

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-28 "He Who Calls Us Is Faithful,
And His Grace Is Sufficient"

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 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. 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

As we've studied this letter to the Thessalonians the recurrent message has been Paul's desire to see this church become more like Christ in all they do and say.

Evidently God thinks it's important that each one of His children bear witness to the fact that He has given them life and that they no longer belong to the enemy, Satan; and that the sin which separated us from God is not to entangle us since Christ has purchased us from the penalty of sin and has empowered us to live as new creatures in Christ.

And Paul shows this over and over again in this letter.

1TH 1:6-7 "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. ⁷ And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."

1TH 2:12-13 "live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. ¹³ And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe."

1TH 3:13 "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."

1TH 4:3,7 "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

Paul's point is quite clear. He encourages the saints to live their lives with the express purpose of bringing attention to and lifting up the name of Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior.

And so, as he closes his letter he once again reminds them in 1TH 5:23 "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."

"God Himself, the God of peace." God Himself is the source of all that we have in Christ including our sanctification. He is not only the God of peace, He has given us peace where before we were at war with Him outside of Christ.

In fact, there is no peace outside of Christ no matter how much the world says they have attained peace in themselves. And the reason the world cannot have peace outside of Christ is because they stand guilty before a holy God. Paul brings this out when writing to the Ephesians.

EPH 2:11-16 "Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility."

This is the kind of peace that only God can give because it's a real peace with substance and with real hope of knowing that we are no longer at enmity with the living God. And having this kind of peace gives us the assurance that no matter what else happens in this life we know that we will be with our God forever, not to be separated from Him because of our sin.

That sin was dealt with once and for all at the cross of Jesus Christ when He took our penalty and gave us His free gift of eternal life which was secured by His bodily resurrection from the dead.

This kind of peace you can't make up. It's a gift from God and it's the reason Paul could say in PHI 4:7 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

But it is because of this peace from God that we can rejoice in knowing that He is personally involved in our lives. He is personally involved in our sanctification; that process where He is conforming us into the image of His Son Jesus Christ that we may live to honor Him and glorify Him in all that we do.

In fact, this sanctification is to affect every area of our lives. As Paul says, 'May God sanctify you wholly, or entirely, your body, soul and mind.'

There are many Christians who feel that living like Christ in all things is an option. They want to take His salvation which was purchased for us through Him dying for our sin on the cross, but they're not willing to die to self.

Self has a tendency to be selfish. Since we were purchased by the blood of Christ, so that we don't have to be separated from Him in hell for all of eternity, then we must realize that we don't belong to ourselves but to our King and Savior who has loved us enough to take our place by sending His Son to die on our behalf.

1PE 1:15-19 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." [Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7] 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

We walk after Him only because we have His Spirit, but we must walk by faith and obedience. To do anything less is to dishonor God and essentially tell Him, 'thanks for the salvation, but let me get on with my own life without You; You cramp my style.'

What kind of thanks is that? He wants all of you, "body, soul and spirit." He wants to mold us into the kind of vessels which bring Him honor and bless us in the process.

I know Christians who don't trust God in this area of their lives for a variety of reasons: They don't see Him working the way they expect Him to work. They aren't patient to let Him work things out and so they try and work them out in the flesh. Some don't truly appreciate the gift they have and they choose to try and walk with

one foot in this world, and when it suits their needs, one foot moving towards the things of God (Spiritual splits it you will).

The bottom line is, do Christians really trust God? Do they really understand that what God says He means, and He backs it up by showing us that He is faithful? When He tells us that He will never leave us or forsake us do we live lives that depend on Him and trust Him to bring us through whatever is going on?

When He says that, 'I will strengthen you', do we seek Him diligently and live in the power of His Spirit and strength or do we go off in distrust and try to help God out by doing it in our own understanding?

We could ask these questions all day. But, you know, there isn't a person in this room who could say, 'yes I've trusted God with every area of my life, I've never doubted Him and I've never questioned the way He's working in my life.'

And yet, if you're a person who has professed to place your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of the penalty of your sin, do you realize that you have placed in His hand your eternal destiny? If we can place our eternal destiny in His hands, then we can and must place our entire lives; body, soul and spirit, in His hands today.

And why? Because His word tells us so. Look at our text.

1TH 5:24 "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

He'll do what? He'll sanctify you entirely as you submit to Him. Your body, your soul, and your spirit belong to Him because He purchased all of you. And you will only really be joyous in this life as you submit to Him who has made you and knows what is best for you.

He promises that the good work that He started in you He will complete. He is faithful, and He keeps His word. How do we know that? We need only look at how God has kept His promises throughout scripture. He never falters in this area.

He promised the Israelites that He would deliver them from Pharaoh, and He personally took them out of Egypt. He promised the Israelites that if they turned their backs on Him that He would judge them, and they spent 40 years wandering in a desert after they came out of Egypt because they grumbled and they turned their back on the one true God and chose to create their own golden calf god.

He promised that He would send a Deliverer who the prophet Isaiah tell us would be one who would be "pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; and that the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (ISA 53:5)

Was He faithful to do that? You bet He was. Jesus Christ Himself came into this world to take our sin as He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities so that we might know the peace of God which passes all understanding.

And when you consider that One who was blameless, sinless, and died for we who deserved God's wrath, that is a peace which passes all human understanding. Yes, God is faithful. "Christ was the great revealer of the character of God, and Christ was faithful even to death", death on a cross. (W.F. Adeney)

We can trust Him not only for our eternal destiny, but we can trust Him today because He is faithful and He will bring all things to pass that are designed for our growth and His glory. God promises that He works all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. So, trust Him and obey Him and depend on Him for strength in every area of life.

1TH 5:25 "Brothers, pray for us."

This little verse tells us volumes of how the great apostle Paul was not unlike you and me. He was just an ordinary man who was called by our Almighty God for an extraordinary work. We too, are ordinary people who are called by our Almighty God to be part of an extraordinary work of representing the Creator of the universe and to be His witness in all that we say and do.

But, look what Paul asks of the Thessalonians. Their prayers. Paul was a man who lived his life personally seeking the face of God, but he was always asking other believers to share in his ministry by giving them a ministry of intercession.

ROM 15:30-31 "I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. 31 Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,"

2CO 1:10-11 "He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then

many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."

EPH 6:19 "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,..."

Paul understood that God is the One who enables His people to serve Him and to be empowered by Him in all things, whether service or being conformed into His image by just living like our Lord Jesus on a daily basis.

But, prayer is an essential part of our walk with God. Prayer is an act of worship, an act of faith and trust and an act of dependence on a faithful God who answers prayer. He may not always answer our prayers according to our wishes but He is always faithful to answer so that we may grow and depend on Him and to rely on His grace for all of life.

Even the apostle Paul learned this when He came to the Lord to specifically pray about a situation in his life which he wanted changed.

2CO 12:7-9 "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Paul didn't get the answer he was looking for, but he got the answer that was best for his life, because God knows best. And as we trust in God's faithfulness to bring us to His everlasting throne, we must trust God that He knows what He's doing in our lives from day to day and not become discouraged when life doesn't seem to go the way we expect.

If we trust God in all things then we can trust Him when He say's, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." And just as Paul could trust the Lord, our response needs to be, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Paul may not have come to the Lord again with that particular request. But you better believe He came to the Lord for the grace

to live with the answer he got and he continually came to the Lord for every area of his life.

And it wasn't enough that he prayed, he wanted the rest of the Body of Christ to pray for him. He knew the power of prayer, because he personally knew the all powerful God who answers prayer; and so do you if you have placed your faith in Christ Jesus who is our mediator before the Father.

As Paul tells us in this letter in verse 17 of the previous chapter, "pray without ceasing." In other words, always be in an attitude of prayer, or to put it another way, always be living in the presence of God as you come to Him for all things that pertain to your life, small or great. But, always be ready to pray for others and bring them before the throne of God that the Lord may work in their lives and use them to His honor and glory.

I would ask for your prayers, so that like Paul, "whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel," and that the Lord would use me to equip you so that you may be used by Him to be His witnesses.

1TH 5:26 "Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss."

In the ancient church it was common for the saints to practice what is referred to in other areas of the N.T. as the kiss of peace. In fact, what is interesting is that this holy kiss or kiss of peace was normally practiced during the time of the Lord's Supper.

And so, Paul is probably encouraging the church to be gathering around the table to celebrate the Lord's death and resurrection for the penalty of our sins. And in the process build each other up with a holy affection by loving the brethren which is expressed in this kiss.

Today we would probably express this love through a handshake or hug, but the intent is the same. We are brothers and sisters in Christ who has given us this love and we must never forget what that love cost our Lord. That love, which has brought us into the family of God through faith in Christ, is to help us realize the peace we have with our God, but that peace is to be extended to the Body of Christ.

We are to live at peace with one another, and the holy kiss that Paul speaks of is an extension of that peace; a peace that is not meant to be abused or faked.

Judas betrayed the Son of God with a kiss. Don't use the peace we have in Christ to get something out of the brethren, or to use the brethren for wrong reasons, or to mislead the brethren in any way.

I've been kissed by many a brother or sister in Christ who was harboring sin in their hearts toward me. Their smiles and friendly attitudes were hiding enmity. They weren't willing to be real with me and restore a proper peace which produces real love.

Our lives are to be sanctified in the power of the Holy Spirit. This kind of life has at its center our desire to do the will of God in all things. This kind of life is what is known as a life which is good for affecting all men in a positive way. The salt of the world, if you will.

This what Jesus says in MAR 9:50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Your saltiness is the direct result of God conforming you into the image of His Son as you submit to Him and love Him with all your heart, soul and mind.

1TH 5:27-28 "I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

God has charged me to give you His word and instruct you in the ways of the Lord. His word is meant for all of His people, not just a select few like the Pastor or leaders or the "spiritual". Like newborn babes Peter says, we are all to "long after the pure milk of the word that by it you may grow in respect to your salvation."
(Pet.2:2)

You moms know that there are substitutes for mother's milk. There is no substitute for the pure milk of God's word, that's why it's called pure. Drink from it every day. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

It all comes back to that doesn't it? Without His grace we would not know Christ. We would not know the power of His Spirit and we would not have the assurance and hope of our salvation which is only in the Son of God.

His grace and His peace has been given to us in Christ, but we are to constantly seek Him that we may live in that peace and grace to

His honor and glory. Take your life in Christ seriously. He took it serious enough to die for you and to rise from the dead for you.

HEB 4:14-16 "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."