

May God Sanctify You

1 Thess. 5:23

Introduction:

1. This passage speaks of Christians being sanctified, of being preserved complete and being without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The word translated “sanctify” here is “hagiazō.” The related word, “hagiasmos” is translated “sanctification” in 4:3.
3. These terms denote a separation to God. They call to attention the resultant state of those separated to God and call attention to the behavior befitting those who are so separated.
4. Chapter 4 indicates that while sanctification involves an initial separation to God and separation from the world it also involves an on-going process of “excelling still more.”
5. All Christians are involved in this process. How does it occur? What does it mean that I should “excel still more?” How does this all relate to being preserved complete and without blame at the coming of the Lord?
6. Let’s consider what Paul has to say here in Chapters 4 and 5.

Discussion:

- I. Sanctification is founded upon what God has communicated to us (4:1-3a).
 - A. Without communication from Him there is no separation apart to Him.
 1. This is spoken of in Matthew 22 as an invitation to a wedding feast.
 - a. The invitations were sent out. 1 Thess. 4:7 refers to being “called by God.”
 - b. But some paid no attention.
 - c. Others were aggressive. They seized the messengers and mistreated them and killed them.
 - d. The messengers were sent into the highways to invite others.
 2. This wedding imagery is suggestive of the nature of this setting apart to God. Eph. 5:25b-26 refers to Christ’s marriage with the church. It says, “He gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”
 3. There is this message from God that calls us into relationship with Him (2 Cor. 6:14ff).
 - B. Not only is it a separation to God; it is a separation from the world.
 1. It is NOT like the Gentiles (4:3-8).
 2. You brethren are different. The difference is like day and night (5:1-11).
- II. Sanctification or separation to God involves a course that involves different behavior (4:3-12).
 - A. This behavior involves “the will of God” (3), “knowing God” (5), being enlightened by God (5:4ff), “being taught by God” (9) and “being instructed” (4:1; 5:12). So rejecting this behavior “is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (4:8).
 - B. Areas of sanctified behavior.

1. In the area of sexuality (4:3-7).
 - a. Abstain from sexual immorality.
 - b. Possess your own vessel (your body or your spouse). Verse 6 seems to suggest that marriage is an underlying thought here. The sexual immorality under consideration involves defrauding and transgressing a brother. Adultery transgresses both one's own spouse and/or the spouse of another.
 2. In the area of brotherly love (4:9-10).
 3. In the area of an ordered life (4:11-12; cf. 2 Thess. 3:6-13).
 4. In the area of respect for those who give you instruction (5:12-13).
 5. In the area of caring for each other's spiritual needs (5:14-15): admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone, do not pay back evil for evil, seek what is good for on another and all people.
 6. In general (5:16-22): rejoice, pray, give thanks, listen, examine, hold fast to the good, abstain from every form of evil. Notice again the emphasis on receiving the word of God on an on-going basis.
- C. God is the active force in sanctifying you entirely (5:23). Note again "excel still more" (4:1, 10).

III. What does all this (sanctification) have to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus (5:23; 4:13-5:11)?

- A. Recall the marriage imagery.
 1. Cf. Matt. 25:1-13. In ancient Jewish weddings the bridegroom went away for a time to prepare for the bride. Then he returned to take the bride to be with him in his father's house.
 2. Cf. Jn. 14:1-6.
- B. The implication is that this period of sanctification is a period of preparation for life with the husband (cf. the language of 1 Thess. 4:17-18). "We will live together with Him" (1 Thess. 4:10).
- C. This period of sanctification is the bridegroom "sanctifying, and cleansing and preparing the bride that he might present her in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle on any such thing; but holy and blameless" (cf. "without blame" in 1 Thess. 5:23) (Eph. 5:26-27).
- D. His coming marks the culmination of "the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

Conclusion:

1. Going to the wedding without the appropriate preparations results in being cast out (Matt. 22:11ff).
2. Sanctification involves being set apart to God.
3. It involves a way of life that is devoted to Him exclusively (James 4:4).
4. It involves behavior disciplined by the instruction of God in anticipation of the return of the bridegroom.

5. Are you sanctified, washed clean in the blood of the Lamb, clothed in wedding garments, prepared for the coming of the bridegroom?

6. The Book of Revelation closes with a view of the bride, the wife of the Lamb (21:9), the new Jerusalem stands in contrast to Babylon, the great harlot. In the New Jerusalem the city and bride images come together and the temple image collapses into God dwelling with His people.

7. Jesus said, "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

8. Are you ready?