

A PRAYER-BLESSING FOR HOLINESS



PART ONE: THE PRAYER-BLESSING ...

PAUL PRAYS THAT THE GOD OF PEACE WILL SANCTIFY HIS PEOPLE COMPLETELY.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV) Now **may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To unlock the many powerful insights of this text we need to grasp the importance of these four things: 1) the significance of the one sanctifying being described as the God of peace, 2) a basic, working idea of the meaning of sanctify, 3) the through and through nature of the sanctifying work and 4) the promised fulfillment of the sanctifying work.

1. We must grasp the significance of the one who is sanctifying being identified as “the God of peace.”

A. Basic #1: Peace with God is the only true peace ... and only in the God of peace do we find peace.

- Romans 5:1 ESV) Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- (Acts 10:36 ESV) As for the word that he sent to Israel, **preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ** (he is Lord of all).
- (Ephesians 2:13–14a ESV) But **now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been brought near **by the blood of Christ**. 14 **For he himself is our peace.**
- (Ephesians 2:17 ESV) And he came and **preached peace** to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
- (2 Thessalonians 3:16 ESV) **Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way.** The Lord be with you all.

B. Basic #2: Only in peace with God do we find holiness.

- (Hebrews 12:14–15 ESV) Strive **for peace** with everyone, and **for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord**. 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

The lack of peace and holiness reveals the absence of the grace of God which causes “*unpeace*”—*bitterness, trouble, defiling*—to remain in the person's life.

Sin destroys peace with God, peace within us, peace with those around us and peace with God's creation. God's intent even before the creation of this

world was that his chosen ones would be holy ... thus would have peace with him.

- (Ephesians 1:4a ESV) Even as he chose us in him **before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.**

C. Basic #3: We need to understand the powerful, inseparable relationship between peace and holiness.

- (Colossians 1:22 ESV) He has now **reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless** and above reproach before him.

Take note that in the peacemaking act of Christ in reconciling us to God in his body ... that he positioned us in peace before God and so is able to present us holy and blameless and above reproach.

D. Basic #4: Peace with God is only place in creation where all is right and well because everywhere else the presence of sin brings contention.

There is no true peace without holiness, and there is no true holiness without peace. Peace with God and holiness are interwoven, inseparable, and essential to the Christian life.

2. We need a solid, working understanding of the word sanctify to escape our overly religious and limited human misconceptions of holiness.

Sanctify ... ἁγιάζω [hagiazō] – to set apart, to make different, as in holy as in other than what we were; to be dedicated to God.

- A. Peace with God relates to our sanctification because we are no longer dead in sin but are now free from sin and are being sanctified (separated) from sin.
- B. Paul prays that God will set them apart (make them different) from what they were—sinful, fallen humans, after Adam—to transform them to what they are and will be in Christ.
- C. God's sanctifying work is what transforms us and prepares us to spend eternity with God.

3. For our instruction, encouragement and course correction we need to grasp the scope of the through and through nature of this sanctifying work of the God of peace.

- (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV) All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.**

A. Paul prays that God will sanctify every aspect of our lives—completely, through and through.

This means in sanctifying us (making us holy) he will bring peace to every area of our lives ... which means that God will deal with sin in every area of our lives ... which means that when we refuse his sanctifying work in any area of our lives that we will have neither peace nor holiness.

B. Peace with God is the way of holiness and holiness before God is the place of peace.

C. We pursue holiness by removing sin from our lives as we control our bodies in relation to who we are now in contrast with (and opposed to) giving ourselves up to the controlling passions of who we were.

- (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5 ESV) **For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;** 4 that each one of you know how to **control his own body in holiness and honor,** 5 **not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.**
- (1 Peter 1:13–16 ESV) Therefore, **preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded,** set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, **do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,** 15 but as he who called you is holy, **you also be holy in all your conduct,** 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
- (1 Corinthians 6:18–20 ESV) **Flee from sexual immorality.** Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 19 **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,** whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Present our bodies to God as living sacrifices or submit our bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit to the idol worship of sexual immorality. Stunning.

- 4. For our assurance, trust-building and course correction we need to believe and have confidence in the ultimate fulfillment of this sanctifying work of the God of peace.**

The God of peace will faithfully continue his work of making us holy until the coming of Christ at which time his work will culminate in our glorification.

PART TWO: THE PROMISED FULFILLMENT ...

PAUL AFFIRMS THAT GOD WILL DO THIS, 5:24.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:24 ESV) He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

1. God is faithful.

2. God is faithful to those he has called.

3. God will surely complete his work of sanctifying us through and through—in every aspect of our lives.

4. God will remain faithful to who he is and will have no pleasure in the faithless.

Do not misunderstand or be misled—the faithless need to be urgently warned that God will not deny himself—he will be forever consistent with who he is.

- (Hebrews 10:38–39 ESV) ... “but my righteous one shall live by faith, **and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.**” 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.
- (2 Timothy 2:11–13 ESV) The saying is trustworthy, for: **if** we have 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.**

5. He will surely do this —sanctify us— with his forever truth.

- (Philippians 1:6 ESV) And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**

A. He will set us apart by means of his forever truth.

- John 17:17 ESV) Sanctify them in the truth; **your word is truth.**
- (1 Peter 1:23–25 NLT) For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. **Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.** 24 As the Scriptures say, “People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. 25 **But the word of the Lord remains forever.**” And that word is the **Good News that was preached to you.**

B. Obeying the truth purifies our souls, specifically so that we may love one another as we should, which cultivates the soil of our hearts so that God may establish our hearts blameless in holiness.

- (1 Peter 1:22 ESV) **Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.**
- (1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 ESV) And may the Lord **make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all**, as we do for you, 13 **so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father**, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.
- (2 Corinthians 13:11 ESV) **Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

CONCLUSION: Holiness is seen in our lives by the evident yield of the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ...

The concept of biblical sanctification rightly understood should thrill our souls and fill us with an intense passion to be led (more and more) by the Spirit in every area of our lives with the joyful anticipation of the mighty working of sanctification of the God of peace himself in our lives ...

Amen and amen!

- (Galatians 5:16 NLT) So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. **Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.**

Led by the Spirit to live according to who we are now in Christ ... we do not fall to the old ways of who we were—living according to our sinful nature ...

- (Galatians 5:22–23a ESV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

And look what comes next ...

- (Galatians 5:24 NLT) Those who belong to Christ Jesus **have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross** and crucified them there.

The one who is led by the Spirit is the one who nails his or her old life to the cross and reckons the old ways and the old person dead ...

This is the way of holiness ... and the blessing of right relationship with God Almighty.

Amen and amen!

MAY THE GOD OF PEACE BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN.

(ROMANS 15:33 ESV)

