

## I Thessalonians

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### 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

- Here Paul comes to the close of the letter. Here we see a father's deep affection for his children.
- First, note that Paul does not make the mistake that so many modern evangelicals make – focusing on the soul, the spirit, to the exclusion of the body. We refer to an evangelistic preacher as a "soul winner". Yet in our study of the New Testament we see that God is vitally concerned about the whole person, spirit and soul *and* body. In 1, 2 and 3 John we saw that a major issue for the early church was the infection of Greek philosophy into Christian doctrine and thought, especially that of Gnosticism. The Gnostics taught that the body was totally unimportant, as it was only the soul that was saved. But from Jesus' parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus to John's detailed description of the Judgement in The Revelation or Paul's brilliant treatise on how our Heavenly bodies are formed in 1 Corinthians 15, there is no question that to God our bodies are every bit as important as our souls and will certainly be with Him in eternity. So Paul asks that God sanctify us in our entirety, spirit and soul, and body.
- "Faithful is He...". This is Paul's way of saying, "Quit looking over your shoulder to see if Jesus is coming back, just get on with the work of being His disciple". From Paul's time to today there have been those people who are so Heavenly focused they are no earthly good! This was a risk in Thessalonica because it seems Paul had been teaching on the immanent return of Christ when he had to leave town quickly. "Should we quit our jobs? Should we sell our homes? Should we just hide and wait till Christ returns?" No, Paul is saying, trust God to act in His own way and in His own time. He is faithful and always keeps His promises.
- "Brethren, pray for us." There is a story about a man who had just been elected to a high office and when his victory was announce many rushed to congratulate him. "No," he said, "don't give me your congratulations. Give me your prayers." William Barclay says that prayer is the golden chain in which he prayed for others and others prayed

for him. Recall that Paul is writing from Corinth and we're told in Acts 18 that his time in Corinth was just as risky and tumultuous as it had been in Thessalonica.

- There was an intimacy in the early church that the first century world didn't understand and that we in our world have lost. As a rule we do not greet each other with a holy kiss. A polite handshake, perhaps a holy hug at best, but rarely ever a holy kiss. The church of Paul's time ate their meals together and worshipped together every night. They called each other brother and sister. They were a real family, with Christ as their brother and God as their Father. They supported each other in every way. In the world of the first century there was nothing like it. The closest anyone could point to was perhaps a military unit, but that too came up short. And nothing in our world comes up to it either, not even the church. We live in a world that makes strangers of us. People today can go to church in one place for years and still be strangers to each other. It wasn't so in Paul's time. It would be a worthy effort to work back towards it.
  
- We don't often use the word "adjure" very much either. It means to earnestly and solemnly request; virtually a solemn command. Certain to say, "I adjure you by the Lord" carries with it a sense of a command.
  
- Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin!