

BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS
GOD WILL FINISH WHAT HE STARTED!-PART 1
1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24

Introduction

Now what we've been talking about for a good number of weeks here at the end of this book **are these little short admonitions or exhortations from the Apostle Paul to this Thessalonian Church and to us as believers!**

We need to understand that these things that we've been looking at **DO NOT come natural to our flesh!** They are things that **have to do with our having been born again of the Spirit and now that we have the Spirit of the living God living within us, they should be a part of our lives because we are spiritually alive now! But THESE THINGS DON'T COME NATURALLY!**

Even though we have the Spirit of God living and dwelling within us, **we must learn to WALK IN THE SPIRIT for these things to be accomplished in our lives!** *Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

This is why there are so many professing believers who are fulfilling the lust of the flesh in their lives—It is because they are not walking in the Spirit! Well then, the question comes to mind **why aren't more believers walking in the Spirit?**

1. **Some are baby Christians who have not yet learned to walk in the Spirit!** *1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

2. **Some though are carnal Christians who have resisted God's working in their lives. Many of these have had Bible teaching and preaching available that could help them learn to walk in the Spirit, but have not availed themselves of these resources! (Some are not here to hear it and others are here to hear it but still resist God's working in their lives!)** Let me say this: Each of us are as close to God right now as the effort that we have put forth to be close to God! **(James 4:6-10)**

Sadly there are some who are satisfied with where they are and have no desire or intentions to be closer to God in their walk!

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3. If you are satisfied with where you are in your walk with the LORD, let me tell you this: **THAT** will hold you back and keep you from maturing in your walk with the LORD! And the reason that is true is because though we are all **COMPLETE IN CHRIST** in our **POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** we are ALL still an **ONGOING WORK OF GOD** in the matter of our **PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION!**

Let's elaborate on that thought a little:

When a person is initially born again by the Spirit of God, there is an ***initial sanctification** that is the LORD's work inside the heart of a believer that makes the believer into a brand-new person at the moment he or she is born again into God's family! **(*Positional Sanctification or Salvation!)**

That **initial sanctification** is of our eternal soul and it is what gives us our **standing in Christ and makes us fit for heaven!** That was accomplished by God through the blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary and applied to our hearts and lives by grace through faith in Him! Don't ever forget that!

That is the **initial sanctification** that is **complete** and **that gives us our standing in Christ!** So why is it that sometimes we as believers don't feel very sanctified in this flesh? It is because that **initial sanctification** has nothing to do with feelings, it has everything to do with established facts!

1. **It Is An Established Fact That We All Are Sinners Who Were Totally Undone Before God!**

Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

2. **It Is An Established Fact That Our Sin Had A Debt Attached To It That Could Only Be Satisfied On Our Part In The Lake Of Fire!**

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

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3. It Is An Established Fact That God Sent His Son Into The World To Do Something About That!

John 3:16-18 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

4. It Is An Established Fact That Jesus Willingly Died On The Cross As Our Substitute!

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Hebrews 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

5. It Is An Established Fact That We Are Sanctified Through The Offering Of Body Of Jesus Christ Once For All!

Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

6. It Is An Establish Fact That We Gain That Initial Sanctification (i.e. Salvation) By Grace Through Faith In Christ's Finished Work! Ephesians 2:8-9 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works...

So, the **INITIAL, POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** at the point of salvation is God's Work in us that guarantees our **SALVATION AND IT IS A DONE DEAL IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER!**

Well then, what in the world is Paul talking about here in **verses 23-24?**

He is talking about the **WHOLE OF OUR SANCTIFICATION!**

POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION = DONE DEAL!

PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION = WORK IN PROGRESS

Let me give you five things you need to know about our sanctification:

- 1. OUR SANCTIFICATION (Both Our Positional And Our Practical Sanctification) IS THE WORK OF GOD IN OUR LIVES! Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**
- 2. OUR POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION WAS A ONE TIME EVENT THAT IS COMPLETE! OUR PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION IS AN ONGOING LIFETIME PROCESS! (i.e. It is ever ongoing but never complete in this life!)**
- 3. GOD WON'T STOP UNTIL THE JOB IS DONE! (Both Verses!)**
- 4. GOD HAS GIVEN US A PART IN OUR PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION!**
Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
- 5. GOD USES EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO US—THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND EVEN THE UGLY—TO MOLD US AND TO MAKE US INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST!**
Romans 8:28-29 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, ...

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That brings us back to our text for today. We see here in these two verses Paul's closing prayer of sorts which are in the form of a benediction in which Paul prays for God's sanctification of his readers.

Paul's teaching and preaching was now over, his exhortation was done, his message had been given, but Paul realized that only God working in the hearts of people can accomplish this! All human effort, no matter how valiant, is ultimately unsuccessful without God's help!

But listen, Paul also knew that this prayer for their sanctification is a prayer that God will ultimately answer! All of God's children are in the process of being transformed by the LORD into the image of Christ! And all of God's children will ultimately be conformed by the LORD into the image of Christ in the end!

No one here believes in Bible preaching and teaching more than I do! No one argues more forcefully for correct Bible doctrine! But all of my preaching and teaching and all the doctrine I share is in vain unless God supernaturally plants the truth in your hearts and He does His work!

That leads me to offer a **layman's definition of sanctification: It is everything God does in your life and mine to make sure we are eventually transformed into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ!**

Sanctification is not some mystical, strange, emotional experience! Let's illustrate it this way. Whenever you invest in someone's life, you care about how they turn out. That's why parents care so much and worry so much about their children. They have given so much and so it matters almost more than life itself how their children turn out.

Now apply that same truth in the spiritual realm. God has invested in us the death of His only begotten Son! Sanctification is the Divine guarantee that that investment will not be wasted! It is the assurance that God finishes what He starts!

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Paul said it this way in *Philippians 1:6*, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*"

God began a good work in us the moment we came to Christ! And now He continues it day by day! And He will see it through to completion which is consummated by Him in the day we see Jesus Christ face to face!

Sanctification, then, has much more to do with God's commitment to us than it does with our commitment to God! We're going to be fully found in the image of Christ one day! He will personally see to it that it is accomplished!

God is not finished with any of us yet—that's why we pray and seek the Lord! We should want to be more like Christ while we are here! Someday we'll be finished—that's what sanctification means!

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians is really a short course in sanctification! I want you to understand that these two verses are loaded and LORD willing, we'll come back next week and see the things revealed to us here!

We'll see the Person, the Purpose, the Prospect, the Position, the Point, the Promise, and the Performance.

Conclusion

So, in closing, **has God started a work in you?** Are you saved? If not, why not come let us show you how God can begin a work of Sanctification in you by giving you new life in Christ Jesus!

And if you are saved, are you cooperating with the LORD's work of Sanctification in your life? Are you becoming more like Christ? That's God's will for you! How is that work of sanctification coming? Is it moving forward as it should? God is going to do whatever is necessary to accomplish His work in your life! And He always finishes what He starts!