

1 Thessalonians

I. Introduction

A. **1 Thessalonians 5:23-28** . . . Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. [25] Brethren, pray for us. [26] Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. [27] I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. [28] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

B. Pray

II. Closing statements in 1 Thessalonians.

A. [23] Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. There is much that we can talk about in this verse, and one of the things is potentially controversial.
 - a. However, the essence of the message in this verse is that God is working in us, sanctifying us, preparing us, and preserving us so that our whole being will be in the right spiritual condition for the return of Christ.
 - b. This truth in no way relieves us of what God requires of us in relation to living a godly life. But it does make it clear that without God, we would be no more victorious than David would have been had he gone up against Goliath without God.
 - c. Paul said it this way in **Philippians 2:12b-13**, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] **for it is God** who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
 - d. In **Hebrews 13:20-21** we read, “Now the **God of peace**, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, [21] **equip you** in every good thing to do His will, **working in [you to bring about]** that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.”
 - e. **2 Peter 1:2-4** says, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these **He has granted to us** His precious and magnificent promises, **so that by them** you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”
2. In other words, without disregarding what God requires of us in relation to becoming and remaining godly,
 - a. It is God who frees us from the overwhelming and enslaving power of sin – like He freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (**Romans 6**).

- b. It is God who multiplies our human efforts at being godly – like He multiplied the five loaves and two fish (**Matthew 14:16-21**).
 - c. It is God who empowers us – like He empowered Jonathan and his armor bearer to defeat 20 Philistine soldiers (**1 Samuel 14:12-14**).
 - d. It is God who protects us so that no enemy can defeat us as long as we keep fighting (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).
 - e. It is God who equips us with the tools, weapons, and intellectual abilities needed to carry out the work He has given us to do – such as dying to self and putting on the mind and likeness of Jesus Christ (**2 Peter 1:2-4**).
 - f. It is God who gave us His holy scriptures – which are able to teach, reprove, correct, and train us in righteousness (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).
 - g. And it is God who gives us the church with its leaders and mature believers whose responsibility it is to teach us the ways of godliness, lead us into stronger faith, teach us about Jesus so we can follow His example, and show us how to grow so that we become spiritually mature like unto the maturity of Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 4:12-13**).
3. The reality is, the hard, tiring, seemingly endless effort we must put forth in dying to self, putting off the old nature, putting on Christ-likeness, and becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus is exceedingly minor in comparison to the work God does in making our efforts produce their intended results.
4. In other words, just as David’s defeat of Goliath was mostly God’s doing, so our becoming the godly Christians God saved us to be is mostly God’s doing. And this is the message of **vs 23**. Therefore, let us look to God, depend on God, and do as God tells us to do so that His work is accomplished in us.
- B. With this message in mind, I want to say a few things about the various statements in this verse.
1. **Now may the God of peace Himself.**
 - a. God has many attributes and various labels. Here He is called the God of peace. We see this aspect of God in His willingness to reconcile us to Himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – so that we can live in peace with Him. And He does this in spite of our having willfully rebelled against Him, chosen to side with His arch enemy, and taken the path of selfishness, pride, and sin.
 - b. As the God of peace, He brings us into the realm of true peace. He gives us peace of mind and heart in the midst of turmoil, threats, and mistreatment. In fact, His peace guards our hearts and minds from being overpowered by discouragement, anxiety, and fear. This is why the scripture says that God’s peace surpasses our ability to fully comprehend it and how it works.
 - c. Finally, though the peace of God freely comes from the God of peace, it comes to those who meet its conditions. A clear example of this is found in **Philippians 4:6-7**, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
 2. **Sanctify you entirely –**

- a. To sanctify someone is to make them holy and then consecrate them for holy use. This is accomplished by bringing about the kind of mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual transformation that frees us from the practice of any and all sin so that we live a godly, purified life.
 - b. Here again, we see that our transformation from sinners into godly Christians is mostly God's doing.
 - c. However, in reality, we are capable on our own, that is, apart from God, to make significant changes to our beliefs, values, thinking, and behavior so as to become better people in a number of areas and ways. Yet only God is able to sanctify or transform or change us **entirely**, that is, through and through, or in every area of our lives.
 - d. Therefore, without God, without complete trust in God's goodness, and without a commitment to love according to God's love – self-interest will remain our supreme motive and self-protection our supreme source of security. And as long as self-interest exceeds God's interests, and self-protection exceeds our reliance on God's protection, we will not give up any selfish or sinful way that brings us happiness, satisfies our sense of need, and makes us feel safe.
 - e. Just as a point of interest and in support of our triune God, according to **Ephesians 5:25-27**, it is Jesus who sanctifies us, and in **Romans 15:15-16**, we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
 - f. In summary, only God – coupled with our trust in God that produces obedience to God – can sanctify us entirely.
3. **And may your spirit and soul and body.**
- a. Based on this single statement, a number of Christians have concluded that we are made up of three parts: the human body, the soul, and the spirit.
 - b. According to this view of humanity, the human **body** is made up of a skeleton, organs, muscles, and flesh. It is born and it dies. In the form we know it, it is confined to this world.
 - c. The **soul** is housed in the human body, but is not confined to the body. It appears to represent the person, himself, that is, the part of us that is born yet lives forever.
 - (1) This is stated in one well known scripture: **Psalms 16:10**, "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."
 - (2) And in the parable of the rich man who tore down his barns to build bigger barns to ensure a more secure future, Jesus said, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" (**Luke 12:20**)
 - (3) For those wishing to hold that we are made up of three parts, the soul is said to include our personality, desires, affections, appetites, passions, fears and hopes. Some include our (1) intellect – with its ability to think, reason, and remember, our (2) conscience, and our (3) inner sense of morality and justice.
 - d. Like the soul, our **spirit** is immortal in that it lives forever. It is said that our spirit is the highest part of our being because it is the part of us that

is able to connect with, and engage with, and be filled with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – not only in this life but throughout eternity.

- (1) An example of God communicating with our spirit comes from **Romans 8:14 & 16**, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God...and [16] The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”
 - (2) And it is believed that an example of God dwelling in our spirit comes from **John 14:23** where Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”
 - (3) I want to add here that your body, your soul, and your spirit are inseparably connected to your mind, and I add this because the only way you are aware of anything in any part of your being is through your mind.
4. The final part of **vs 23** says, **Be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- a. This final statement confirms the purpose for which God is doing all this work within us – so that we will be in the right spiritual condition at the return of Christ.
 - b. And because we are made up of more than one part, it is essential that all our parts are in the right spiritual condition, which is why we read in **Romans 8:10-13**, “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. [11] But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. [12] So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—[13] for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”
 - c. I am using this scripture to affirm that God wants to transform every part of our being – body, soul, spirit, intentions, thoughts, passions, fears, and even our personality.
5. Once again, though the various parts of **vs 23** are of interest and give us much to consider and discuss, they work together to form the message of **vs 23**, which in essence says that God is working in us, sanctifying us, preparing us, and preserving us so that we – as a completer being – are in the right spiritual condition for the return of Christ.
- C. [24] Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.
1. Just like God called Abraham and promised him an heir that would in time make him a great nation, and just as God promised to bring this great nation into the Promised Land, and just as God promised to equip, enable, empower, assist, and go before this nation in driving the evil inhabitants out of the Land, and just as God promised that they could dwell in the Land securely, and just as God made all this a reality, so God calls us and promises to equip, enable, empower, assist and go before us in driving sin out of our lives, dying to self and selfishness, putting on the new nature that He has created for us, becoming

- conformed to the likeness of Christ, and living accordingly so that we will be in the right spiritual condition when Christ returns.
2. We read a similar statement in **1 Corinthians 1:8-9**, “[God] will confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 3. And Paul says it this way in **Philippians 1:6**, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

III. Conclusion

- A. [25] Brethren, pray for us.
 1. There is not only a great need to pray for those who lead you, there is great wisdom in doing so.
 2. Why? Because those who lead you, regardless of how they look on the outside, are in a war with evil.
 - a. They are faced with various kinds of temptations – including the temptation to become proud, misuse power or money, take advantage of or manipulate their followers, and give their followers the feelings of spirituality without leading them to true spirituality and godliness.
 - b. In addition, there is the temptation to build a large following in order to feel good about yourself for having accomplished something great. And there is the temptation to seek the praise of your peers or anyone else who is impressed with your accomplishments.
 - c. Beyond this, there is the perpetual need for wisdom, insight, and discernment – not only in understanding and teaching what the Bible says, but also in dealing with people in light of their history, their current situations, and their problems.
 3. And this is just the beginning of such a list. But the point is, pray for your leaders.
- B. [26] Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. That is, show genuine affection for one another, but always keep your affection within the boundaries of godliness and moral purity.
- C. [27] I adjure you by the Lord (*command you, or bind you as if putting you under an oath*) to have this letter read to all the brethren.
- D. [28] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.