

Lesson 10

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

The following chart shows the response to sin at the various stages of life.

	As an Unbeliever [In the present earthly life]	As a Believer [In the future heavenly life]
Response to Sin	Cannot NOT Sin	CAN—NOT Sin
Scripture	“ <i>slaves to sin</i> ” [Rom 6:17]	“ <i>our lowly bodies... will be like his glorious body</i> ” [Phil 3:20]

The following chart shows the stages of the Christian’s sanctification from sin to holiness.

	At Conversion	Present Life	Future Life
Also Known As	JUSTIFICATION / Past or Positional Sanctification	SANCTIFICATION / Present or Progressive Sanctification	GLORIFICATION / Future or Perfect Sanctification
Explanation	At conversion, believers were set apart in a spiritual sense from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.	After conversion till the time of their death, believers are to be continually progressing in holiness.	In the future, God will give new and glorified bodies to all believers where they will forever be made perfect in holiness and unable to sin.
Scripture	1 Corinthians 6:11 “ <i>And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.</i> ” Colossians 1:13 “ <i>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves</i> ” Hebrews 10:14 “ <i>because by one sacrifice he [Jesus] has made perfect forever those who are being made holy</i> ”	1 Thessalonians 4:3 “ <i>It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality</i> ” 2 Corinthians 3:18 “ <i>And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.</i> ”	Philippians 3:20-21 “ <i>20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.</i> ” 1 John 3:2 “ <i>Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.</i> ”

Paul’s prayer here in verse 23 is for the **present sanctification** for the believers.

IV. Paul's Final Comments [5:23-28]

A. Prayer for Sanctification [5:23-24]

v. 23

²³ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1. Realizing that without divine help, believers cannot fulfill the commands described earlier, Paul prays for God's intervention in accomplishing these commands. God the giver of peace is the One that brings about peace between sinful man and himself through the cross [Rom 5:1]. And Paul's prayer is that this God of peace will sanctify the believers "*through and through*." In other words, he is praying for holiness in every area of the believers' life.

The word "*sanctify*" means to be "set apart" from sin to holiness. [Please see the charts for an overview of sin and sanctification].

2. All humans consist of the immaterial and material parts.

Some see Paul as viewing the believer having three parts [i.e. man is a tripartite being—*spirit, soul* [the immaterial] and *body* [the material]]. They view the spirit as that part of man which communicates with God and soul as that part of man that makes him conscious of himself, i.e. it is the seat of his emotions, will, etc. The body is the physical or material part that expresses the inner person. Proponents of this view see that God intends to make a distinction between the inner person as also seen in Hebrews 4:12.

Others view Paul as using the terms ["*spirit, soul*"] to emphasize the totality of the inner person. Thus they conclude that man is only a bipartite being, i.e., having only two parts and that the immaterial part cannot really be further sub-divided. They see Paul using the multiple terms ["*spirit, soul*"] for emphasis on the inner person just as other Scriptures also do [Deut 6:4; Lk 10:27]. They claim that Paul himself and other writers refer to man as being a two-part being elsewhere in Scriptures [Rom 8:10; 1 Cor 7:34; 2 Cor 7:1; Jas 2:26]. They also claim that the words spirit and soul are used interchangeably throughout Scripture [Heb 6:19; 1 Pet 2:11; 2 Pet 2:8].

3. To "*be kept blameless*" does not mean sinless perfection, but that no legitimate charges of blame can be brought against the believer's life. And he prays that the believer will be kept blameless not for a day or two but until the return of Christ.

v. 24

²⁴ *The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

Paul knows that the same God who chose and called us to salvation is the One who can preserve us to the very end. In other words, the Christian life does not start with grace and continue/end by works. It is God's grace from the beginning to the end. Even the Christian's desire and commitment to persevere comes as a result of God working in him.

Galatians 3:3 "*Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*" ⁴ *Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?"*

Philippians 1:6 "*being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

Philippians 2:12-13 "¹² *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,* ¹³ *for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*"

B. Request for their Prayer [5:25]

²⁵ *Brothers, pray for us.*

Paul requests the believers to keep on praying for him and his companions. He constantly seeks others to pray for him because he knew that without the Lord's help, nothing could be accomplished.

Ephesians 6:19 "*Pray also for me*"

2 Thessalonians 3:1 "*pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored*"

C. Request for Expressing Affection to One Another [5:26]

²⁶ *Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.*

It was customary in Paul's time [and also in some cultures today] to show Christian love by greeting a friend with a kiss. The principle is love; the expression of this love was by means of a kiss as acceptable in a given culture. Today, this is equivalent of giving a handshake or a hug.

Romans 16:16 "*Greet one another with a holy kiss*"

1 Corinthians 16:20 "*Greet one another with a holy kiss*"

2 Corinthians 13:12 "*Greet one another with a holy kiss*"

D. Request for Letter Circulation [5:27]

²⁷ *I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.*

Paul uses strong words to ensure that his letter was read to all the believers in the Church. By using the words, "*I charge you before the Lord,*" he is literally putting them under oath to this command.

E. Benediction [5:28]

²⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

While believers always will have God's grace through Christ, Paul prays that the believers will practically experience and rejoice in this grace.