



February 27, 2005

### *The Wholeness Of Service*

***“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.” (1 Thess 5.23).*** The words of Paul, here quoted, come at the end of the apostles first epistle to a group of Christians who had been led astray by some notions that were not in agreement with what they had been taught. One of those was concerning the second coming of Christ. Paul detailed the characteristics of this return and encouraged them to continue in their diligence to serve God. The passage above is interesting in that Paul’s admonishment is to serve God completely.

First of all he prays that the ***“God of peace”*** would sanctify them wholly. There had been misunderstandings concerning certain aspects of their belief and service to the Lord. Paul had written to them to correct these. Paul also did the same thing for the Galatians when he warned them about believing in doctrines that had attempted to replace the truth (***Gal 1.6-9***). From these two examples, and numerous others in the New Testament, it is not hard to realize that the state of the human mind is such that we will continually stray from the path that God has set before us. This is the story of the Bible itself and is the reason why God had to send his Son to save us in the first place. God acknowledged the wayward nature of the created being man realizing that ***“the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 9.21)***. God’s peace can only visit and dwell in our lives when we are living in accordance with his commands. Those in the scriptures who have loved and served God in this manner have been preserved, even if they were killed for their faithfulness.

Paul expressed in this prayer that he desired for them to be preserved in spirit, soul and body. It is difficult for us to distinguish between the spirit and soul except to acknowledge that they both reflect that part of man that is eternal and created in the image of God. We understand that the spirit refers to that life force that animates the body and that will eventually return to God who gave it. We also understand that the soul seems to indicate that part of our spiritual and eternal nature that thinks, reasons and decides what to do. It is also clear that the soul will be judged in the last day for the deeds done in the flesh. The final aspect here is the body and that is where the problems creeps in. The flesh is that aspect that is doomed to destruction through death and is part of the physical reality in which we now live until such time that God will decide to send Christ back to judge the world. It is body that leads us to stray through weakness and sin against God. It is the weak soul however that causes us to allow this to happen and so we begin to see the relationship between these three terms. Paul warned against the sins of the flesh and it’s weakness. ***“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Gal 5.16-17)***. Taken in context of the other scriptures we may compare this to something that Christ told a young man years earlier when he was asked what one should do to inherit eternal life. This man was very rich and this was a problem for him as Christ answered his question. ***“Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.” (Luke 18.22)***. The young man walked away saddened, unwilling to part with the thing that would steal his heart from God.

It is difficult to face the world and it’s pressures and pleasures and try to imagine something else so wonderful that we can’t comprehend it. That is what God has promised us if we will heed the word that he has given and obey. Too many times is it too difficult to attempt to get away from the things that hold us down, or that we enjoy, for the unknown of serving God. In this we are mistaken. God has given us a book that details all of things that we need to know, and the promises that we can hold on to in order to get there. Christ stated that we must ***“love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (Luke 10.27)***. There is a need for “wholeness” when serving God. We must accept what he has told us to do and hold to those things no matter what befall us in this physical world. That may become difficult at times as we perhaps weaken, but there is strength to keep us on track and wisdom in the pages of what God has revealed.

**TLC**