰⁷ Xenophon, for example, reminds his army that he ‘has passed many sleepless nights for your sake’ (*Anab.* 7.6.36).¹⁰⁸

Fear was likewise a common cause of sleeplessness,¹⁰⁹ not least for soldiers before facing battle.¹¹⁰ One might also stay awake all night in preparation or in eagerness for a coming battle.¹¹¹ Some recounted that Alexander of Macedon, worn out by worry before a battle, finally succumbed to sleep and had to be awakened;¹¹² yet unlike the Persians, he and his troops could sleep.¹¹³

Urban housing could make sleep more challenging. Privacy was next to impossible on upper floors of apartment buildings; sleeping cubicles were small, and other space would have to be shared with other dwellers.¹¹⁴ Cer-

100. Homer, *Il.* 24.4-6; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.423-425; *Tristia* 3.8.27.

101. Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 1.6; PGM 101.5-7; Aristaenetus, *Erot. Ep.* 1.10 (line 37); 1.27 (lines 32-34).

102. Plutarch, *Them.* 3.3-4.

103. Peter G. Bolt, *Jesus' Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark's Early Readers* (SNTSMS, 125; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 163, citing PGM 12.376-396 and its potentially deadly intended consequences.

104. Homer, *Il.* 2.2-3; Aristophanes, *Lys.* 27; Livy, *History of Rome* 40.56.9; Plutarch, *Cic.* 35.3; *Alex.* 31.4; Ps. 102.7; cf. Cicero, *Att.* 13.26.

105. Plutarch, *Virt. vit.* 2; *Mor.* 100F.

106. *Jos. Asen.* 18.4 MSS; cf. fear of consequences in Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Histor.* 6.10.14.

107. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 7.5.1; Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 3.16.1; perhaps 2 Cor. 11:27-28; Galen, *Hygiene* 308K; Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.48.

108. The translation is from Brownson (LCL), III, pp. 336-37.

109. Publilius Syrus, *Sent.* 359; Plutarch, *Alex.* 31.4.

110. Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Histor.* 4.13.23; 7.8.2; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 13.256-257.

111. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 9.4-5.

112. Justin, *Epit. hist. Tr. Pomp.* 11.13.1-2.

113. Plutarch, *Alex.* 31.4; 32.1-2.

114. Stambaugh, *Ancient Roman City*, p. 178.

tainly snoring was well-known, not least among those who imbibed too heavily before sleep.¹¹⁵ Poor families would share some open space in apartments and retire to small cubicles, often without lighting from outside, to sleep; yet ‘Street noises probably penetrated even to the interior cubacula and made sleep difficult.’¹¹⁶ The physician Galen observed that ‘clamor from neighbors at night, barking dogs, or some unpleasant news produce insomnia in those who are sick’ (CAM 290K).¹¹⁷

Some wealthier homes allowed for much quieter nights; Pliny the Younger had a bedroom for night use ‘which neither the voices of my young slaves, the sea’s murmur, nor the noise of a storm can penetrate, any more than the lightning’s flash and light of day unless the shutters are open’ (Ep. 2.17.22).¹¹⁸ Still, disturbance was inevitable even for the wealthy. It is reported, for instance, how an owl disturbed Augustus’s sleep.¹¹⁹

Ancient Medical Discussions of Sleeplessness

Jesus’ disciples in John’s Gospel appear aware of the health benefits of sleep: ‘Therefore the disciples told him, “Lord, if he has been sleeping (κεκοίμηται), he will get better”’ (Jn 11.12).¹²⁰ They were not alone. Others in antiquity also understood that sleep could aid one’s recovery.¹²¹ To support health, for

115. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.13.

116. Stambaugh, *Ancient Roman City*, p. 178, citing Martial, *Epigrams* 12.57.3-17.

117. The translation is from Johnston (LCL), p. 113.

118. The translation is from Radice (LCL), I, p. 141.

119. Macrobius, *Sat.* 2.4.26.

120. Note that in this dialogue between Jesus and the disciples (Jn 11.11-14), there is a play on the word *κοιμάω*, which can refer to literal sleep or as a euphemism for death (cf. *s.v.* ‘κοιμάω’, BDAG). In v. 13, the author clarifies that Jesus had spoken of literal death by using the noun *θάνατος* while the disciples thought he was referring to ‘taking a rest in sleep’ (*τῆς κοιμήσεως τοῦ ὕπνου*). The noun *ὕπνος*, which is almost always used of literal sleep (*s.v.* ‘ὕπνος’, BDAG), helps disambiguate the meaning of *κοίμησις*.

121. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 66.11; Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 4.5.3; 4.6.1; 5.1-2.

example, Pliny the Elder prudently recommended especially exercise and ‘self-treatment by sleep’ (*Nat.* 28.14.53).¹²²

In his work *On Property Management*, the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus (c. 110–30 BCE) noted that many considered rising during the night ‘useful for health as well as for property management and for philosophy’ (column B; lines 6-8).¹²³ Not surprisingly for an Epicurean, Philodemus himself demurred (column 11; lines 30-41).¹²⁴ Others also recognized that lack of sleep could harm one’s health;¹²⁵ in one ancient ghost story, the terrified occupants of a haunted home lacked sleep, hence sickened and died.¹²⁶ Some considered it physically impossible for a person to remain awake for three straight days.¹²⁷

Medical writers address sleeplessness as a problem¹²⁸ and attribute it to various causes.¹²⁹ Old age would bring insomnia, it was thought, because individuals become dryer then, as opposed to the moistness of infancy.¹³⁰ Physical sickness was a common and understandable cause of inability to sleep.¹³¹

122. The translation is from Jones (LCL), p. 39. As already noted, his namesake nephew apparently doubted that Pliny followed such sleep advice himself.

123. The translation is from Philodemus, *On Property Management* (trans. Voula Tsouna; SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World, 33; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), p. 11.

124. See Philodemus, *On Property Management*, p. 33.

125. Fronto, *Ep.* 6 (note that this is M. Aurelius’s letter to Fronto, who preserved their correspondence).

126. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 7.27.5-6.

127. *y. Sukkah.* 5.2, §1, bar.

128. E.g. Hippocrates, *Acut.* 42; Celsus, *Med.* 5.28.11; 2.1.18; Galen, *MM* 2.2.82K; *MM* 8.538K; *Thras.* 40.885K.

129. Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 17.10 links it (along with other problems) to the brain.

130. Imagined discussion in Macrobius, *Sat.* 7.10.9.

131. E.g. Hippocrates, *Acut.* 1–2; *Prorrh.* 1.135-136; *Prorrh.* 2.18; *Morb.* 4.26; *Epid.* 1 (case 5); *Epid.* 3.1 (cases 9-11); Celsus, *Med.* 2.7.20; 4.14.1; outside medical writers, e.g., Fronto, *Ad Am.* 2.2; *Ad M. Caes.* 5.58 (73).

This was true, for example, of fever,¹³² hemorrhage,¹³³ various uterine and menstrual problems,¹³⁴ wounds,¹³⁵ and of course, more generally, pain.¹³⁶

Causation could also work the other direction. Lack of sleep could bring about fevers,¹³⁷ derangement,¹³⁸ indigestion¹³⁹ or could otherwise undermine health.¹⁴⁰ Insomnia could also reduce the pulse rate¹⁴¹ and dry out the body,¹⁴² although insomnia or drowsiness did not always impair normal life activities.¹⁴³ Sometimes insomnia could be merely coincident rather than causal,¹⁴⁴ or might merely portend or reveal other health issues.¹⁴⁵ Galen believed that a good solution to illnesses caused by insomnia is sleep,¹⁴⁶ which he therefore tried to help induce.¹⁴⁷

Not all ancient prescriptions for curing sleeplessness were equally helpful. ‘When someone cannot sleep’, Macrobius concludes, ‘physicians treat him with cool substances, now poppy juice, now mandrake or the like, including

132. Hippocrates, *Acut.* 1-2; *Prorrh.* 1.74 (cf. 68); *Epid.* 3.17; *Coan Prenotions* 80; Celsus, *Med.* 2.7.3; Galen, *MMG* 1.2.43K-44K; *MM* 9.611K; *MM* 10.671K, 673K.

133. Hippocrates, *Prorrh.* 1.135-136.

134. Hippocrates, *Mul.* 1.2.16; 1.8.36.; 1.36.86. Some of these cases also accompany fever (such as *Mul.* 2.8.252).

135. Celsus, *Med.* 6.26.5.H; 6.27.5.

136. Hippocrates, *Progn.* 10; Celsus, *Med.* 2.4.2.

137. Galen, *MMG* 1.2.6K, 11K-12K, 15K; *Hygiene* 40K; *MM* 8.3.552K-553K; 9.601K; 10.667K, 679K.

138. Hippocrates, *Prorrhetic* 1.38.

139. Hippocrates, *Acut.* 49.

140. Galen, *CAM* 302K; *MM* 11.766K; cf. Livy, *History of Rome* 22.2.11; 40.56.9; Celsus, *Med.* 2.6.2.

141. Galen, *MMG* 1.2.12K, 13K.

142. Galen, *Hygiene* 226K; *Ars Med.* 373K.

143. Galen, *CAM* 298K.

144. Galen, *MMG* 1.2.7K.

145. Hippocrates, *Prorrh.* 1.3, 10, 101, 132, 149; 2.18; *Coan Prenotions* 20, 24, 36, 41, 86, 109-110, 164-165, *Aph.* 2.3; Celsus, *Med.* 2.4.1-3; Galen, *Hygiene* 315K; *CAM* 360K; *MM* 12.847K.

146. Galen, *MMG* 1.2.16K; cf. also Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1 (case 7).

147. Galen, *MM* 8.555K.

wine: wine usually restores sleep' (*Sat.* 7.6.7).¹⁴⁸ For sleeplessness coupled with fever, Celsus prescribes blood-letting or, failing that, facilitation of bowel evacuation.¹⁴⁹ Pliny the Elder, not a medical specialist but an encyclopedist, offers various remedies for sleep, including the ash of papyrus in wine, eating hare,¹⁵⁰ and, according to Magi, 'the gall of a she-goat' (*Nat.* 28.79.260).

Some physicians tried to keep people awake. As one scholar notes, 'Caelius objected to the more extreme sleep depriving treatments of Greek physicians—such as tying up a toe during sleep to prevent the dreams that cause nocturnal emissions or trying to prevent a patient with brain fever (*phrenitis*) from sleeping.' More wisely, Caelius sent them to sleep.¹⁵¹

Midday Siestas

Paul's sleepless nights and busy days need not preclude some opportunities to catch up on missed sleep, even if they were less than ideal. Biblical writers were aware that some took afternoon naps: 'Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ishbaal, while he was taking his noonday rest' (2 Sam. 4.5 NRSV).

That Paul labored 'day and night' means simply that he labored some of the time when it was dark and some of the time when it was light.¹⁵² While it is unclear whether Paul supplemented his nocturnal sleep with any naps, that this practice was common warns us against ruling it out.

A biphasic sleep pattern, particularly evident in terms of a midday nap, was common in antiquity. That midday heat invited a break from work made midday an opportune time for napping. Not surprisingly, ancient Mediter-

148. The translation is from Kaster (LCL), III, p. 205. For wine as treatment, the LCL note also compares Celsus, *On Medicine* 3.18.12, 5.25.2.

149. Celsus, *Med.* 6.7.1B.

150. E.g. Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 24.51.88; 30.48.140.

151. Leslie Dossey, 'Watchful Greeks and Lazy Romans: Disciplining Sleep in Late Antiquity', *JECS* 21 (2013), pp. 209-39 (236-37).

152. See e.g. *t. Kil.* 1.16; Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), pp. 58-59; J. Julius Scott Jr, *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), p. 260.

ranean sources often report that noon was bright and hot.¹⁵³ The heat could be so terrible then that one could hyperbolically compare it with Zeus's lightning,¹⁵⁴ and it could prove dangerous.¹⁵⁵ Conversation out in the open then would be unpleasant,¹⁵⁶ although some were trained to endure midday heat.¹⁵⁷

Consequently, at midday most people would break temporarily from normal agricultural work,¹⁵⁸ from hearing legal cases,¹⁵⁹ from hunting,¹⁶⁰ from allowing animals to graze¹⁶¹ and sometimes from battles.¹⁶² People undertook only the most urgent activities then (e.g. Acts 26.13); one of the few exceptions to midday breaks was the urgency of the harvest.¹⁶³

As the hottest time of day, midday also made people thirsty¹⁶⁴ and invited wild animals to drink in the shade.¹⁶⁵ People often broke for meals then, after a hard and full morning of work.¹⁶⁶ (Romans often ate a light midday meal

153. E.g. Sophocles, *Ant.* 416; Apollonius of Rhodes, *Arg.* 2.739; 4.1312-1313; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.591-592; Seneca the Younger, *Nat.* 4.2.18; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 35.23-24; Libanius, *Encom.* 7.11; Sir. 43.3; *Jos. Asen.* 3.2/3.3; for plants, cf. Philostratus, *Heroikos* 3.2.

154. Aeschylus, *Sept.* 430-431.

155. E.g. to boxers (Cicero, *Brut.* 69.243; cf. Philostratus, *Heroikos* 15.6).

156. Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 2.21.

157. Lucian, *Anach.* 25.

158. Columella, *Arb.* 12.1; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.4.

159. Sus. 7 (Dan. 13.7 LXX); Aulus Gellius, *Bell. afr.* 17.2.10. Cf. also breaks from school at noon (Duane F. Watson, 'Education: Jewish and Greco-Roman', in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], pp. 308-13 [312]).

160. Ovid, *Metam.* 3.143-154; Philostratus, *Heroikos* 11.7.

161. Vergil, *Georg.* 3.331-334; Longus, *Daph.* 1.8, 25.

162. Livy, *History of Rome* 44.35.20; 44.36.1-2. Because of this practice, guards might be caught unprepared at midday (Thucydides, *Histo.* 6.100.1). One might exercise then, however (Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.59).

163. Vergil, *Georg.* 1.297-98.

164. Livy, *History of Rome* 44.36.1-2; Longus, *Daph.* 3.31; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.365; Philostratus, *Heroikos* 15.6; cf. Jn 4.6-7.

165. Ovid, *Metam.* 10.126-129; also people (Alciphron, *Farm.* 9, 3.12.1); cf. Philostratus, *Heroikos* 3.2 for watering plants then (in the dry season).

166. E.g. Suetonius, *Claud.* 34.2; Alciphron, *Paras.* 1, 3.4.1; see also Stambaugh, *Ancient Roman City*, 200 (citing Plutarch, *Mor.* 726E); Acts 10.9-10; cf. 1 Kgs 20.16.

that finished at about noon).¹⁶⁷ People normally took shelter under trees, in homes or elsewhere then.¹⁶⁸ (Even mythical Indian ants sought shade at midday).¹⁶⁹

Noon was thus a time for rest¹⁷⁰ and, often after a meal,¹⁷¹ for midday siestas.¹⁷² The Roman aristocrat Pliny the Younger, for example, normally took a midday siesta in summer,¹⁷³ though he skipped it during the winter, when nights were longer.¹⁷⁴ Sometimes attackers even found guards napping at midday, hence rendering them susceptible to attack.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

This article has surveyed the range of reasons for sleeplessness in antiquity. These sources provide a fuller historical background in which to interpret New Testament figurative wakefulness and literal sleeplessness passages. New Testament exhortations for spiritual vigilance are rooted in daily experiences in antiquity. A fuller historical understanding of such experiences may help inform the theological content of such exhortations. In terms of literal sleeplessness, Paul's audiences would have possibly understood his sleepless nights as potentially costly to his health yet honorable, associating it with

167. Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), pp. 20-21; cf. J. Robert Sallares, 'Meals', in Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd rev. edn, 2003), p. 942.

168. E.g. Gen. 18.1; *Jos. Asen.* 3.2/3; Alciphron, *Farm.* 9, 3.12.

169. Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.102-105 (claiming that he learned this from the Persians); Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 35.23-24.

170. E.g. Polybius, *Hist.* 9.17.3; Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.13; 2 Sam. 4.5.

171. E.g. Catullus, *Carmina* 32.10; *t. Ab.* 5.2A; probably also in Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.29.

172. E.g. 2 Sam. 4.5; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 13.637-638; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 1.3.1; Plutarch, *Them.* 30.1; Suetonius, *Aug.* 78.1; *Vesp.* 21; *Life of Aesop* 6; Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 4.8; Philostratus, *Heroikos* 11.7; 16.3.

173. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 7.4.4 (although on this occasion he found himself unable to sleep); 9.36.5.

174. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 9.40.2.

175. E.g., Thucydides, *Hist.* 6.100.1; Polybius, *Hist.* 9.17.3; perhaps Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.13; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 36.15.

hard work, self-discipline and/or sacrifice on their behalf. And finally, evidence from antiquity on sleep and sleeplessness confirms that many of the reasons we incur insomnia today are not new. While the intensity and some of the underlying causes might differ, as well as some medical opinions and many suggested remedies, we can still identify in numerous ways with the ancients, thus contributing to a sense of continuity with the past.