

2 Thessalonians 5:23-28

October 16, 2022



SCRIPTURE

²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

²⁵ Brothers and sisters, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

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

COMMENTARY

5:23. After all these commands and instructions, Paul offered the hope and possibility of living this extraordinary life: May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. Christianity is not a teeth-gritting effort, an ascetic call. Though personal effort and responsibility are required, we are offered the very hand of God. He pulls us up to a higher and more glorious way of living.

We are not left on our own. The God of peace sets us apart for His use. Only those who live in peace with God—who have entered through the way of Christ's reconciliation—can be sanctified. To be sanctified is to be “set apart” or “consecrated” for holy use.

God works to make us sacred, or holy, through and through, in every part of our lives. Paul emphasized this as he prayed that their whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He prayed that our entire being—our personal, spiritual inner life, the true person; our body, the vehicle for our earthly journey—would be totally under the holy claims of Christ.

To be found blameless does not mean earthly perfection. Paul was expressing his desire that no one would be able to make an indictment against the Christian's life. It is the same idea as expressed in Philippians 2:14-15: “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation.”

5:24. The follower of Christ is never left alone: The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Here is great comfort and assurance. We are never abandoned. God's faithfulness is the undergirding of our faith. Our hope and trust are placed in a



trustworthy God. The call of God is not separated from His faithful enabling. In our struggles we can rest in Him.

5:25-28. Paul closed his first letter to the Thessalonians with three personal requests to the church. He asked them to pray for us. As the missionaries had remembered the Thessalonians, now these believers were to remember Paul, Silas, and Timothy before God. Prayer was not a ritual or an empty duty to Paul. He saw it as the power of God unleashed, the place where the Christian was transformed in the presence of God.

In asking for their prayers, Paul was also identifying with these Christians. He recognized that, although he was an apostle, he was still human. An adventurer in the Christian life, he was facing hardships, struggles, weariness, and temptations just as they did—in every way their brother.

5:26. Paul then told the Thessalonians to greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. A kiss upon the cheek was a warm greeting practiced widely in that culture, and still is today. The distinction was Paul's description of this greeting as a "holy" kiss. This was a pure, holy greeting that was never to degenerate into romantic or sexual feelings. Love and affection are marks of the church, but these distinctions must always be kept blameless and holy.

5:27. First Thessalonians was far more than just a friendly correspondence. This becomes clear in the next command: I charge you before the Lord. Paul put these believers under oath, and he did so before the Lord. He was binding them to have this letter read to all the brothers. Paul had written from his heart, and he had written on some important matters for everyone in the congregation. This letter was not simply to be circulated, but to be read aloud when the Thessalonians gathered for worship.

5:28. As he began, so Paul ended—with grace: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. The grace of God is the well-spring of all God's goodness to us. Forgiveness, salvation, peace, the gift of his Holy Spirit, the maturing of our lives in holiness, the stirring of our hearts and will to follow him—all these are of grace.

MAIN POINT

God is faithful to completely sanctify us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.
Introduction

What is the biggest "ask" you've ever made of another person (parents to buy you a car, employer to give you a raise, girlfriend to marry you, etc.)?



On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the level of confidence you had that you would receive what you asked for in that situation. Explain.

What one thing do you most want God to do for you in your earthly life?

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the level of confidence you have that He will do that for you. Explain.

Today, we come to the end of 1 Thessalonians. Paul covered much ground in this letter but seemed to come back to one primary hope in conclusion—the complete sanctification of believers. He did not wonder if God could accomplish this but knew with confidence that He would. We can know it with confidence too.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24.

What does it mean for God to “sanctify” a person completely?

Why do you think Paul used the phrase, “the God of peace,” here?

What is the relationship between God’s peace and your spiritual growth?

Are either of the two sentences in verse 23 difficult for you to believe as truly possible? Explain.

God allows Christians to participate in their sanctification, but real growth comes from the Lord. How is this related to the statement in verse 24?

Do you believe God is able to do all He purposes? Is this belief evident in your life? If so, how?

Paul ended his letter with a pastorally sensitive prayer that summed up the content of his writing to the Thessalonians. They were not meant to carry out all the instructions Paul had given by gritting their teeth and getting to work. The Christian life is impossible to carry out by willpower alone. The God of peace works in the lives of believers to sanctify us (make us holy). He sets us apart completely—in every part of life. Human life involves both material and nonmaterial elements, and God is involved in all aspects of our existence. Paul assured the believers that though they may have anxiety about the coming day of the Lord, God is faithful to keep all those He calls.



- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:25-28.

What other instructions did Paul give in closing?

Based on verses 23-24, what was Paul asking these believers to pray for on behalf of him and his team?

Why might the believers in Thessalonica have thought Paul didn't need prayer like they did?

Do you ever get lulled into prayerlessness for Christian leaders in your life, assuming that they are doing fine?

What's wrong with that kind of prayerlessness?

Why did Paul ask the believers in Thessalonica to pray for his and his teammates' sanctification?

Paul was not ashamed to ask for prayers on His behalf.

Do you ask for prayers when you need them? Is there any situation in your life right now that requires prayer?

Paul was completely consumed with doing the Lord's work. And he also knew he needed the God of peace to sanctify him completely. It was his hope and expectation to be found sound and blameless when Jesus returned.

How does Christian community play a role in the sanctification of individual believers (vv. 26-27)?

God is faithful to sanctify us completely, but we have responsibility in that process. This is not to grit our teeth and get to work as if it depends on us but to willingly and expectantly invite God to lead us in His way, join with other believers in the process, and rest in God's grace through it all.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Paul's words to the Thessalonians are practical and instructive for believers today. Like a mirror, the church's treatment of her leaders and individual members reflects to the world an image of the God we serve. Each of us contributes to this reflection in some way.



How are you contributing to this image either positively or negatively?

Do you pray for our church? Its leaders?

**What is an area of your life in which you desire God to sanctify you completely?
How does today's passage encourage you in that?**

As a group, how well do we live out 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28? How can we grow in this area?

PRAYER

Thank God for His grace and faithfulness to complete the work in you that He has started. Ask Him to help you seek out His sanctifying work each day, whether life is beautiful or messy. Thank Him for church leaders and pray for Him to sanctify them completely too, so the church might shine the light of the gospel into the darkness of the world.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of 1 Thessalonians.

October 23, 2022 --- 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5



