

I Thessalonians 5:23-28 Spirit, Soul, and Body

Today we begin the last section of I Thessalonians. Next week, Lord willing, we will be starting II Thessalonians. But this week our focus is on I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 23 to 28.

Chapters 4 and 5 focusing on the instruction to the believers in Thessalonica, instruction about the coming of the Lord.

We saw in chapter 4 that they were confused. There were many different teachings going around, even people who falsely represented the apostle Paul in the teaching on the coming of the Lord. And so, in chapter 4 verses 13 through 18 he presents that those who have died did not miss the rapture. In fact, he said, "You did not miss the rapture." He says, "When the Lord comes there will be a command, trump of the Archangel will sound, and the sound of the Archangel, and the dead in Christ will rise first: and then we who are alive on the earth are going to rise up together with them and meet the Lord in the air." And with that our physical bodies are raised up, changed and transformed, and with that we will forever be with the Lord.

But when we started chapter 5, The Coming of the Day of the Lord. Not the coming of the Lord, but the coming of the Day of the Lord, which is a biblical phrase for the Judgment Day.

I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 1 to 5 is The Coming Day of the Lord. And he told them, **You do not have to** (verse 4 of chapter 5) **but you yourselves, brothers, are not in darkness, in order that that Day should overtake you as a thief. You yourselves are all sons of light, and sons of day; we are not of night, nor of darkness.** Factual statements. We will not miss the coming of the Lord. What makes a person ready for the coming of Jesus Christ to go be with him is that a person must receive Christ. Not intellectually believe in Him but spiritually receive Him, have Christ in their heart. He says that we will miss this because of verse 9, **Because God has not appointed us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** He has not appointed us to judgment. He is going to take us out of here before judgment comes.

He goes on in verses 12 and 13 to talk about The Consideration of Leaders. **Now brothers we request you to know the ones laboring among you, in taking the lead of you in the Lord, and warning you, and to esteem them - three words: above, out, and beyond in love on account of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.** That is what is the bottom line there.

Then there were Commands for Orderliness, a series of commands. **We encourage you, brothers, be warning the disorderly, be comforting the fainthearted.** *Fainthearted* means *small capacity soul*, a person who is weak. **Be comforting the fainthearted, be sustaining the weak, be long-suffering** (slow in human reaction) **toward everyone. See that anyone should not return evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good, both towards one another and towards all. Be rejoicing always. Be praying unceasingly. In everything be giving thanks, for this will of God in Christ Jesus toward you. Do not be quenching the**

Spirit. Do not be rejecting prophecies. Be testing all things; be holding firm the good. And lastly, **Be abstaining from every form of evil.** So when evil is around, leave. Escape. Get out of there. Abstain.

So for today I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 23 and 24, The Confirmation for Believers as he ends this letter with these six verses. He says, **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely to the end, and may your entire spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Verse 24, **Faithful is the One calling you, who also will do it.**

Verse 23 starts off with two main verbs. Both verbs are in what are called the optative mood, which is an expression of a desire or a wish. Those two verbs are the word *sanctify* so it is translated with *may* because it is a wish. **May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely to the end.** The second verb is the word *preserved*. And again *may* is translated with preserved. **May your entire spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** By the use of the optative mood Paul is praying for something to happen for them, which has already been promised to happen.

Look at verse 24, **Faithful is the One calling you, who also will do it.** So he is not praying for a hope that God will do this for you. God will do this, which is why he puts it in the optative mood. His wish and desire is for God to do this for them.

The first verb we will study is: **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely to the end.** The word *sanctify* means *to set apart*. We have discussed this quite a few times before. When the Holy Spirit comes into a person's spirit that person is set apart, sanctified, belonging to Christ. But as he says, **May the God of peace Himself do it, may He sanctify you completely to the end.** Now that phrase *completely to the end* is one Greek word. It is a compound Greek word. The first word is the word *whole*, and the second word is the word *end*. So, **May He keep you whole all the way to the end, whole or complete.** Which is why the New King James uses the term *wholly*. **May He sanctify you wholly**, that is *whole, complete*. What makes it technically sound is the fact that he is not saying, "May He sanctify you and then gradually, progressively, sanctify you all the way to the end." May He make you complete and then keep you all the way to the end this way, is how the text reads. Completely to the end.

Secondly, **And may your entire spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Interesting, this is the triad that makes up human life. Man is made up of spirit, soul, and body. Everyone is made of spirit, soul, and body - these three, which is very interesting. The spirit is the real me, the real living me. The *soul*, which is the word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ (*psuchē*), which is where we get our word *psyche* from, that is the mind. Spirit, mind, and body. The body is what contains my spirit, and the mind is where all the activity takes place.

This is important to understand because when we go to understand salvation, we understand that from the Scriptures, as we will see in a moment, that everybody is born spiritually dead, though a living spirit. That is death in the sense of separated. I am living but I am separated from God. Sin has separated me from God from the very beginning and so I need a

remedy for this, for this sin problem. It was paid for on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross He paid the punishment, He paid the penalty for my sins, so that I can experience salvation. Salvation is the new birth, new spiritual birth by receiving Christ. And the Spirit of Christ comes into my spirit that lives inside my body, and that feeds impulses to the soul, to the psyche, to the mind.

So the Bible teaches according to Ephesians chapter 2 verse 5 that before you come to know Christ you are dead spiritually in your trespasses and sins. And your spirit is separated from God, therefore it is spiritual death, though you be living. When I die, my spirit is going to leave my body and my body is going to be left lying there dead somewhere. The word *death* literally means *separation*. But my spirit is who I really am. So when I die my spirit leaves my body, separation. But spiritually I am in a separated condition from birth, separated from God, because of my trespasses and from my sins.

The Bible teaches that a person without Christ, a person that has never received Jesus Christ is dead spiritually to God in his spirit, though he has a living spirit. It might sound confusing but I have a living spirit that is not dead, but yet my living spirit is dead towards Christ. Sin and trespasses have separated me from the Lord. So therefore, there is a remedy for this.

Jesus said in John chapter 3 verses 3 through 5 to Nicodemus that the remedy to the situation is a spiritual birth. You need to be born from above, you are dead spiritually.

And He said in John chapter 5 verse 3 that you must be born of the Spirit of God.

Galatians chapter 4 verse 6 says because you are sons of God, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. *Heart* is another Biblical word for *spirit*. God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, "Abba Father." So the spirit of Christ comes into your heart. You are born again.

John says in I John chapter 3 verse 24, **We know that we abide in Him and He abides in us, because of the Spirit that He has given to us.**

He said the same thing again in I John chapter 4 verse 13. **We know that He abides in us and we in Him, because of the Spirit that He has given to us.**

And so Peter also says in II Peter chapter 1 verse 4 says that we who have received Christ, we are partakers of the divine nature, once we been born of the Spirit. Once we have been born of the Spirit we are also sealed by the Spirit. My spirit cannot get out. Nothing can penetrate the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit seals me.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13 that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. So we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Our spirits are completely sealed so that nothing can penetrate to where Peter said in I Peter chapter 1 verse 5, **we are those who are being kept by the power of God until salvation comes.** And His Spirit lives in my spirit, is one with my spirit, and His Spirit seals my spirit.

So that is my spirit, separated from God at birth, because I was born in trespasses and sins. But the remedy is to be born spiritually from above. To experience a spiritual birth where Christ comes and dwells within my spirit. He indwells me in His fullness and seals me by His Spirit so that nothing can penetrate or take me away from Christ.

But then there is the soul. The word *soul* is the word *mind*, or *psyche*. It is the arena in which all the action is taking place. It is all happening up here. God's Spirit ministers into my psyche or mind from out of my spirit. So He lives within me, born of His Spirit He dwells within me. He feeds the impulses and thoughts going up into the psyche where He ministers to us. The Holy Spirit is feeding us from the Word of God, which is why we are glad that we spend so much time in the Word, just because the Holy Spirit continues to feed the Word into the arena.

Colossians chapter 3 verse 2 Paul says, **Set your mind on things above, not things on the earth.** So there is a battle going on, where Satan is trying to get at us from the earth and the Lord wants us to set our mind on things that are above. And Satan is trying to draw us from the earthly perspective.

It is the influence of the mind, perceptions, is what Paul said in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 23, **We are to be renewed in the spirit of our mind.** There is a perceptive process of the psyche itself. So it is not just the mind, the psyche, it is the *νοῦς* (noos), which is the Greek word for the perceptions of the mind. God wants us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind.

In Romans chapter 12 verse 2 Paul says, **Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** So he is talking about rewriting the grid, rewriting the cortex of the brain. Once you are saved God's Spirit then ministers into the arena, the thought processes in fact change, and transforms the grid of the mind to how we think and how we view things of life.

So we have a spirit and we have a mind, which is considered to be the arena in which all things take place. But then there is the body. Interesting there is a difference in the Bible between the body and what the body is made of, the flesh. The flesh is not the body.

Paul says in I Corinthians chapter 6 verse 19 that **Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit**, but he did not say *the flesh*, he said *our bodies*. The body is the container in which Christ dwells. But Christ does not dwell in my flesh.

In fact, Paul says in Romans chapter 7 verse 18 that **There is no good thing in me, that is, in my flesh.** Not one good thing in my flesh. So the difference between a Christian and non-Christian: a nonbeliever only has one thing feeding the brain. But the Christian has two things going on that we have to battle, whereas a nonbeliever does not have to battle. So if a person does not have Christ, they have one thing, the flesh, feeding the brain.

Like he said in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 3 that **Before we came to know Christ that we were fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.** So the flesh feeding the impulses and desire to the mind. So the nonbeliever has this to battle with.

The Christian has two things to battle with. Once you have received Christ, you have got the Holy Spirit ministering from my spirit into my psyche, but Satan also has access to my psyche. He also has access to placing thoughts there. He also has the ability to influence the psyche by the flesh. There is a battle going on in the believer's life. Galatians chapter 5 verse 17 it says, **For the flesh fights against the Spirit, and the Spirit is against the flesh: and these are contrary one to another: so that you cannot do the things you desire to do.**

So two things. **May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely to the end.** You are completely sanctified at the beginning when you receive Christ but he says, May He complete it to the end. And secondly, **May your entire spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** When He comes, I am actually going to be preserved to be blameless.

Ephesians chapter 1 verse 4 says that one day - that the great work of Christ - that because of His work for me on the Cross, when I stand before Him I am going to be blameless. And because my record, my sin, is going to be wiped out and blotted out, **I will stand before Him blameless.** *Without a blemish* would be a literal translation.

Faithful is the one calling you, who also will do it. It is a promise. It is not a wish. Notice the word *calling*, -ING on the end of it, continuous calling. It is a participle. He is continually calling, continually doing it. He has called us, and we have received Him, and He is continually calling us and drawing us to Him, and He will do it. He will sanctify us completely to the end and preserve our entire spirit, soul, and body blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He will do it. He is faithful. Everything is based on His faithfulness.

Verses 25 to 28, there are four things about The Charges of the Saints as Paul signs off his letter. Literally in verse 25 it reads, **Brothers, pray concerning us.** A literal translation would be *pray continually concerning us*. Do not stop, again denoting that participle there.

Verse 26, **Greet all the brothers in a holy kiss.** It is called *a holy kiss* mainly because it is not a human kiss of affection. It is a holy kiss, a kiss that is set apart. It is actually a greeting. In those days - just like today in the Middle East and we see it on the news reels at times, where dignitaries will greet each other with a kiss on the cheek. That is equivalent to our handshake.

Verse 27, **I charge you by the Lord that this letter is to be read to all the holy brothers.** So he wants the letter to be a circulation letter, read by all the brothers, not just a few that are in Thessalonica.

Verse 28 lastly, **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you. Amen.** Notice the word *is* is in italics. In the other English translations, it is the word *be*: *May His grace be with you*, as if he is saying it is a benediction, or he is stating that it is a wish. But the Greek text makes it a fact. There is no word *be* and there is no word *is*. There is no verb in the sentence. It is a statement of fact in the Greek text. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you.**

Amen. He is giving them the bottom-line fact that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you wherever you go; and everything that happens it is God's grace ministering His mercy and all of these provisions and blessings to you. What a reminder.

That closes the book of I Thessalonians for us. Let's close with prayer.