

Series: **Confident Hope**
Today's Title: **"Sanctified"**

May 29, 2022 – 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Objective: To help Christians understand the call beyond conversion to sanctification.

Decisions with ongoing implications and impact.

Decisions we make...which implicitly have additional actions.

Putting in a pool. So exciting to see it being built...finished... and filled with water.

But a pool requires ongoing work to keep it in good order.

When you purchase a car - whether it's new or used.

It always feels good to upgrade your car.

But a car requires regular maintenance and a regular flow of money to keep it running.

Marriage...having kids - amazing!

But after the honeymoon...after a child's birth... there is a great deal of work and effort - to keep your marriage healthy and thriving - and a great deal of work, sacrifice, and expense to raise a child from infancy to adulthood.

Becoming a Christian - putting your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

Greatest...best decision you can ever make!!!!

But just like these other life decisions, becoming a Christian is not simply about your conversion - your initial decision to put your faith in Jesus as your Savior.

It's so much more than that.

The purpose of your salvation is more than your personal salvation - more than a blessed hope and future in heaven.

God saves us for a purpose - His purpose.

His plan is to bless our lives and use us to reach others.

His plan is to bless our lives as He conforms us to be more Christ-like in our daily lives.

His plan is to bless our lives, so we can be a blessing to others!

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

We have 2 verses we're looking at this morning, and these verses are packed full of spiritual truths - so let's pray, and then we'll dive right in.

Opening prayer

Let's read vs. 23-24:

"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.

He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it."

The God of peace. vs. 23a

vs. 23 - Begins Paul's concluding his 1st letter to the Thessalonian believers - and as he often does, he is ending the letter with a prayer.

Peace...it's a tough word for us this week.

Peace is something we all want - we all value - but peace is a possibility - and a reality - because of God. “...the God of peace”.

God’s desire - His will - is for us to have peace.

Numbers 6:24

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

We need to realize that apart from God, peace will not be possible.

When the birth of Christ had taken place, angels announced His birth to a group of men who were on the lower rungs of the social ladder in 1st century Israel. Shepherds were not admired by others.

But God sees value in every person - every person is an image-bearer of God - and so He chose to announce the birth of the Lamb of God - and the possibility of peace - to a group of shepherds outside of Bethlehem.

Luke 2:14

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”

When peace is not present, there is pain and suffering.

The past 2 weeks have been evidence that peace is not guaranteed - it’s not something this world offers.

Evil destroys peace, and evil has been on display over the past 2 weeks with 2 mass shootings.

Saturday, May 14, Buffalo, NY, a racially motivated gunman murders 10 people and injures 3 others in a Tops Friendly Market.

This past Tuesday, May 24, an 18-year-old gunman, after shooting his grandmother, goes to Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX, and murders 19 children, 2 teachers, 17 others wounded.

Evil is a real thing.

I'm not making a political statement this morning; I'm making a theological statement - a spiritual statement.

Evil cannot be legislated out of existence.

The Bible tells us that Civic Government - designated authorities in a society are a blessing from God as they punish evil. Those in authority over us are called by God to be "...an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer." (Roman 13:4)

But human society will never purge evil through legislation and government policing power.

Evil is a spiritual issue - and the only solution is Jesus Christ!

I'm not saying there is no role for legislation.

There is.

But our hope cannot be in legislation...in politics or in government solutions...or in ourselves.

The only solution to eradicate evil is the rule and reign of Jesus Christ!

The rule and reign of Christ will happen one day - but it's not today.

In the meantime, while we wait for His return and the perfection of His Kingdom, we must remind ourselves that evil is real.

There is danger whenever and wherever evil surfaces.

In addition to evil, we live in a fallen world.

It's 'fallen' because when sin entered the human realm, humanity and the creation fell from holiness - fell from perfection.

As a result, life in this world is difficult - and it's not always safe.

Life is not immune to pain, suffering, sickness, and death.

We can certainly have times in this life of great joy, pleasure, abundance, and prosperity.

There are times when it can feel like life is so good - where you experience so many abundant blessings from God - and you can begin thinking the good times will never end!

But they will end.

Because of sin, death is the great equalizer for us all. Difficulty and illness don't discriminate between the wealthy and the poor, the educated and the uneducated. Your ethnicity or your gender are not protective barriers against our fallen world.

Jesus was clear on this.

Jesus was clear that in the midst of difficulty, pain, and suffering, we can have and experience peace.

John 16:32-23

"Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave Me alone.

Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.

I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Paul told the Philippians...

Philippians 4:6-7

"...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Paul and his church planting team were run out of Thessalonica - they were in physical danger, so they had to leave long before they planned.

1:5

"...for you received the Word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Spirit..."

2:14

“...for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen...”

Despite the evil and pain of this world - the difficulty in our lives, we serve and follow “the God of peace”.

The God who sanctifies. vs. 23a

‘Sanctifies’ is a theological term, which means it’s often a confusing term.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely...”

“Himself” is in the emphatic position, which means Paul’s primary emphasis here is on the work of God in our sanctification.

Our sanctification is not achieved by our own strength, self-determination, self-discipline, or the might of our character and depth of our spiritual commitment.

Although God uses all those things in the process.

Our sanctification is achieved by God’s power at work in us.

Paul writes about this elsewhere...

Philippines 2:13

“...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13b

“...you accepted it (the Word of God) not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

(See also Hebrews 13:20-21)

I mentioned that Sanctification can be a confusing term for some, so let's walk through a primer on Justification and Sanctification.

Justification

This is also a theological term, but it is also a legal term. In the Bible we read that God justifies people.

We read in the Bible that people are "justified by faith".

Justification means that God makes a legal declaration that you are righteous. God declares the person is not guilty of sin - He declares them righteous.

Justification is a legal standing before God.

It's about a person's status before God, not their character, habits, or practice.

A justified person is still a dishonest person, a liar, a coveter, and a gossip.

How does a person become justified before God?

How can you be declared righteous - 'not guilty' - by God of your sin?

Answer: By faith in Jesus.

Romans 5:1

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Because Jesus died on the cross and paid the price / penalty for our sin, our sin does not go unpunished.

Our sin does not escape divine justice.

But Jesus paid the price for our sin.

It's not the best illustration, but it's as if we are sentenced to prison, but Jesus serves our prison sentence for us.

Romans 3:23-25a

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith."

Justification is a divine pardon.

Our legal standing - legal status is set right.

We have a clean slate. Our 'rap sheet' has nothing written on it!

But...we still have a problem.

A serious problem.

We're justified, but we're still messed up.

We're still a dishonest person, a liar, a coveter, and a gossip - and maybe worse!

We're clean legally before God, but we need our life practice - our thoughts and attitudes cleaned up!

Sanctification

We need to be sanctified.

Sanctified means to be set apart - dedicated - made holy.

We need to become more like Jesus.

Romans 8:29

“He also predestined (us) to be conformed to the image of His Son...”

Colossians 3:10

“...put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.”

1 Peter 1:14-16

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

After you are justified - declared righteous by God through your faith in Jesus, He then begins to renovate your life.

Both inside and outside - your entire ‘self’ begins to undergo a thorough and comprehensive renovation.

It’s impossible for us to become righteous before being declared righteous.

We can’t renovate our own live before God declares us righteous - declares us ‘not guilty’.

The key to justification is your own self-declaration that you are unrighteous.

Too many people look in the mirror and declare themselves ‘righteous’!

They declare themselves to be better than the next person.

They declare their ‘good’ is more impactful than their ‘bad’.

Romans 3:10, 23

“None is righteous, no, not one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

So, God begins to ‘*sanctify*’ us.

He begins to cleanse us - to clean us up.

Paul said that Christians - those who have faith in Jesus for their salvation have been:

“...delivered...from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...” (Colossians 1:13)

1 Peter 2:10

“...but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy...”

I mentioned a few minutes ago that “Himself” is in the emphatic position.

This means the power of our sanctification is God.

God sanctifies us. We can’t be sanctified without God working in our life to bring us to sanctification.

But we still have a role to play.

We still must yield to His leading.

We are told in **Roman 6:12-13**

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.”

We must choose to follow God.

We must choose to deny our flesh and follow the Spirit of God.

We must decide to obey God and not our own will.

Our complete and total sanctification. vs. 23

This is speaking of the extent of our sanctification.

How much of you / me does God want to change - make holy?

Everything!

“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.”

“completely” and “whole” - Two very unique words in the Greek.

They are both compound words, with the first word being the same in each word.

“holos” is the first word - which means, ‘*whole, complete*’. We get our English word holistic from this Greek word.

So, the extent of our sanctification is our total self.

There is not part of our life - no part of our being - of our ‘self’ that is left out of the sanctification process.

God wants everything remodeled!

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

The reality is that our sanctification never ends.
We never reach a point where God is done working on us - done working in us.

There are always things in our life that need to be radically transformed by the Spirit of God - by the power of His Word - so we can be conformed to the image of Christ.

This is a life-long work.

Philippians 1:6

“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.”

There are many challenging parts to sanctification, but one of the most challenging is the more sanctified you become, the more sin is revealed in your life!

This isn't discouraging.

Part of being more sanctified is a growing humility, a teachable heart, and a shrinking level of pride.

The God who is faithful and powerful. vs. 24

“He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.”

This is such a wonderful comfort.

The work of sanctification is difficult...and constant.

So much of the time my flesh - my sinful desire is strong, and I'm constantly tempted to choose my way instead of God's way.

But I'm not fighting this battle on my own.

“He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.”

Paul was very open and transparent about his work and struggle of sanctification.

He wrote about this struggle in **Romans 7:14-15**

“So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good.

The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin.

I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate.”

But. We’re not on our own.

Colossians 1:29

“For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.”

God “Himself” works in us - with His power.

But we also have a role. We must

Philippians 2:12b-13

“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

Apply it...

Know that justification leads to sanctification.

Conversion is not the beginning and end of your faith.

God justifies you – to fully redeem you!

God works to sanctify you.

He doesn’t leave us on our own.

He works with us – a dual effort – to be more like Christ.

Sanctification leads to peace – despite your circumstances.

If we try and live on our own – without Christ – we will not experience peace.

When we walk with Christ and grow close to Him, we will also experience the peace of God – which only comes when one walks with God.

Closing prayer