**Lesson 9**

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Verse 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. **A. The God of Peace**

What a beautiful name. The God of peace gives us the peace of God. Peace is God’s initiative and flows from who He is.

[***Romans 5:1***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5:1&version=NKJV)

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have****peace****with****God****through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

[***Romans 15:13***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15:13&version=NKJV)

*Now may the****God****of hope fill you with all joy and* ***peace****in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

[***Romans 15:33***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+15:33&version=NKJV)

*Now the****God****of****peace****be with you all. Amen.*

[***1 Corinthians 14:33***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+14:33&version=NKJV)

*For****God****is not the author of confusion but of****peace****, as in all the churches of the saints.*

[***Colossians 3:15***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3:15&version=NKJV)

*And let the****peace****of****God****rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

[***Philemon 1:3***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philemon+1:3&version=NKJV)

*Grace to you and****peace****from****God****our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

[***Hebrews 13:20***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13:20&version=NKJV)

*Now may the****God****of****peace****who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,* ***21****make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

**B.** **The God of Peace HIMSELF…**

Whatever it is that Paul is about to say that God does, he has emphasized that it is HE, the God of peace, **HE HIMSELF**, who does it.

**C. Sanctify you entirely**

1. 🡺Wait a minute, aren’t we sanctified already?

[***Hebrews 10:10***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10:10&version=NKJV)

*By that will* ***we have been sanctified****through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ* ***once for all****.*

[***1 Corinthians 6:11***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+6:11&version=NKJV)

*And such were some of you. But you were washed, but* ***you were sanctified****, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

[***Jude 1:1***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jude+1:1&version=NKJV)

*Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called,* ***sanctified****by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:*

[***1 Corinthians 1:2***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+1:2&version=NKJV)

*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who* ***are sanctified****in Christ Jesus, called to besaints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

1. We ARE sanctified, which means we ARE holy. Nothing can change our holy standing before God. So, then, what does this mean? We believe it is speaking of the outworking of holiness. Many who come to Christ have lifestyles that are clearly NOT holy. As we mature in Christ, the holiness we possess is worked out into our lives.

*Using Hebrews 10:14 and Philippians 1:6 we can conclude that we are both perfected (telieoo) in regard to everything Jesus accomplished on the cross, and subsequently brought to a state of completion (epiteleio), which most certainly refers to our maturation, or one might say, to fulfilling what Jesus already accomplished. This would include aspects such as being transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2) and from glory to glory by beholding Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). We aren’t born again knowing every right from wrong, but grace teaches us to forsake worldly lusts and to live godly (Ti. 2:12). The fruit of the Spirit grows (Gal. 5:22). Our character develops (Rom. 5:3-4). We become rooted and grounded in God’s love (Eph. 3:17). Our understanding and appreciation of what was accomplished through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection becomes clearer to us (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Our discernment between good and evil matures (Heb. 5:14). Let me put it this way. Everything that Scripture teaches was accomplished by Christ’s death is “finished.” Yet, there is a process of our current perfection being brought to completion from beginning to end. What is essential to understand is that it is Jesus who brings to completion this work that He started—not we through our own efforts. This growth comes by the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

[***Philippians 1:6***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201:6&version=NKJV)

*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

**D. “and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”**

1. **Some have written that only our spirits are complete and without blame and that our souls and bodies are yet to be completed.** If this is so, then why does Paul express that all three be PRESERVED complete and without blame? The truth is ALL of us is complete and without blame.

*If, on the other hand, Paul is here affirming a tripartite view of our humanness, as the early fathers mostly believed, then Lightfoot’s explanation seems best. The spirit is ‘the ruling faculty in man … through which he holds communication with the unseen world’; the soul is ‘the seat of all his impulses and affections, the centre of his personality’; while the body ‘links him to the material world and is the instrument of all his outward deeds’. Stott*

*The spirit part of Adam was the part of him that died when he ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:16-17); Adam’s physical body didn’t die until age 930 (Genesis 5:5). So, when Ephesians 2:1 says we were dead in trespasses and sins, it is speaking of a spiritual death (see note 9 at Colossians 3:3). Our spirits were dead, or separated from God. AWMI*

1. **Others have said that it is impossible to corrupt in any way our spirit, soul, and body.** Then why does Paul pray that they be preserved complete? If it isn’t possible, then why pray it? How might this happen?
   * **Receiving “another” gospel** (adding law to grace): affects the spirit primarily, but filters out into both soul and body.

[***Galatians 5:4***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+5:4&version=NKJV)

*You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

* + **Using our bodies for the purpose of sin instead of righteousness: affect the body primarily, but can filter out into soul and spirit**

***1 Corinthians 6:13a-20***

***Now the body*is*not for sexual immorality but for the Lord****, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.*

*15****Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make*them*members of a harlot? Certainly not!****16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body*with her?*For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit*with Him. *18****Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.****19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*who is*in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20****For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.***

* + **Allowing our minds to receive demonic/worldly/false spiritual lies: affects the mind which filters into our souls and spirits**

[***Romans 12:2***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12:2&version=NKJV)

***And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,*** *that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

**Verse 24**

**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.**

1. **Verse 23 is a common verse used to prove “progressive sanctification”.** Even those who teach progressive sanctification first acknowledge that we are already sanctified in their doctrinal statements. However, what is more commonly ***taught*** isn’t that we ARE sanctified/made holy, but that we rather begin unholy and then need to become sanctified/holy AND this this happens through OUR OWN EFFORTS when WE: 1) abstain from sin and 2) engage in spiritual disciplines (to put it brief…the list is actually much longer).
2. ***It’s important to acknowledge that there is NOTHING anyone can do to make themselves holy. We can choose to let the holiness that is already in us bear fruit in our lives, but the doing of it is ALWAYS GOD’S.***
3. ***“Faithful is HE who calls you, and HE will bring it to pass.”*** *Ahh! There is the rest we have been promised. GOD SANCTIFIES US (initially at salvation) AND HE SANCTIFIES US COMPLETELY (as we walk by grace through faith).* ***GOD HIMSELF DOES THIS. We simply cooperate with His Spirit as He leads us and changes us.***

*For the Thessalonians this is the needed reminder that neither their “sanctification” nor their being “preserved blameless” for the Parousia is dependent on their own personal struggling for it, but on their trusting the God who has already called them to himself, and who will thus bring to pass in their lives what God has begun. In the end everything depends on the single reality that God is absolutely faithful. Fee*

**Verse 25**

**Brethren, pray for us.**

1. **Paul, the great apostle, asks for prayer for himself and those who were working closely with him in Athens. This humble request speaks volumes.**

***Romans 15:30-33***

*Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,****31that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you****.****33****Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

***Colossians 4:2-4***

*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3****meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ****, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

*Three times in this letter Paul has told the Thessalonians of his prayers for them. He mentions them continually in his prayers, he says (1:2). He prays both for the overflowing of their love and for the strengthening of their hearts in holiness (3:12–13). And he prays for their complete sanctification (23). Now he asks them to pray for him. It is a touching example of his personal humility and of the reciprocity of Christian fellowship. Stott*

**Verse 26**

**Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.**

1. **At the time of writing of this epistle it was common for men to greet each other with a kiss…not so common for cultures today (except Middle Eastern cultures, where it is still common).** Today it is more common for men to greet each other with a holy hug or a holy handshake. In some cultures, men don’t even hug each other. Women often greet each other with a kiss on the cheek or an “air” kiss on the cheek accompanied with a hug or simply a hug. How a sister and brother greet each other will depend on the culture. Even in the U.S. this varies greatly. (Some Christian cultures do not allow an unmarried woman and man to even shake hands, let alone exchange a hug or kiss.) The exchange of a holy kiss need not be seen as a “rule” for every culture. Before launching out to hug or kiss someone, especially of the opposite gender, it would be wise to observe what the norm is where you are.

*Yet the apostle’s instruction is clear that when Christians meet each other they should greet each other, and that their verbal greeting should be made stronger, warmer and more personal by a culturally appropriate sign. Stott*

*🡺What would be most remarkable about this expression of mutual Christian love within the believing community is the radical crossing of social boundary lines that would have been involved, not only between Jew and Gentile but also between rich and poor, slave and free. Fee🡸*

*The*kiss*, as the common sign of affection amongst kindred and near friends in meeting or parting, was universal in the primitive Christian assemblies, and is still a usage of the Greek and Oriental Churches, especially at Holy Communion. In the West the ceremony gradually died out during the Middle Ages. It was unsuitable to the reserved manners of the Germanic races. The custom was naturally liable to abuse and suspicion, when the simplicity of primitive Christian feeling declined; and it became the subject of numerous regulations in early Councils. The Apostle desires “a holy kiss” to be exchanged by those who heard the Epistle read, as an expression through the Church of his love to each of its members. So in*[*Romans 16:16*](http://biblehub.com/romans/16-16.htm)*, after bidding the Church “salute” by name a number of his personal acquaintances, he includes all present at the reading of the letter by saying, “Salute one another with a holy kiss.” The same thing is said in*[*1 Corinthians 16:20*](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/16-20.htm)*, followed by the words, “My love be with you all in Christ Jesus;” also in*[*2 Corinthians 13:12*](http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/13-12.htm)*. In*[*1 Peter 5:14*](http://biblehub.com/1_peter/5-14.htm)*the salutation is called “a kiss of love.”-* [*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/1_thessalonians/5.htm)

**Verse 27**

**I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.**

1. **This is stronger than just requesting that the letter be read to the others.**

Adjure: horkizō

**Thayer Definition:**

1) to force to take an oath, to administer an oath to

2) to adjure (solemnly implore)

**Verse 28**

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

1. **This is a statement of fact and a spoken blessing.**

*The one element that recurs in all the letters in the church corpus, as well as the Pastorals (1-2 Timothy, Titus), is the concluding “grace.” Fee*

*If a local church is to become a gospel church, it must not only receive the gospel and pass it on, but also embody it in a community life of mutual love. Nothing but the grace of Christ can accomplish this. Stott*

*It was “grace,” God’s own favor that is theirs through “the Lord, Jesus Christ,” with which he greeted them at the beginning; and now that same “grace” is what he wishes for them in conclusion. It is the one word in Paul’s vocabulary that embraces all that God has done, and that he desires that God will do, for his Thessalonian friends through Christ Jesus. Fee*

*A concluding reference to grace was almost his signature, so central was it to his whole theology. He had begun by wishing them grace (1:1); he now ends in the same way. It is no empty, conventional formula, however; for grace is the heart of the gospel, indeed the heart of God. Stott*

1. Unless stated otherwise, all scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible, **(NASB)**

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2. *Hildebrand, C. D. (2014-01-13). Are We Preaching "Another" Gospel? (Kindle Locations 811-823). Xulon Press. Kindle Edition.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)