

Part 3: SANCTIFIED (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God. Our goal should be to be like Jesus. Jesus faced temptation and never sinned. Jesus was challenged and never spoke error. Jesus was confronted and never retaliated. We should desire to be the same!

By saying this, Paul was not suggesting that God would end the process of our sanctification in this life as a point in time. Paul was praying that God would make his readers all-the-way like Jesus; he was not predicting a time when it would be completed. Jesus made us, and He saved us -- our entire being.

This is Paul's way of saying

- "May God get ahold of you completely" or
- "May God change every part of you" or
- "May God leave no part of your life in the dark".

Isn't that and shouldn't that be our desire for ourselves?

We are supposed to be a complete person. Christianity isn't just about what we do on Sundays. Paul wanted these church members to realize that every aspect of their lives is subject to discipleship and that God could make every part of them more like Jesus.

"Sound and blameless" means that when we stand before Jesus, we can do so with a clear conscience.

Part 3: SANCTIFIED Final Verse, Verse 24

24 He who calls you is faithful; he will do it.

Finally, verse 24 is amazingly important -- God wants us to be more like Jesus, and He will help us get there.

Pray this for everyone in your group! And if there is a specific area in your life where you are struggling (like how you handle money, how you speak to coworkers, how you spend your free time, whatever), ask someone you trust to pray with you about that specific thing.

Closing Thoughts

Paul asked for prayer for himself and his co-laborers. Paul believed prayer "worked", and he wanted those spiritual benefits for himself as he did for his readers.

Paul concluded with a message of grace, his favorite benediction probably because it was his favorite topic.:

The grace of Jesus had completely changed his life, and he wanted everyone he knew to experience that grace and share it.

We should do the same.

Adapted with gratitude from bible study: *Christian House Rules for Living -- Paul's Final Instructions in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24*

Bible Art Study Journal

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 'Final Instructions'

12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. 14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good, 22 reject every kind of evil. 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. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

God wants us to be more like Jesus, and He will help us get there. Paul wraps up this letter with a flurry of exhortations for how they (and all Christians) should live as we wait for Jesus to return. This brilliant package of rules covers how we should treat our church leaders, one another, our relationship with God, and our attitude toward worship. And it ends with a prayer that every day would end with us more like Jesus.

Find the purple boxes! & Read, Sketch, Color or Paint, Reflect and Journal

We've inserted purple boxes in key places. These are to encourage you to give yourself the gift of reflection, prompt journaling, and sketching, coloring, painting! Give yourself this special gift of full expression of your thoughts and feelings as you spend this time with God.

WARMUP—Do you have a favorite "rule" that you remember seeing in your mom's or grandma's house?

PART 1: RESPECTING (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13)

12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to regard them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

We have two commands (asks): "give recognition to" and "regard". "Give recognition to" (or "acknowledge") means something more than being willing to say "hey preacher". It's more than acknowledging that this person holds the position of pastor in the church. This means to show **honor and respect**.

Reflections:

- *What are ways your group can give recognition to your church leaders? □ Why is it important for church members to live at peace with one another?*

Part 2: ACCOUNTABLE (1 Thessalonians 5:14-22)

14 And we exhort you, brothers and sisters: warn those who are idle, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

□ *"Warn those who are idle"* - The word for "idle" really means "undisciplined". This very well could be those people who have stopped working because they think Jesus is coming back before their next meal. In any case, their idleness had led to them becoming unruly and undisciplined. If someone in our church has become that, we're supposed to step in. God doesn't want us to be like that.

□ *"Comfort the discouraged"* - Paul has mentioned two sources of discouragement in this letter -- persecution (2:14), and the death of loved ones (4:13). But this rule doesn't have to be limited to that. One of the most important things we can do as church members is encourage one another to stay the course.

□ *"Help the weak"* ("weak in spirit" - see Rom 14:1, 1 Cor 9:22, 2 Cor 12:10). ("weak in body" - see 2 Cor 12:9, Gal 4:13). If someone needs spiritual help or physical help, we're supposed to help them. Perhaps their discouragement has made them spiritually "frail".

□ *"Be patient with everyone"* - Everyone means everyone.

PART 2: ACCOUNTABLE CONT'D.

15 See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all.

□ *"Don't repay evil for evil"* - Rom 12:21 says, "Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good." Retaliation is a tool of the world that Christians should never use. Rather, we are to "turn the other cheek". In Romans 12, Paul connects this idea with living at peace with everyone. You can see how they fit together. Note that "evil for evil" is a saying -- Paul means **any** act of retaliation, even if you don't think it's particularly "evil".

□ *"Pursue what is good for one another"* - This is the natural opposite of the previous. In Phil 2, Paul says, "Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others." And then he immediately describes Jesus as our perfect model of such a lifestyle. Note that we are supposed to seek the good of everyone else, not just the people we like. Also catch this: where "one another" refers to church members, the "all" covers everybody else.

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray constantly, 18 give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

□ *"always rejoice / constantly pray / in everything give thanks"* - Paul isn't saying you're supposed to block out your calendar for those three activities but rather that your life should be characterized by those three activities. These things are directed to God: we express our joy to God; we pray to God; we give thanks to God. They are tied to one another, and they build on one another.

□ *"Rejoice always"* - Paul uses this regularly (see Rom 12:12, 2 Cor 13:11, Phil 3:1), but most people's favorite is **Philippians 4:4**, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" "Rejoice" is the verb form of "joy"; we've said consistently that joy is a choice, not a feeling (like "hope" or "love").

□ *"Pray continually"* - *What is prayer?* Prayer is talking with God, not to try to change God's mind but understand God's will. *Want to know how to deal with an unruly church member? Someone who is weak in spirit? Someone who is persecuting you? Pray! Let God by His Holy Spirit help you!*

□ *"Give thanks in everything"* - Paul isn't saying "give thanks for everything". There's a huge difference there. For example, we aren't supposed to give thanks for tragedies. Rather, we give thanks that God has been with us in the tragedy, and that He can bring good out of the tragedy. We know that in all things, God is working toward the perfect end -- the return of Jesus. And so we thank God in everything that happens along the way.

PART 2: ACCOUNTABLE CONT'D.

19 Don't stifle the Spirit. 20 Don't despise prophecies, 21 but test all things. Hold on to what is good. 22 Stay away from every kind of evil.—

And then Paul shifts gears to a final batch of Spirit-related exhortations.

□ *"Don't stifle the Spirit"* - It's possible to get so mechanical about our functioning that the Spirit's involvement becomes unnecessary. That's bad. We need to constantly "fan the flame of the Spirit" (as Paul says it) rather than "snuff out the flame of the Spirit". **Perhaps it would be wise to discuss how a church can stifle the Spirit.**

□ *"Don't despise prophecies"* - Remember that this isn't necessarily talking about predicting-the-future stuff, but rather -thus-saith-the-Lord stuff, like sermons. When someone is teaching us God's Word, we should pay attention! "In one ear out the other" or worse, hearing it and denying it, that is not how a Christian should treat a sermon (or a Bible study lesson).

□ *"but test all things"* - This is the necessary corollary to the above -- don't gullibly accept everything everyone says as a word from God. Just as people use "in Jesus' name" as a magic formula for prayer, they might also use "thus saith the Lord" at the end of a soapbox. Maybe. Maybe not. It is our responsibility to test what people tell us, like the Bereans did with Paul's message (Acts 17).

□ *"Hold on to good / stay away from evil"* - These make a logical pair, and together they cover pretty much everything in life. Paul elaborated on this to the **Philippians** -- "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things" (4:8). The important thing to note is that Paul uses active verbs for both. We have to work at this.