

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Analysis

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—autos de ho Theos tēs eirēnēs hagianai hymas holoteleis, kai holoklēron hymōn to pneuma kai hē psychē kai to sōma amemptōs en tē parousia tou Kyriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou tērētheiē (αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὁλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθείη). Paul prays for comprehensive sanctification. Ho Theos tēs eirēnēs (ὁ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης, 'the God of peace')—God who gives peace (not anxiety), makes peace (through Christ's blood, Col 1:20), and is Himself peace.

Hagianai hymas holoteleis (ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὁλοτελεῖς, 'sanctify you completely')—holotelēs (ὁλοτελής) means 'complete, entire, through and through.' Sanctification must be total, affecting the whole person. Holoklēron hymōn to pneuma kai hē psychē kai to sōma (ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα, 'your whole spirit and soul and body')—holoklēron (ὁλόκληρον, 'complete, intact, whole') modifies the threefold human nature. This isn't technical psychology (trichotomy vs. dichotomy debates) but comprehensive statement: God must sanctify your entire being. Amemptōs (ἀμέμπτως, 'blamelessly') looks toward parousia (παρουσία)—sanctification prepares believers for Christ's return.

Historical Context

Paul concludes with prayer for comprehensive sanctification—not partial reform but total transformation affecting spirit (relationship with God), soul (mind, emotions, will), and body (physical actions). This holistic soteriology contrasts with Greek dualism (which despised body, exalted spirit) and modern reductionism (which denies spirit, exalts body/mind). Biblical anthropology sees humans as unified beings—spirit/soul/body integrally related, all needing redemption. Sanctification must address the whole person, preparing entirely for Christ's return. This prayer summarizes the letter's theology: God sanctifies (divine work, v. 23) believers who pursue holiness (human responsibility, vv. 14-22).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does sanctification affecting 'spirit and soul and body' teach about holiness's comprehensive scope?
2. How do you pursue sanctification of your whole person (not just external behavior or internal thoughts alone)?
3. What does 'preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord' teach about sanctification's goal and motivation?

Interlinear Text

Αὐτὸς	δὲ	ὁ	θεὸς	τῆς	εἰρήνης	ἀγιάσαι	ὑμᾶς	
the very	And	G3588	God	G3588	of peace	sanctify	you	
G846	G1161		G2316		G1515	G37	G5209	
ὁλοτελεῖς	καὶ	ὁλόκληρον	ὑμῶν	τὸ	πνεῦμα	καὶ	ἡ	
wholly	and	whole	I pray God your	G3588	spirit	and	G3588	
G3651	G2532	G3648	G5216		G4151	G2532		
ψυχὴ	καὶ	τὸ	σῶμα	ἀμέμπτως	ἐν	τῇ	παρουσία	τοῦ
soul	and	G3588	body	blameless	unto	G3588	the coming	G3588
G5590	G2532		G4983	G274	G1722		G3952	
κυρίου	ἡμῶν	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	τηρηθείη				
Lord	of our	Jesus	Christ	be preserved				
G2962	G2257	G2424	G5547	G5083				

Additional Cross-References

Jude 1:24 (Parallel theme): Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

Hebrews 4:12 (Spirit): For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

1 Peter 5:10 (References Jesus): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (References Jesus): To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

1 Peter 1:2 (Spirit): Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Philippians 1:10 (References Christ): That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Philippians 1:6 (References Jesus): Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Leviticus 20:8 (References Lord): And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.

Hebrews 2:11 (Parallel theme): For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

2 Peter 3:14 (Peace): Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

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