

THE BOOK OF THESSALONIANS

"The God of Peace"

1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24

Introduction

1. The final verses of this chapter focus on Paul's deep concerns for the church. Some of these relate to: a. Spirit quenching; b. Despising of prophecy; c. Proving everything; d. Holding good; and e. Abstaining from evil (vv. 19-22).

2. No matter how careful one may be, there is unceasing need for God to effect His purpose in a believer. This is the force of the adversative "but" rendered "and" (KJV). He has promised this (Phil. 2:13). But it has also prompted Paul to prayer and this is the issue of these verses (vv. 23, 24).

3. The specific elements of the prayer are clearly indicated. Study them:

1. THE PERSON ADDRESSED

a. His Name. The Lord is called the "God of peace." This is His character and nature, but also what He bestows (cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9 et.al.). Disorders may have persisted in the assembly over the issues just discussed (vv. 12-22), hence this title. He has other titles of similar nature (Acts 7:2; Rom. 15:5, 13; 2 Cor. 1:3; 13:11; 1 Pet. 5:10).

b. His Emphasis. The reflexive pronoun "Himself" is in the emphatic position of the sentence. It notes the "very" God who alone can do as outlined here.

2. THE REQUEST INDICATED

a. Its Content. The verb "sanctify" is aorist, but really sees the act as a process. The end is seen in perspective. They are called "saints" (3:13; 2 Thess. 2:13), so their position is clear. This verse views the subject as realized. The verb connotes a separation to holiness from the profane. Don't water it down!

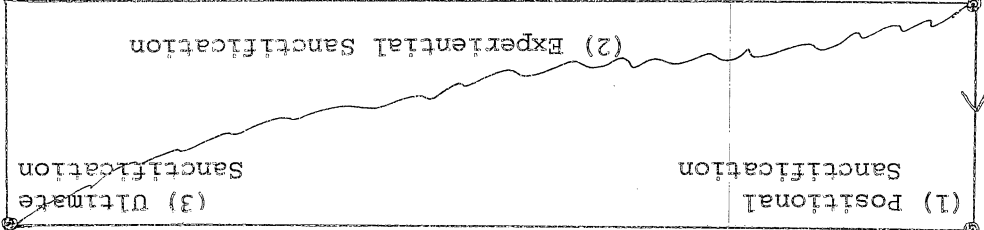
b. Its Extent. "Wholly" means just that. The thought is "through and through." Not an increasing degree of sanctification, but an extension of it to every part. The whole man. Qualitative sanctification and not quantitative is in view.

3. THE EXPLANATION OFFERED

a. Specifically. The verb "preserved" is also aorist, hence the process is seen as a single completed act. Being singular, it views the parts of man as a unit. The verb

is an extrapolation of "sanctify."

b. Objectively. The prayer for preservation is linked with "blameless" and this is "in" (not "until") the coming of Christ. This adverb is only found in Thessalonians in the New Testament (2:10; 3:13; 5:23). This is Paul's goal for his prayer-blamelessness in the return event of Christ. That is when position will join experience.



c. Totally. The adjective "whole" linked with the tripartite division of man, as noted here, means complete in all parts: the whole-lot. Every vestige of the person is a concern. Glory to God for then we shall be like Him (Rom. 8:28, 29; 1 John 3:2). The endless debate over dichotomy and trichotomy is fruitless. Man's being is basically twofold: material and immaterial. The latter has many segments (Heb. 4:12). Here two are given: soul (earth-ly concerns) and spirit (heavenly concerns).

4. THE ASSURANCE PROVIDED

a. God's Faithfulness. The term used expresses the fact that God does not lie in making promises nor does He repent of them when made. He fulfills all His word in His own time (1 Tim. 6:15). This is a favorite theme in the Word (Psa. 36:5; 119:90; Isa. 65:16; 2 Thess. 3:3).

b. God's Call. The present participle focuses on the person in the calling rather than the act of calling (cf. Gal. 5:8). Nevertheless, it is important to view God's call as an effective instrument to accomplish the prayer.

c. God's Activity. Here is the statement of utter assurance. God "will do it." No doubt here. The "also" does not make the "who" emphatic, but the "do" (Greek grammar). Hence, God Himself will accomplish in the believer His own call.

Conclusion God is the God of peace, i.e. of wholeness and completeness. Even with all their attainments, the Thessalonians were not wholly sanctified. This work would carry on until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Meantime, it was proper to pray for the complete work to be done. Paul was assured it would be accomplished. So be it.