

1 THESSALONIANS: VERSE-BY-VERSE THROUGH PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE
SESSION 12 | 1 THESSALONIANS 5:21-28

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22 | CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

- Verses 16-22 - Exhortation #4: Concerning Spiritual Things (*Vv 16-20 included on session 11*)
 - **Prove all things** - put all things to the test. This learned habit is sorely lacking in today's society. After testing all things, **hold fast that which is good**, and, by implication, let go of that which is bad.
 - **Abstain from all appearance of evil** - The word **appearance** is εἶδος [eidos] "form." In English, the word *eidos* is carried over in the suffix -oid, as in *android* and *astroid*. The suffix means, "in the form of" or "the appearance of." We should avoid evil in all shapes and sizes.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24 | GOD'S WORK ALONE

- Verse 23 –
 - The phrase **God of peace** is Pauline (assuming a Pauline Hebrews authorship), but is not specific as to God's role toward a Jewish or a church audience, thus we should simply assume that this is a phrase that Paul used, always to close his letters.
 - If this is uniquely Pauline, it would testify to his authorship of Hebrews (see Heb. 13:20).
 - Paul claims that God will **sanctify you wholly**.
 - While the theologians speak of *progressive sanctification*, this verse speaks of complete sanctification that is done *instantly*.
 - The word **sanctify** is in the aorist tense, which signifies a moment in time rather than a progression of time.
 - Paul further claims that the **whole spirit and soul and body will be preserved** (in the passive tense) until **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**.
 - This particular coming would be the rapture, it seems, though the Second Coming would not be out of the question.
 - If the Thessalonians are Jews, and thus inherit the Kingdom (as we contend), and they are part of the Body of Christ, and thus raptured (as we also contend), it is not out of the question to see that Paul here teaches that *the rapture does not remove the possibility of the inheritance of the Kingdom*, for their **whole** being will **be preserved**.
- Verse 24 –
 - In the previous verse we have both sanctification and preservation together, complete, and wholly a work of God. Verse 24 strengthens this, making explicit that God, the One who is **faithful** will be the One **who also will do it**.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:25-28 | PERSONAL REQUESTS AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- Verse 25 –
 - As Paul did in 2 Thessalonians and in Hebrews, he concludes his letter with a simple request: **pray for us**. Here (unlike other passages) he adds no further insight into his needs.
 - Nowhere does Paul claim that prayer will ever lose its effectiveness, and nowhere does he claim that all our prayers will be answered. We must be satisfied with the somewhat frustrating balance of the request for prayer and the silence we often hear in our prayers.
- Verse 26 –
 - The instruction is clear: **Greet...with an holy kiss**.
 - How can it be that Paul gives clear instruction, and yet few in the western world obey?

- The instruction is also found in Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, and 1 Peter 5:14.
 - Perhaps we actually *do* obey this instruction, but our manner of expression is different.
 - The word **kiss** is φίλημα [philema], which is a noun made of the verb *phileo*, commonly known as *brotherly love*. The greek suffix *-ma* makes a noun out of a verb (as in *charisma*).
 - So *philema* is the *expression of phileo*, and western Christians do *express* their brotherly love, often with a handshake, a hug, pat on the back, an arm on the shoulder, a gift, etc.
- Verse 27 –
 - The fact that Paul would **charge** (KJV marginal note: *adjure*) the Thessalonians to read the epistle (similar to Col. 4:16) indicates that Paul understood that it was a *divine message* to be treated with a respect that went beyond a simple journaling of Paul’s thoughts.
 - Paul understood his role as Apostle and understood that his *epistle* was to be raised to the level of scripture.
- Verse 28 –
 - All of Paul’s letters end with a very similar greeting.
 - Romans 16:24, 1 Corinthians 16:23, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Galatians 6:18, Ephesians 6:24, Philippians 4:23, Colossians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:18, 1 Timothy 6:21, 2 Timothy 4:22, Titus 3:15, Philemon 25, Hebrews 13:25
 - None of the other books of the New Testament save Revelation end in such a greeting.
 - This is testimony to Paul’s unique role as the Apostle of grace.
 - This is testimony to Paul’s authorship of Hebrews.

SUMMARY THOUGHT ON 1 THESSALONIANS

- It has been my contention that the Thessalonians were *Jewish, kingdom believers* and that he encouraged them both in the Kingdom and in grace.
- If this is true:
 - We can apply *both* messages to the body of Christ because both were applicable to the Thessalonians (an evangelical position, with a largely allegorical understanding of kingdom).
 - We can reject *all* the epistle as applicable to the body of Christ (an Acts 28 position).
 - We can reject *any* of the epistle as applicable to the Kingdom believers.
 - I reject the above approaches believing that we can *rightly divide* that which belongs to the Kingdom era from that which belongs in the church era.
- If there is no Body of Christ in 1 Thessalonians:
 - Then we have no clear teaching at all on the rapture because our rapture theology is foundationally built on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Without this passage, there really is no foundation upon which to build.
- If there is no Kingdom flock in 1 Thessalonians:
 - Then we have no clear teaching on the rapture because the mixture of rapture and Second Coming would be hopelessly mixed together in 1 Thessalonians.
 - Then we have to accept Calvinism, based on 1 Thessalonians 1:4 (the only other option is to stretch the boundaries of the “plain sense” rule to make “election” to mean something unrelated to salvation.
- The keys to dividing 1 Thessalonians:
 - For chapters 1-2: Luke’s background in Acts 17.
 - For chapters 3-5: Paul’s comments concerning the source of his material.
 - Key words: 1 Thessalonians 1:6, **ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.**