**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**

slide 1

**Paul’s Closing Doxology**

***23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.***

* Over the past several weeks we have been examining Paul’s closing instruction to the church in Thessalonica in v. 16-22.
  + **In v. 16-18 Paul gives** **3 commands to the individual members of the church** . . . that they, and we . . . ***rejoice always, pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks.***
  + **In v. 19-22 Paul gives** **5 commands to the church, in general**. . . that they, and we . . . ***not quench the Spirit, not despise prophetic utterances, examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good and abstain from every form of evil.***
* Then, having given this instruction to the Thessalonian church and . . . by extension, to the universal church . . . Paul now closes this section of practical instruction with what be considered to be either **a prayer and/or a doxology of praise.**
  + In reading through it, it seems to me to read more like a doxology of praise to God for what He has done and continues to do within the Thessalonian church.
  + This would certainly be in line with Paul’s joyful purpose in writing this letter.

***1 Thessalonians 5:23— Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

slide 2

* Paul begins this closing doxology with the statement . . . ***now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely***.
* It is significant that in this opening phrase of this doxology that Paul refers to God by the title ***the God of peace***.
* When we find the nouns ***God*** and ***peace*** together in Scripture, there are several important things we need to keep in mind.
  + **First**, in the phrase ***the God of peace***, we are reminded that ***God* is the source *of peace***. The only way a person can know and have true ***peace*** is if God declares Himself to be at ***peace*** with each of us.
    - In other words, **only God has the ability to make peace between Himself and man**.
    - No matter how much men may want to believe that they are or wish to be at peace with God, **peace with God is not dependent upon men, but solely the prerogative of God.**
    - Only God can make peace between Himself and any of Adam’s descendants. No matter how much man way want to, we have no ability to make peace with God.
  + **Second**, when we talk about God being ***the God of peace***, we must remember that **the only way we can have peace with God is by faith in Jesus Christ**. We are taught this, explicitly, in Romans 5:1 . . .

***Romans 5:1— Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

slide 3

* + With this statement, we learn that **the only way a descendant of Adam can have *peace* with God is *through our Lord Jesus Christ***.
    - And not only **can** we have ***peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ***, but **we have the promise** from God that ***we have peace with God through* . . . and only *through . . . our Lord Jesus Christ.***
    - Every person who is a believer in Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior is adopted into the family of God and forever has **peace with God**.
    - And every believer who has ***peace with God*** has the promise and assurance that he or she will never lose that peace.
* The significance of having **peace with God** is attested to by the number of times it is found in Scripture. In the writings of Paul we find it in the closing verses of several of Paul’s other New Testament epistles . . .

***Philippians 4:9—The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.***

slide 4

***Romans 15:33— Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.***

***2 Corinthians 13:11— Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.***

* In the closing of the letter to the Hebrews, the author closes with the doxology whose central subject is ***the God of peace*** . . .

***Hebrews 13:20-21— 20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.***

slide 5

* + Paul’s emphasis in each of these statements at the close of the respective letters is that **God, Himself, is the source of peace with man. He initiates it and He preserves it.**

***1 Thessalonians 5:23— Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

slide 6

* Then, having reminded us that God is ***the God of peace***, Paul then states his prayer and desire that ***the God of peace Himself*** will ***sanctify you entirely***.
* Here in v. 23 Paul states the fact that as ***the God* who makes *peace* with those whom He chooses to save**,He will ***entirely sanctify* all those who receive faith in Jesus Christ**.
* The word ***sanctify* . . . or sanctification . . .** is an important theological term.
  + The word ***sanctify*** is translated from the Greek word *hagiazō* (#37), meaning **“to make holy.”**
* But the **sanctification** of believers . . . **“the making of believers holy”** . . . occurs in **2 ways.**
* **First**, there is our **positional sanctification**.

slide 7

* + For Christians, our **initial, positional sanctification** occurs at the moment we are first saved. When we receive faith through the Holy Spirit we are **positionally sanctified, meaning we are consecrated to God.**
  + To be **consecrated** means **to be set apart as belonging to God.** We are positionally sanctified . . . consecrated as a child of God . . . in the moment that we are saved. From the moment of our justification by faith, we are consecrated to God . . . declared positionally holy.
* But there is a **second** aspect of sanctification that continues throughout our lives. This sanctification is our **practical sanctification.**
  + While positional sanctification is a declared position before God, **our practical sanctification is** **the work of the Holy Spirit in** **changing and conforming us into the image of Christ.**
  + Our practical sanctification is what the Holy Spirit is actively doing in each of us to **transform us and** **make us more holy.**
* And it is this work by the Holy Spirit to **make each of us more holy** that Paul is referring to here in v. 23.
  + Here in v. 23 Paul is expressing his praise and gratitude that **based upon their obedience to the instruction he has just given them in v. 16-22 that** **God will entirely . . . perfectly and completely . . . use his instruction to transform all those who are in Christ.**

**What makes a man or woman?**

**The Dichotomy—Trichotomy Debate**

***1 Thessalonians 5:23— Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

slide 8

* So, here in the first part of v. 23, the apostle Paul expresses his thanks and praise to God for transforming the believers in Thessalonica through the work of the Holy Spirit.
* Then, in the second part of v. 23, Paul expresses his praise to God for ***completely preserving*** the Thessalonians . . . and all believers . . . **until the coming of the Lord.**
* Here in this second part of v. 23, Paul’s doxology expresses his praise and thanks for God’s protection of **the entire being** of all believers . . . ***spirit, soul and body.***

* Here in v. 23 Paul is making a significant theological statement when he refers to ***the spirit and soul and body*** of believers.
  + The significance of this reference has to do with the debate of the question, **“what makes a man or woman?”**
* Theologians have forever debated the **dichotomy—trichotomy issue**.
* It is a universally accepted truth that humans are composed of two primary components, a physical, material body and a spiritual, immaterial soul.
  + But, as Paul states here in v. 23, there is debate . . . and disagreement . . . regarding whether the immaterial aspect of our being . . . our soul . . . is actually composed of **2 parts . . . spirit and soul.**
  + The dichotomy—trichotomy debate centers on the question of whether man is composed of **body and soul . . . the dichotomy view . . .** or man is composed of **body, soul and spirit . . . known as the trichotomy view.**
* The reason this subject is debated is because **both** views appear in Scripture.
  + For example, **in support of the dichotomy view** we read . . .

***Psalm 31:9— Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also.***

slide 9

***Isaiah 10:18— And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body, and it will be as when a sick man wastes away.***

* In Matthew 10:28 the Lord, Himself, makes the statement . . .

***Matthew 10:28— "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

* + But **in favor of the trichotomy view** we find all three . . . ***spirit and soul and body*** stated here in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. We also see the reference to the distinction between **soul and spirit** in . . .

slide 10

***Job 7:11— "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.***

***Isaiah 26:9— At night my soul longs for You, indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently;***

* And most clearly we read in Hebrews 4:12 . . .

***Hebrews 4:12— For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.***

* Theologically, the question is, **“is the immaterial aspect of man composed of the soul, only, or is the immaterial aspect of man composed of both soul and spirit?”**
  + And, if man’s immaterial aspect is **both soul and spirit**, **what is the difference between the two?**
* As I said a moment ago, this theological debate has been going on for as long as men and women have been studying Scripture.
  + My purpose in mentioning this issue here is not to debate this issue, but simply to mention that this passage is one of the central passages in the debate.
  + The dichotomy—trichotomy debate is an interesting and worthwhile theological subject to study and debate, but time does not allow it here this morning.
* What we see here in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is Paul’s doxology of praise to God for His work and protection in the Thessalonian believers . . . and for all believers.
  + In v. 23 Paul expresses his gratitude and praise to God for ***sanctifying* each of us *entirely*** and ***preserving* each of us *completely* so that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns for His bride, we will each appear before our God, blameless in His sight, because we are clothed in the righteousness of our Redeemer and Savior.**

slide 11

***1 Thessalonians 5:24—Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.***

* So, having stated his heartfelt praise and thanks for God’s continued and complete **sanctification and preservation** of these dear friends, **in v. 24 Paul then makes a statement that should have given them additional comfort, when he says of God** . . . ***faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.***
* As we examine this statement by Paul in v. 24 we find and are reminded of several very important facts about God and our relationship to Him.
* The **first** . . . and the most important fact . . . is found in Paul’s statement regarding the character of God, that **God is faithful**.
  + Where Paul declared that **God is the source of peace** in v. 23, here in v. 24 Paul reminds us that **God is a faithful God.**
* The **faithfulness of God is one of God’s essential attributes**.
  + Because God is faithful, all His words and acts must be and must forever remain faithful.
  + God’s faithfulness and His immutability go hand-in-hand. It is because God is immutable . . . unable to change . . . that He is also faithful.
    - Because God cannot change, He cannot change His mind or rescind a promise that He has made. And because He has promised that not one of those sheep whom He has saved will be lost, His divine immutability and faithfulness require that He fulfill that promise. And because He is infinitely powerful and sovereign, God has the ability to carry through on the promises He has made.
    - We find this promise stated by the Lord in John 10:27-29 . . .

***John 10:27-29— 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.***

slide 12

* + We see another expression of God’s faithfulness the opening verses of Paul’s letter to his friends in Philippi . . .

***Philippians 1:6— For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.***

slide 13

* + In the letter to the Hebrews we read of God’s faithfulness . . .

***Hebrews 10:23— Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;***

* + In his letter to his home church in Ephesus, the apostle John says of God’s faithfulness to forgive our sins, as He promised . . .

***1 John 1:9— If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

* You know, God’s faithfulness is an amazing attribute. In fact, it is manifestation not only of His immutability, but also of His patience.
  + That fact that God is willing to forgive us when we continue to sin is truly an act of great patience, faithfulness and love extended toward each of us.
  + **And were it not for His immutable promises He has made to each of us who believe, He would be completely just in giving us the punishment we justly deserve.**
  + But because of His immutability, His faithfulness, His patience and His love toward us, God does not give us what we deserve. He gives us what He has promised He will give to us. God will faithfully fulfill the promises He has made toward everyone who believes.
* Of this faithfulness to give what He has promised, we read in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 . . .

***2 Timothy 2:11-13— 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.***

slide 14

* I will never forget hearing this verse preached by David Fry, 16 years ago because David made such an important theological point.
  + Note in v. 13 that Paul writes, ***if we are faithless, He remains faithful****.*When Paul states that ***if we are faithless, He remains faithful***, the question that arises is, **by remaining faithful when we are faithless, who is God being faithful to?**
  + Many people interpret this verse to mean, **“when I am unfaithful to God, He is still faithful to me.”** And while we may, at first, think of **ourselves** . . . thinking that God is faithful to **us** . . . here in 2 Timothy 2:13 Paul is actually stating that ***if we are faithless,* God *remains faithful* to Himself . . . doing all that He has promised He will do for His own name’s sake and for His own glory**.
  + Even when we are disobedient and sin against God, **God remains faithful . . . not to us, but to Himself . . . in doing and fulfilling all the promises that He has made.**
  + What an incredible and incredibly humbling truth. The reason God does what He does is not because of any worthiness in us, but because of the worthiness of Christ, which has been imputed to us. And because of Christ’s worthiness, God has promised that He will save us and bless us. And God is faithful . . . to Himself . . . to keep those promises.
* And it is because of God’s faithfulness **to Himself** that we have the complete knowledge and assurance of what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 . . . ***faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass***.

slide 15

* + All that God has promised that He will do for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior **will be fulfilled and accomplished** because God is faithful to Himself to do it.
* Looking at this doxology in v. 23-24 we can now clearly see that **God will sanctify each of us entirely and He will preserve our spirit, soul and body completely, without blame, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ because He is faithful to Himself to do and fulfill all that He has promised He will do.**
  + **God will accomplish all that He has promised He will do because He must and because it serves to glorify Him.**
  + Yes, each person who receives faith has, truly, received a gift of infinite value. But the reason God has chosen each of us to receive His gift of salvation is because it glorifies Him.
* As you study and understand passages like the one before us today, they are truly humbling.
  + As Christians, it is easy to make the mistake of focusing on ourselves and what God has given to us. God has lavished upon each of us gifts of His grace that are incomprehensible. And it is easy to get caught up in marveling at what we have received. But we must never forget that the reason God has given us such abundant blessings is because **they glorify Him the most.**
  + All that God has done and given to us is for the purpose of us worshipping Him and giving Him glory.
  + And, as we have been reminded this morning, **all that God has promised to us will be given to us, because God is faithful to Himself to fulfill all His promises.**
* We give thanks and praise and glory to God for His holiness and for His glory.