

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **A Prayer for Sanctification 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 Part 2**

The world is concerned about so many things. They are concerned about their health, they are concerned about their finances, they are concerned about their families, they are concerned about their job prospects, they are concerned about the government, they are concerned about their retirement, they are concerned about their lawns, they are concerned about their education. They are concerned about how long this message will last. Is there anyone who is here this morning that disagrees with what I am saying? But is there anything wrong with being concerned about these things? And the answer would be, No!

Right now I am concerned about numerous things in my own life. Lynn (My wife) is presently in a high stress situation at work and I am concerned for her emotional, physical and spiritual welfare. Erin (My oldest daughter who is married to Tom) is presently pregnant with twins and I am concerned about her health. Kristin is presently considering one of the most important decisions of her life and I am concerned for her that she would be careful to make a prayerful decision. I am concerned for Nathan in his present transition from high school to college that he would also make good decisions. I am concerned about my own health. I have been going through various tests for the past several months and I am continuing to go through those tests.

Our life is filled with concerns. There is nothing wrong with us having concerns. In fact if we were not concerned about anything we are either dead or terribly indifferent. But there is a potential problem. The problem arises when our earthly concerns dominate the pursuit of righteousness. The problem arises when earthly concerns take precedent over understanding and obeying the word of God. Let me ask you a question what dominates your thinking? Is it the cares of this world or is it your personal righteousness?

Sometimes it seems that we forget who we have become in Christ. And we go back to our old ways. I was reading the daily bread this past week and there was a reading in the book called “IDENTITY CRISIS.” And the author of this reading said that several years ago he had read about a young husband who forgot that he was married. According to the newspaper account that he had read, the day after the newlyweds had returned from their honeymoon, the husband was 3 hours late getting home from the office. Dinner was burned - and his bride was burning mad. He had absentmindedly gone to his mother’s house!

Sometimes old patterns die hard. We were accustomed before we became christians to having our earthly concerns dominate our lives. But this should not be the way it is now . We have been saved and holiness should become the focus of our lives.

This concern is the focus of Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians in **1 Thess. 5:23-24**. Let us read the verses: **“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..”**

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This is a prayer for sanctification. Look again at the very first phrase, “**Now may the God of Peace Himself sanctify you entirely .....**” The theme of His prayer is “sanctification.” This is a very important theme in scriptures. And our consideration of it hopefully would heighten our hunger for personal righteousness. We have begun to ask certain basic questions.

First of all we considered the NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION. The word HAGIAZO means to separate. In this context we would have to understand that it is Paul’s prayer that the Thessalonians be separated from sin to holiness. Beyond every other concern that Paul could have prayed for, he prayed for this. Sanctification, our separation from sin to holiness must dominate our lives. And this is what Paul prays for.

We not only considered the nature of sanctification but also the SOURCE OF SANCTIFICATION. Let us read the verse “**Now may the God of peace sanctify you entirely .....**” We certainly are commanded to be holy and we need to be striving for holiness but the work of making us holy is the work of the Lord the God of peace. This should be a wonderful relief for us.

This morning we will continue to explore this theme of sanctification. The next basic element of sanctification that we want to consider is the extent of it.

### GOAL OF SANCTIFICATION

Let us look once again at the verse. “**Now may the God of peace sanctify you entirely .....**” The word “entirely” (HOLOTELEIS) which occurs only here in the NT, is a compound of HOLOS, “whole, entire” and TELOS which means “end.” Its basic connotation is therefore “wholly attaining the end, reaching the intended goal,” hence it has the force of no part being left unreached. The prayer is that the divine sanctification may extend to every part of their being, leaving no area untouched.

The Thessalonians lived exemplary lives. In **1 Thess. 1:6-7** it says “**You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, (7) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.**” But even though they lived exemplary lives Paul was not satisfied.

Paul was not satisfied with his own life. In **Phil. 3:7-14** Paul said “**But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, (9) and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, (10) that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (12) Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.**”

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**(13) Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet (WHAT? PERFECTION) ; but one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Paul certainly prayed for the Thessalonians that the God of peace might sanctify them entirely but we must remember that he prayed the same thing for himself. We cannot allow ourselves to become satisfied. If we become satisfied with the progress of our sanctification our thinking will become filled earthly concerns. In order to keep us from becoming satisfied we must see the goal in very clearly. And what is that goal? That we would be sanctified entirely. That we might be holy even as God is holy. We certainly have not yet arrived. We are therefore to continue to keep striving.

We have looked at the nature of sanctification, the source of sanctification, the goal of sanctification and now we will be looking at the components.

### THE COMPONENTS OF SANCTIFICATION

Let us again look at the verse and read carefully what it says, **“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.”** Until we are sanctified by the Lord entirely what should be the areas of our lives that we need to be concerned about? Paul is praying that the Thessalonians **“spirit and soul and body be preserved complete.”** Paul is listing for us the areas that we need to be concerned about in terms of sanctification until that time we are sanctified by the Lord entirely Within these words Paul in essence is saying that we need to be concerned with both the material and immaterial parts of man in respect to our separation from sin to holiness.

Why might Paul be led of the Spirit of God to list these various components? The reason is that in the Greek culture the body was not esteemed. Therefore, however the body, which had in the greeks minds very little or nothing to do with them personally, went about fulfilling its appetites was of no concern to them. This way of thinking therefore could very easily lead the Thessalonian believers down the path of immorality. Paul is making sure that the being sanctified “entirely” is understood by the Thessalonians to include the “body.”

Paul’s use of the three nouns “spirit and soul and body” should not be pressed to make clear distinctions between each of these three words. Paul never in any of his epistles ever intimates that we are made up of three distinct parts. Rather over and over again we see Paul inferring that there are really only two parts the material and immaterial part of man. In Rom. 8:10 he says, **“And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”** In 1 Cor. 5:3 Paul says, **“For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.”** In 1 Cor. 7:34 he says, **“and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit .....**” In 2 Cor. 7:1 Paul says, **“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves form all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”**

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I believe that Paul is not seeking to give an anthropological statement by using these three nouns but he is piling up words for emphasis. This is not unknown in the scriptures. Certainly we see this in **Mt. 22:37** when Christ said, “... **you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**” Certainly the terms of Christ is using in this verse are not giving to us three distinct parts. He is rather choosing to pile up terms that are very closely related in order to give emphasis. And that certainly would be the case here in **1 Thess. 5:23**. Paul is simply emphasizing the breadth, height and depth that our sanctification process to take in. The “entirely” sanctified condition Paul is Praying for encompasses both the material and immaterial part of man.

We have seen the nature of sanctification, the source of sanctification, the goal of sanctification, the components of sanctification. We are now going on to the...

### THE PROTECTOR OF OUR SANCTIFICATION

We can see the goal but who will keep us moving toward that goal? Hopefully it does not depend upon us. Let us read the verse again. “**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.**” Paul is praying that we might be “preserved.”

The word “preserved” (a form of TEREON) implies the guarding of something to keep it safe. The important question that we need to answer is who is doing the preserving or guarding? The word “preserved” is passive in the greek. It is not us who are responsible but rather it is the Lord who must be responsible for this work.

How effective does Paul believe this guarding work has to be? Completely effective! Again let us look at the verse, “**Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved ... what? “complete.”** The word “complete” (HOLOKLERON) is a compound word. The first part of the word, “HOLOS” means, as we said earlier “whole” and “KLEROS the second part of the word means ”a lot or portion received by lot.” Its basic connotation would therefore be “that which retains all that was allotted to it therefore without lack or deficiency, complete and whole in all its parts.” The Lord has no intention of allowing His sanctifying ministry in our lives to have no effect. **JUST AS HIS GRACE CAUSED US TO COME TO HIM HIS GRACE WILL ALSO CAUSE US TO FOLLOW HIM.**

It is His work of preserving us complete having a dynamic impact on our lives that will permit to stand blameless at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

“Blameless” (AMEMPTOS) is used only twice in the New Testament. It denotes a condition of being blameless, “so that there is no cause for censure.” It does not imply a condition utterly without defect, but rather a condition where no just cause for complaint can be raised.

We have considered the nature of sanctification, the goal, the components, the protector now let us consider the certainty of our final sanctification.

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THE SECURITY OF OUR FINAL SANCTIFICATION

The security of our final sanctification is the faithfulness of God. Look at **V. 24** “**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.**” The Lord who called us to sanctification, is the same Lord who will protect us along our way, and is the same Lord who will bring it to pass.