

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28, Week 12
 Sunday, November 26th, 2017

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

²³Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

²⁵Brothers, pray for us. ²⁶Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. ²⁷I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. ²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Throughout the first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul seems almost like a coach on the sidelines, teaching, encouraging, and preparing his team during the most important game of the season. A coach can train his team all day long but when it's game time, the players are left to perform on their own. Then, a coach is simply left to watch - and pray. "At some point the people of God, those who are God-taught and Spirit-led, must ultimately be left in the hands of the God who faithfully sanctifies and keeps his church to the end. Appropriately, Paul called upon the power of God to accomplish more than the lengthiest list of exhortations ever could."¹

As Paul concludes his letter, he bursts into one final prayer. He descriptively calls upon God as the God of peace. This expression would reverberate not only to the peace God ultimately provides for His people (Rom. 5:1; 8:6), but back to the peace Paul exhorted them to have with one another as well (1 Thess. 5:13). Of all the names or attributes of God that Paul could have used as he closed out this letter, he chose *peace*.

The Hebrew term for peace is *shalom*. "Shalom and its derivatives have been said to represent 'one of the most prominent theological concepts in the OT.' (The word group occurs about 180 times in the OT.)"² In the New Testament, the word for peace is translated *eirene* and it appears in every book within the New Testament except for the book of 1 John.³

As we live in a culture that seems to offer so little peace, Paul's words, *the God of Peace* can be like a glass of ice-cold water on a scorching-hot day in this world gone into mad mayhem. Could it have been that the Apostle Paul, knowing the upheaval life has a habit of creating, sought with one last drop of ink to remind the Thessalonians of Who their God was and what He offered them?

Paul called upon the God of peace to sanctify the Thessalonians completely and prayed that they'd be kept blameless till Christ returned - a prayer similar to

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
John 14:27

Paul made reference to the God of peace elsewhere.

Romans 15:33; 16:20; & 2 Thess. 3:16.

¹ Martin, Michael D. *1, 2 Thessalonians*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen, B&H Publishing Group, 1995. The New

² Clendenen, E. R. (2003). [Peace](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1261). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

³ Ibid.

that which Paul prayed in 1 Thessalonians 3:13. Consider this powerful quote from The New American Commentary:

*“The prayer concludes with a word of assurance. **The God who calls believers into His kingdom is a faithful God. He is not whimsical and arbitrary.** He is a powerful God, capable of doing what He promises. The present tense participle ‘who calls’ highlights the ongoing work of God among his people. God’s calling through the gospel of His Son begins a good work that gives believers a future hope (Phil 1:6). That hope is as sure as the God who provides it. The faithful God does what he has promised to do for those whom He has called into the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor. 1:9). That which this God ‘will do’ is left unstated in the text, but the reference is certainly back to the prayer. Believers will be sanctified and kept. For those who are in Christ, the future is secure.”*⁴

Believer, I’m not sure what other words could be more reassuring or comforting.

The God of Peace who calls you is faithful.

Will you trust His promise to you to complete all that He started? He is not finished with you yet.

Closing

I wonder how Paul felt as he uttered the last words to his amanuensis before likely picking up the pen himself to close the letter, as was common in that day to validate authorship. The switch to the first person in 5:27 could indicate when Paul began writing with his own physical hand.⁵ Did tears sting his eyes as he earnestly pleaded for the brothers to *pray*? Was he hopeful as he thought of the believers in Thessalonica greeting one another like a family? We can merely speculate. We’ve certainly seen Paul’s tenderness towards the Thessalonians as if they were his own children (2:7,11) and his desire to see them *stand fast in the Lord* (3:8) and to flourish in holy living that pleased the Lord *more and more* (4:1).

As our time in the book of First Thessalonians comes to its conclusion, I pray we’ve been captivated by a church who received the Word of God with joy despite affliction, became imitators of Christ and an example to believers everywhere (1:6-8). A church that had turned from idols to the true, living God, anticipating the Son from Heaven (1:9-10) – the Author of their faith. Could the testimony of their lives be ours? By the grace of God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

⁴ Martin, Michael D. *1, 2 Thessalonians*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen, B&H Publishing Group, 1995. The New American Commentary.

⁵ Ibid.