

# 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

October 16, 2022



## **INTRODUCTION**

Think of something you'd like to ask someone, but haven't because you're anxious about how they might respond.

What is something you could ask your parent(s) confidently, knowing the answer would most likely be "yes"?

What is something you could ask your parent(s), but expect the answer would likely be "no"?

Now think about this. What about the things you ask God in prayer? On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that He will answer your prayers and give you the desires of your heart?

Today, we come to the end of 1 Thessalonians. Paul covered a lot of topics in this letter but, in his conclusion, he came back to his primary hope—the complete sanctification of believers. Sanctification basically means that believers grow in holiness. Paul's confidence level was a 10 that God could make all believers holy, including you. You can know it with confidence, too.

## **DISCUSSION**

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

We already learned that "sanctify" means to be made holy. Why did Paul need to pray for God to complete that work?

Are either of the two sentences in verse 23 difficult for you to believe as truly possible? Explain. Will you ever be completely holy? Can you be "blameless" when Jesus returns? Explain.

Is sanctification and blamelessness something you want Jesus to find in you? What is your responsibility in that process?

**Do you believe God is able to do all He intends to do? Does your life show that belief? If so, how?**

Paul ended his letter with a prayer that summed up his whole letter to the Thessalonians. They were not meant to carry out all the instructions Paul had given with hard work and self-determination. It doesn't happen like studying for the ACT. The Christian life is impossible to carry out by will power and effort. Instead, God works in our lives to sanctify us (make us holy). He sets us apart completely—in every part of life. Even though we 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?**

**Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his team. Based on verses 23-24, what do you think was his specific prayer request?**

**Do you pray for the spiritual growth of your friends and family, or are your prayers usually focused on physical needs like health or money? Why?**

**Do you think the believers in Thessalonica might have thought Paul didn't need prayer like they did?**

**Do you ever fail to pray for people because you assume that they are doing fine? What is wrong with that?**

**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 God to sanctify him completely. It was his hope and expectation to be found sound and blameless when Jesus returned.

**What do you think Paul's instruction to "greet everyone with a holy kiss" and "read this letter to everyone" was all about? How much do you think our group and church have to do with your personal sanctification?**

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.

## **GOING DEEPER**

🌿 READ JOHN 17:17.

**Can you be sanctified if you do not regularly spend time in God's Word? Explain.**

🌿 READ GALATIANS 2:20.

**What does it mean to be "crucified with Christ"?**

**Can you be sanctified completely if you aren't willing to turn away from your sins? Why?**

**What is something sinful you need to give up to be sanctified in holiness?**

## **APPLICATION**

**Do you pray for our church? Its leaders? Why or why not?**

**What is an area of life where you tend to struggle, and you know you need God to do a work to sanctify you completely? How does today's passage encourage you in that?**

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

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for His promise to complete the work that He has started in your life. Ask Him to help you seek out His sanctifying work each day, whether you see your situation as great or terrible. Thank Him for our 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**

## COMMENTARY

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

**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.