

# 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Commentary

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JESUS IS COMING AGAIN  
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1 Thessalonians Overview				
1 Th 1:1-10	1 Th 2:1-20	1 Th 3:1-13	1 Th 4:1-18	1 Th 5:1-28
LOOKING BACK			LOOKING FORWARD	
Personal Reflections History			Practical Instructions Hortatory	
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Word and Power of the Spirit		Establishing & Comforting	Calling & Conduct	1Th 4:13ff Comfort
				1Th 5:12ff Commands

1 Salvation	2 Service	3 Sanctification	4 Sorrow	5 Sobriety
Paul Commends Spiritual Growth	Paul Finds the Church	Strengthening of the Church	Directions for Spiritual Growth	Holy Living in Light of Day of the Lord
Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians
Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD				

1Thessalonians 5:23 **Now** may the **God** of **peace** **Himself** **sanctify** you **entirely**; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be **preserved complete**, **without blame** at the **coming** of our **Lord Jesus Christ** (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [Autos de o theos tes eirenes agiasai \(3SAAO\) umas oloteleis, kai olokleron umon to pneuma kai e psuche kai to soma amemptos en te parousia tou kuriou emon lesou Christou teretheie. \(3SAPO\)](#)

**Amplified:** And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [separate you from profane things, make you pure and wholly consecrated to God]; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound and complete [and found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** May the God of peace Himself consecrate you through and through; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete so that you will be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ([Westminster Press](#))

**Milligan's Paraphrase:** 'As however without God all your strivings must be in vain we pray that the God of peace Himself will sanctify you through and through, that the whole man may become God's, each part preserved entire and without blame, and found so at the Parousia of the Lord Jesus. (St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians. 1908)

**NLT:** Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** May the God of peace make you holy through and through. May you be kept in soul and mind and body in spotless integrity until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Now, may the God of peace himself consecrate you, every part of each one of you, to His worship and service, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved in their entirety blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eerdmans)

**Young's Literal:** and the God of the peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved unblameably in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ

**NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF SANCTIFY YOU ENTIRELY:**Autos de o theos tes eirenes haciasai (3SAAO) humas holoteleis:

- Romans 15:5,13,33; 16:20; 1Corinthians 14:33; 2Corinthians 5:19; Philippians 4:9; 2Th 3:16; Heb 13:20; 1Peter 5:10
- 1Th 3:13; 4:3; Leviticus 20:8,26; Ezekiel 37:28; John 17:19; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1Cor 1:2; Heb 2:11; 1Pet 1:2; Jude 1:1
- [1 Thessalonians 5 Resources](#)

## A PRAYER FOR PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

**Progressive sanctification** is continuing growth in holiness and Christlikeness, wrought by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18+), the intake of the Holy Word (1 Pe 2:2+, Mt 4:4+) and Spirit enabled obedience of holy ones (Php 2:13NLT+).

**Now** ([1161](#))(**de**) marks a transition from the previous commands to a short but spiritually rich prayer (pray this prayer for your family

members, your church members [by name], you pastor and elders [individually and by name] - and be confident God WILL ANSWER! Why? see the promise in 1 Jn 5:14-15+). And this prayer to God for sanctification is a fitting conclusion to the preceding exhortations to holiness, for it is only by His enablement they will be fully realized. God Alone is the Source of genuine sanctification, which makes this prayerful appeal to Him appropriate.

**James Denney** introduces this section with the comment that... "THESE verses open with a contrast to what precedes, which is more strongly brought out in the original than in the translation. The Apostle has drawn the likeness of a Christian church, as a Christian church ought to be, waiting for the coming of the Lord; he has appealed to the Thessalonians to make this picture their standard, and to aim at Christian holiness; and conscious of the futility of such advice, as long as it stands alone and addresses itself to man's unaided efforts, he turns here instinctively to prayer: "The God of peace Himself" — working in independence of your exertions and my exhortations — "sanctify you wholly."...Notice the comprehensiveness of the Apostle's prayer in this place. It is conveyed in three separate words — wholly, entire, and without blame . It is intensified by what has, at least, the look of an enumeration of the parts or elements of which man's nature consists — "your spirit and soul and body." It is raised to its highest power when the sanctity for which he prays is set in the searching light of the Last Judgment — in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." ([1 Thessalonians 5 Commentary](#))

**Frame** explains it as "if Paul had said: "I have exhorted you to ethical consecration and to the things that make for peace, but God himself is the only power that can make the exhortation effective." (Frame, J. E. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. New York: C. Scribner's Sons. 1912)

**Calvin** - Having given various injunctions, he now proceeds to prayer. And unquestionably doctrine is disseminated in vain, unless God implant it in our minds... Paul, accordingly, knowing that all doctrine is useless until God engraves it, as it were, with his own finger upon our hearts, beseeches God that he would sanctify the Thessalonians.

**Matthew Henry** - He prays that they may be wholly sanctified, that is, more perfectly, for the best are sanctified but in part while in this world; and therefore we should pray for and press towards complete sanctification.

**Himself** ([846](#)) (**autos**) In the Greek sentence this pronoun is first for emphasis. Paul's emphasis is that it is God Who sanctifies us ("Himself sanctify you"), accomplishing His work in us. We are to cooperate with His work as just emphasized by a series of exhortations and commandments beginning in 1Thessalonians 4. But ultimately Paul wants to make it clear that sanctification is God's work in us. Our part and God's part is clearly seen in Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to...

**Work out** (present imperative) your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you, both to will (give you the desire to obey) and to work (energizing that desire) for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-note, Phil 2:13-note)

**Hiebert** writes that as the God of Peace it is His "prerogative it is to bestow the well-known Christian peace upon those who have been reconciled to Him through Christ."

**God of Peace** - a frequent phrase in the NT...

**Romans 15:33** (note) Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

**Romans 16:20** (note) And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

**Philippians 4:9** (note) The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

**1Thessalonians 5:23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Hebrews 13:20** (note) Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,

**Vincent** comments that this phrase **God of peace** means "God Who is the Source and Giver of peace. **Peace**, in the Pauline sense, is not mere calm or tranquility. It is always conceived as based upon reconciliation with God. God is the **God of peace** only to those who have ceased to be at war with Him, and are at one with Him (see **notes Romans 5:1, Col 1:20, 1:21; 1:22**). God's peace is not sentimental but moral. Hence the **God of peace** is the Sanctifier. **Peace** is habitually used, both in the Old and New Testaments, in connection with the Messianic salvation. The Messiah himself will be **Peace** (Micah 5:5 "*And this One will be our peace...*"). **Peace** is associated with righteousness as a Messianic blessing (**Ps 72:7** *In his days may the righteous flourish, And abundance of peace till the moon is no more; Ps 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other*). **Peace**, founded in reconciliation with God, is the theme of the gospel (**Acts 10:36** *The word which He sent to the sons of Israel,*

*preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)). The gospel is the gospel of peace (see notes **Ephesians 2:17; 6:15; Romans 10:15**). Christ is the Giver of peace (**John 14:27** *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*; **John 16:33** *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*).*

Other titles of God which exhibit a similar construction are as follows. Notice that God is the Source of each of these spiritual blessings!

**God is the...**

- God of **glory**, Acts 7:2
- God of **patience**, Ro 15:5 (note)
- God of **hope**, Ro 15:13 (note)
- God of **all comfort**, 2Corinthians 1:3, cp. Ro 15:4 (note)
- God of **love**, 2Corinthians 13:11
- God of **all grace**, 1Pe 5:10 (note).

We see that the anticipation of Christ's imminent return for His beloved Bride, prompts (or should prompt) in her an attitude of expectancy and actions commensurate with that mindset. Remember that right actions always emanate from right attitudes. Paul's point is that the Bridegroom really is coming quickly and this certainty should marinate our minds and cause us work out our salvation in fear and trembling, purify ourselves for He is holy, cleansing ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord or the awe of what it will be like when we truly do see Him face to face!

**John** has this meeting in mind when he gently exhorts believers...

And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. (1John 2:28-29)

**Guzik** comments that "The idea behind the word **sanctify** is "to set apart" - to make something different and distinct, breaking old associations and forming a new association. For example, a dress is a dress; but a wedding dress is sanctified - set apart for a special, glorious purpose. God wants us to be set apart to Him...In all that he told the Christian to **do** in 1Thessalonians 4:1 through 1Th 5:22, he never intended that they **do** them in their own power. More Christians are defeated on account of self-reliance than on account of Satanic attack. ([1 Thessalonians 5](#))

**Morris** agrees with Guzik writing that "The way in which he effects the transition... indicates that it is only in the power of the God on whom he calls that his exhortations can be brought to fruition. 'I have been urging you to do certain things, but it is only in God's strength that you will be able to do them. (Morris, Leon. The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957)

**Calvin** writes that "under the term **sanctification** is included the entire renovation of the man. The Thessalonians, it is true, had been in part renewed, but Paul desires that God would perfect what is remaining. From this we infer, that we must, during our whole life, make progress in the pursuit of holiness.

**Frame** commenting on sanctify you renders it "'Consecrate you throughout," "through and through" (Luther). The note of consecration already struck (1Th 3:13-note and 1Th 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 7,8- notes 1Th 4:3; 4:4; 4:5; 4:6; 4:7; 4:8) is heard again. As in those passages so here consecration includes not only religion, devotion to God, but conduct, ethical soundness. (Ibid)

**Elwell** writes that...

The concern of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:22 has been that the lives of his readers be sanctified more and more. It is fitting, therefore, that he should in the end pray once again for their complete sanctification (Gk. *holoteles*, found only here in the NT, means "entirely," "completely"). Sanctification is a process which begins with conversion and will be completed only when "perfection comes" (1 Cor. 13:10). (Elwell, W. A.. Vol. 3: Evangelical Commentary on the Bible. Baker Book House)

**Sanctify** ([37](#)) (**hagiazō** from **hagios** [see word study] = holy, set apart) means to set apart for God, to sanctify, to make a person or thing (in the OT altars, days, priests, etc were set apart) the opposite of *koinos*, which means profane or common.

**Hiebert** - The primary meaning of sanctify is "to set apart, to consecrate," but it also carries the thought of the resultant holiness of character in the consecrated. The note of holiness was already sounded in 1Thes 3:13 and 4:3-8. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2](#)

**Sanctify** is in the **orist tense** which usually speaks of a point in time, but which in this context according to Vine speaks "not an act begun and accomplished in a moment, but a "process seen in perspective," and so contemplated as a complete act. This is the case also with the word "keep," **tereo**, in 1Ti 6:14 (*that you **keep** the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*), where a momentary act is out of the question. These passages are complementary one to the other, here the divine side is presented, there the human, the action in each terminating only with the coming of the Lord, cp. Php 1:6 (note). Since those addressed were already saints, i.e., "sanctified ones" (see note on "saints," 1Th 3:13 (note), and 2Th 2:13), the apostle must be understood here to desire for them the continuous and complete realization of this calling, that by His power they might be enabled to live consistently with the fact that every part of their complex being belonged to God, cp. Ep 5:25, 26, 27-notes Ep 5:25; 26; 27 ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**Hiebert** agrees with Vine noting that "Some insist that the aorist here points to the crisis experience of entire sanctification," but it is generally accepted that the action is best viewed as **constative** (*An aorist tense verb that, along with other contextual features, presents the action simply, in summary, or as a whole. Also called complexive, comprehensive, global, historical, punctiliar, simple or summary*), a process of sanctification occurring during this present life and viewed as consummated at the return of Christ. Even those who insist upon the meaning of an initial crisis experience stress that it must be followed by a continuing process of sanctification. The completion of that process is in view here. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Wuest** writes that **hagiazō** does not mean...

merely "to set apart," but in the case of the pagan word, "to set apart for the gods," and in the case of the Christian word "to set apart for God." The worshipper of the pagan god **acquired the character** of that pagan god and the religious ceremonies connected with its worship. The Greek temple at Corinth housed a large number of harlots who were connected with the worship of the Greek god. Thus, the *set-apartness* of the Greek worshipper was in character licentious, totally depraved, and sinful.

The believer in the Lord Jesus is set apart for God by the Holy Spirit, out of the First Adam with the latter's sin and condemnation, into the Last Adam with the latter's righteousness and life (cf 1Cor 15:22,45). Thus, the worshipper of the God of the Bible partakes of the character of the God for Whom he is set apart. This is **positional sanctification**, an act of God performed at the moment a sinner puts his faith in the Lord Jesus (1Cor 1:2). The work of the Holy Spirit in the yielded saint, in which He sets the believer apart for God in his experience, by eliminating sin from his life and producing His fruit (cf notes Galatians 5:22; 23), a process which goes on constantly throughout the believer's life, is called **progressive sanctification** (1Thes 5:23). When our Lord sanctifies Himself, He sets Himself apart for God as the Sacrifice for sin (John 17:19; He 10:7-note).

When man sanctifies God, "the word denotes that manner of treatment on the part of man which corresponds with the holiness of God, and which springs from faith, trust, and fear" (see 1Pe 3:15-note)" (Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans)

**Vine** - A number of things are "sanctified" in the NT - **(a)** the gold adorning the Temple and of the gift laid on the altar, Matt. 23:17, 19; **(b)** food, 1Ti 4:5; **(c)** the unbelieving spouse of a believer, 1Co 7:14; **(d)** the ceremonial cleansing of the Israelites, Heb 9:13; **(e)** the Father's Name, Luke 11:2; **(f)** the consecration of the Son by the Father, Jn 10:36; **(g)** the Lord Jesus devoting Himself to the redemption of His people, Jn 17:19; **(h)** the setting apart of the believer for God, Acts 20:32; cf. Ro 15:16; **(i)** the effect on the believer of the Death of Christ, Heb 10:10, said of God, and He 2:11; 13:12, said of the Lord Jesus; **(j)** the separation of the believer from the world in his behavior— by the Father through the Word, Jn 17:17, 19; **(k)** the believer who turns away from such things as dishonor God and His gospel, 2Ti 2:21; **(l)** the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ, 1Pe 3:15. "Since every believer is sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1Cor 1:2, cf. Heb 10:10, a common NT designation of all believers is '**saints**,' *hagioi*, i.e., 'sanctified' or 'holy ones.' Thus sainthood, or sanctification, is not an attainment, it is the state into which God, in grace, calls sinful men, and in which they begin their course as Christians, Col 3:12; Heb 3:1." ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Richards** makes an interesting point noting that "A basic distinction must be made between the OT and the NT doctrines of holiness. In the OT, the holy is that which is set apart from the common so that it is isolated for God's service. In the NT, holiness is a dynamic process. The holy is actually the common, infused now by God's Spirit and transformed for his service. Thus, our sanctification has to do with God's transformation of us into persons whose actions in daily life are expressions of the Lord. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

**Hagiazō** primarily conveys the idea of separation from and consecration to the service of deity in secular Greek but to God Almighty

in the Biblical context. Believers are to separate themselves from profane things and dedicate themselves wholly to their Holy God. As alluded to in the notes on the verses that use *hagiazō*, there are 3 aspects of sanctification...

**(1) Past** (positional) **Sanctification** - This refers to the time of our initial salvation, which was wrought by the atoning work of Christ, at which time we were clothed with His righteousness, we were given a new nature and we were freed from the power of sin and death. This is a one time event, never to be repeated.

**(2) Present** (progressive, experiential) **Sanctification** - This aspect of sanctification proceeds from past sanctification and deals with present Christian living. It is the process in which believers are working out their salvation by the Spirit's power, who sets us more and more apart from the world and more and more conformed to the image of Christ. This is the aspect to which Paul's prayer in 1Thes 5:23 relates.

**(3) Future** (ultimate, perfect) **Sanctification** - Glorification when God makes believers free of even the desire of sin, free of the fallen flesh nature, and joined with our transformed, glorified bodies for all eternity.

**MacArthur** writes that "The Puritan Thomas Watson stated it this way, '[Sanctification] is a principle of grace savingly wrought, whereby the heart becomes holy, and is made after God's own heart. A sanctified person bears not only God's name, but His image' (Body of Divinity [reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 167)." In all of Paul's epistles, whenever he moves from doctrinal exposition to practical exhortation (Ed note: E.g., doctrine in Ephesians 1-3; duty in Ephesians 4-6), he has this aspect of sanctification in mind (Experiential sanctification). His passionate prayer for the Thessalonians and for all believers was that through experiential sanctification God would progressively conform them to holiness. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

There are 28 uses of **hagiazō** in the NT...

**Matthew 6:9** (note) "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, **Hallowed** (aorist imperative) be Thy name.

**Comment:** When we pray **hallowed be** we are asking God to make His Name holy, a Name that people will treat as holy and not as profane. We are saying "Treat Thy Name as holy", the idea being that the Father would secure before the whole world in a final and decisive way the holiness appropriate to His Name, to which human beings will respond with praise and adoration. In fact, in Ezekiel God promises to answer this prayer declaring "*I will vindicate the holiness of My great Name which has been profaned among the nations, which you [unfaithful Israel] have profaned in their midst. Then the nations [Gentiles] will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.* [Ezekiel 36:23] The psalmist Solomon prays "*And blessed be His glorious Name forever; and may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen.*" [Ps 72:19]

**Barclay** - The word which is translated hallowed is a part of the Greek verb **hagiazō**. The Greek verb **hagiazō** is connected with the adjective **hagios**, and means to treat a person or a thing as *hagios*. *Hagios* is the word which is usually translated holy; but the basic meaning of *hagios* is different or separate. A thing which is **hagios** is different from other things. A person who is **hagios** is separate from other people. So a temple is *hagion* (Greek #39) because it is different from other buildings. An altar is **hagios** because it exists for a purpose different from the purpose of ordinary things. God's day is **hagios** because it is different from other days. A priest is **hagios** because he is separate from other men. So, then, this petition means, "Let God's name **be treated differently** from all other names; let God's name be given a position which is absolutely unique." But there is something to add to this. In Hebrew the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called-- John or James, or whatever the name may be. In Hebrew the name means the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us. That becomes clear when we see how the Bible writers use the expression. The Psalmist says, "Those who know thy name put their trust in thee" (Ps 9:10). Quite clearly that does not mean that those who know that God is called Jehovah will trust in him. It means that those who know what God is like, those who know the nature and the character of God will put their trust in him. The Psalmist says, "Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of the Lord our God" (Ps 20:7). Quite clearly that does not mean that in a time of difficulty the Psalmist will remember that God is called Jehovah. It means that at such a time some will put their trust in human and material aids and defenses, but the Psalmist will remember the nature and the character of God; he will remember what God is like, and that memory will give him confidence. So, then, let us take these two things and put them together. **Hagiazō**, which is translated to hallow, means to regard as different, to give a unique and special place to. The name is the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known and revealed to us. Therefore, when we pray "Hallowed be Thy name," it means, "Enable us to give to thee the unique place which thy nature and character deserve and demand." ([Matthew 6 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))



**Matthew 23:17** "You fools and blind men; which is more important, the gold, or the temple that **sanctified** the gold?"

**Matthew 23:19** "You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that **sanctifies** the offering?"

**Luke 11:2** And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, **hallowed** (aorist imperative) be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.

**John 10:36** do you say of Him, whom the Father **sanctified** (set apart for a specific task) and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God '?"

**John 17:17** "**Sanctify** (aorist imperative) them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

**Barclay** on **hagiazō** - Jesus prayed that his disciples might be consecrated by the truth. The word for to consecrate is **hagiazō** which comes from the adjective **hagios**. In the King James Version **hagios** is usually translated "holy" but its basic meaning is "different" or "separate." So then **hagiazō** has two ideas in it.

(a) **It means to set apart for a special task.** When God called Jeremiah, he said to him: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; and before you were born I consecrated (Heb = **qadash**; Lxx = **hagiazō**) you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). Even before his birth God had **set Jeremiah apart for a special task**. When God was instituting the priesthood in Israel he told Moses to ordain the sons of Aaron and to consecrate (Heb = **qadash**; Lxx = **hagiazō**) them that they might serve in the office of the priests (Exodus 28:41). Aaron's sons were to be **set apart for a special office and a special duty**.

(b) **But hagiazō means not only to set apart for some special office and task, it also means to equip a man with the qualities of mind and heart and character which are necessary for that task.** If a man is to serve God, he must have something of God's goodness and God's wisdom in him. He who would serve the holy God must himself be holy too. And so God does not only choose a man for his special service, and set him apart for it, he also equips a man with the qualities he needs to carry it out.

We must always remember that God has chosen us out and dedicated us for His special service. That special service is that we should love and obey him and should bring others to do the same. And God has not left us to carry out that great task in our own strength, but out of his grace he fits us for our task, if we place our lives in his hands. ([John 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**John 17:19** "And for their sakes I **sanctify** Myself, that they themselves also may be **sanctified** in truth.

**Acts 20:32** "And now I commend (entrust to the care of God and His word, to deposit for safekeeping!) you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are **sanctified**. (perfect tense)

**Acts 26:18** to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been **sanctified** (perfect tense) by faith in Me.'

**Romans 15:16** (note) to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, **sanctified** (perfect tense) by the Holy Spirit.

**Comment:** **Hagiazō** here refers to the moment these Gentile sinners were set apart and made saints - the moment of salvation (so called "positional sanctification") with perfect tense pointing to the permanence of their position in Christ (which should give you assurance regarding eternal security).

**Denney** explains that "The offering which Paul conceives himself as presenting to God is the Gentile Church, and the priestly function in the exercise of which this offering is made is the preaching of the gospel." (Nicoll, W Robertson, Editor: Expositors Greek Testament)

**MacArthur** writes that "In faithful fulfillment of his unique apostolic calling, Paul's supreme offering to God was a multitude of Gentiles, who by virtue of the Holy Spirit's power had been sanctified and thus made acceptable for fellowship with the Father. Like Paul, every believer who is instrumental in winning a soul to Jesus Christ presents that convert, whether Jew or Gentile, as a priestly offering to the Lord." ([MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**1 Corinthians 1:2** to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been **sanctified** (perfect tense) in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

**Comment:** John MacArthur explains that "They were saints because they had **been sanctified** (hagiazō), set apart from sin, made holy in Christ Jesus. According to Scripture, every true believer in Jesus Christ—whether faithful or unfaithful, well known or unknown, leader or follower—is a set apart person, a holy person, a saint. In the biblical sense, the most obscure believer today is just as much a saint as the apostle Paul. This is the believer's position in Christ. Holiness, in that **positional** sense (**Ed note:** Synonymous with "positional sanctification"), is not a matter of good works, of holy living. As Christians we should live holy lives, but holy living does not make us holy. To the extent our living is holy, it is because, in Christ, we already are holy and have the counsel and power of His Holy Spirit. We are holy because the Sanctifier (the One who makes holy) has already sanctified us in response to our trust in Him (Heb. 2:11). Christ's work, not our own, makes us holy. We are "saints by calling." That refers to the efficacious call of God to salvation (1 Cor 1:24, 26). ([MacArthur, J.: 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#)) (Bolding added)

**1 Corinthians 6:11** And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were **sanctified** (aorist tense), but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

**Comment:** To be **sanctified** is to be made holy inwardly and to be able, in the Spirit's power, to live a righteous life outwardly. Before a person is saved he has no holy nature and no capacity for holy living. But in Christ we are given a new nature and can live out the new kind of life. Sin's total domination is broken and is replaced by a life of holiness. By their fleshly sinfulness the Corinthians were interrupting that divine work. ([Ibid](#))

**1 Corinthians 7:14** For the unbelieving husband is **sanctified** through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is **sanctified** through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

**Comment:** **Wuest** notes that "In the case where the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband, and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, it "clearly cannot signify the sanctification in its fulness which the NT divine and saving work produces; for a personal faith is required in the object of it, which is in this case denied. Still it is unmistakably intimated that by virtue of the marriage union, the unbelieving side in its measure participates in the saving work and fellowship with God experienced by the believing side"

**MacArthur** adds that "In God's eyes a home is set apart for Himself when the husband, wife, or, by implication, any other family member, is a Christian. Such a home is not Christian in the full sense, but it is immeasurably superior to one that is totally unbelieving. Even if the Christian is ridiculed and persecuted, unbelievers in the family are blessed because of that believer. One Christian in a home graces the entire home. God's indwelling that believer and all the blessings and graces that flow into the believer's life from heaven will spill over to enrich all who are near." ([Ibid](#))

**Ephesians 5:26** (note) that He might **sanctify** her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** (note) Now may the God of peace Himself **sanctify** (optative mood) you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Timothy 4:5** (*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude*) for it (everything created by God) is **sanctified** (present tense) by means of the word of God and prayer.

**Comment:** **BKC** explains that "All the seemingly "ordinary" things of life can then become extraordinary as they are consecrated (hagiazō) by the Word of God and prayer (**Ed note:** in context especially gratitude or thanksgiving). In the light of the Scriptures a Christian recognizes God's good hand behind the things provided, and offers thanksgiving to the Lord. In this way the ordinary things so easily taken for granted (some of which are forbidden by errorists) become sanctified (set apart from common things) as occasions for worship and praise. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

**2 Timothy 2:21** (note) Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified** (perfect tense), useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

**Hebrews 2:11** (note) For both He who **sanctifies** (present tense) and those who are **sanctified** (present tense) are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren

**Comment:** "He Who **sanctifies**" is the Lord Jesus Christ. "Those who are **sanctified**" is present tense, passive voice which could be paraphrased "those who are continually being set apart from the world and to God" which describes our present state of progressive sanctification ("present tense salvation" -- see the



Three Tenses of Salvation) which describes our daily being conformed to the image of God's Son, which will culminate in our being "like Him" (1 John 3:2-3) (glorification).

**Hebrews 9:13** (note) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled (made "common" or unclean, violating the state required for ritual holiness), **sanctify** for the cleansing (purifying, making ritually cleansed and acceptable to offer worship in the setting of the Tabernacle) of the flesh

**Comment:** In the OT the worshippers were "set apart" from whatever ritually defiled them by the blood of animals, which effected only an "external" cleansing, not an internal one (contrast this effect with that brought about by the blood of Christ in **Hebrews 13:12** below).

**Hebrews 10:10** (note) By this will we have been **sanctified** (perfect tense) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**Comment:** Here the writer's use of perfect tense pictures a past completed event with present ongoing effect/result. Note also that **sanctified** is in the passive voice, indicating we are being acted upon by an outside force [God and His will] Who takes a sinner and sets them apart as a same person. Furthermore note that the perfect tense shows in the strongest way the permanent and continuous state of salvation into which the believer is brought and in which he lives, which is especially significant if you wrestle with the issue of eternal security - even the verb tense underscores the truth of "eternal security"!

**Hebrews 10:14** (note) For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are **sanctified** (present tense).

**Comment:** This verse can be amplified as follows - "*Those who are continually* (present tense) *being* (passive voice = subject acted upon by outside source, ie, the sanctifying work of the Spirit) **set apart from the world and unto God**".

Here the reference is to ongoing sanctification or so-called "progressive sanctification" (= "present tense salvation") which is a continuous process in this life and is terminated only when we are glorified ("future tense salvation") in eternity future in heaven. (See also the Three Tenses of Salvation)

**Hebrews 10:29** (note) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was **sanctified**, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

**Comment:** **Wuest** writes that "The words *"by which he was sanctified"* in connection with the identity of the person who committed this sin (trampling under foot...), might trouble the reader when he remembers that the historical background and analysis of the book show that that person is an unsaved person. But the difficulty disappears when we remember that the writer is addressing himself to the professing Christian church, made up of saved and unsaved, and that the idea here is, *"by which he professed to be sanctified."* (Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans)

**Hebrews 13:12** (note) Therefore Jesus also, that He might **sanctify** the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

**1 Peter 3:15** (note) but **sanctify** (aorist imperative) Christ as Lord in your hearts (quoting from Isaiah 8:13), always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence

**Comment:** Instead of worrying or being afraid, the readers are commanded to set Christ apart as Lord in their heart. The idea is that instead of fear, affirm Jesus is Lord and submit to (and trust) His control, instruction and guidance. Set Christ apart from all others as the sole object of their reverence and obedience, even in the face of unjust suffering. He will give courage, boldness and fortitude that we might be able to weather the storm.

**Revelation 22:11** (note) "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still **keep** himself **holy** (aorist imperative)."

From the preceding passages we learn several truths about hagiazō or sanctifying... In Romans 15:16 the Spirit produces an initial sanctification or so-called **positional sanctification** (which equates with the moment of salvation). Other passages also speak of our initial salvation as the time at which we were **sanctified** or set apart from the world and unto God (Acts 20:32, 26:18, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11). In John 17:17 Jesus teaches that the Word of truth is the agent by which believers are sanctified (here speaking of ongoing sanctification once we are saved). In **Hebrews 10** we see these two aspects of sanctification - past tense

salvation or initial salvation where by God's "will we have been sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10) and present tense salvation or experiential (progressive) sanctification.

There are **144** uses of **hagiazō** in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ge 2:3; Ex 13:2, 12; 19:14, 22f; 20:8, 11; 28:38, 41; 29:1, 20, 27, 33, 36f, 43f; 30:29f; 31:13; 40:8ff, 13; Lev. 6:18, 27; 8:10, 12, 15, 30; 10:3; 11:44; 16:4, 19; 20:3, 8; 21:8, 12, 15, 23; 22:2f, 9, 16, 32; 25:10f; 27:14ff, 22; Num. 3:13; 5:9f; 6:11f; 7:1; 8:17; 16:16, 37f; 18:8f, 29; 20:12f; 27:14; Deut. 5:12, 15; 15:19; 22:9; 32:51; 33:3; Jos. 7:13; Jdg. 17:3; 1 Sam. 7:1, 16; 16:5; 21:5; 2 Sam. 8:11; 11:4; 1 Ki. 8:8, 64; 9:3, 7; 2 Ki. 10:20; 12:18; 1 Chr. 18:11; 23:13; 26:26ff; 2 Chr. 2:4; 5:11; 7:7, 16, 20; 26:18; 29:33; 30:8; 31:6; 35:3; Ezr. 3:5; Neh. 3:1; 12:47; 13:22; Ps. 46:4; Prov. 20:25; Isa. 8:13; 10:17; 13:3; 29:23; 49:7; Jer. 1:5; 17:22, 24, 27; 51:27f; Ezek. 20:12, 20, 41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 37:28; 38:16, 23; 39:27; 44:19, 24; 46:20; 48:11; Dan. 4:22; 12:7, 10; Joel 1:14; 2:15f; 3:9; Amos 2:12; Zeph. 1:7; Hag. 2:12) **Hagiazō** is repeatedly used in the Septuagint (LXX) to express the entire dedication and consecration of persons (including an entire nation, Israel), things (altar, etc), times (days, etc) to God.

**Genesis 2:3** Then God blessed the seventh day and **sanctified** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

**Exodus 13:2** "Sanctify (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) to Me every first-born, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."

**Exodus 29:1** Now this is what you shall do to them to **consecrate** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish

**Exodus 40:13** And you shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and **consecrate** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) him, that he may minister as a priest to Me.

**Leviticus 11:44** 'For I am the LORD your God. **Consecrate** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

**Leviticus 22:2, 3** Tell Aaron and his sons to be careful with the holy gifts of the sons of Israel, which they **dedicate** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) to Me, so as not to profane My holy name; I am the LORD. Say to them, 'If any man among all your descendants throughout your generations approaches the holy gifts which the sons of Israel **dedicate** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) to the LORD, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from before Me. I am the LORD.

**Jeremiah 1:5** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born **I consecrated** (Hebrew = qadash = set apart; Lxx = hagiazō) you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

**MacArthur** comments that this prayer is for their sanctification explaining that...

Sanctification is the ongoing spiritual process by which God increasingly sets believers apart from sin and moves them toward holiness. The apostle's entreaty for the Thessalonians parallels and reiterates the theme and form of his earlier prayer for their spiritual growth (see **notes** 1Thes 3:11; 12; 13)

**Entirely** (3651) (**holoteles** from **hólos** = all, the whole, complete + **télos** = end, consummation) is used only here in the NT and means complete to the end, i.e. absolutely perfect, wholly complete, completely-entirely!

**Holoteles** describes something complete in all its parts, with no part wanting or unsound. It implies entirety and also the idea of completion. Paul asks God that nothing in these saints would escape the sanctifying power (of His Word and His Spirit). Paul is praying that God would sanctify these saints "through and through".

**Hiebert** adds that the basic idea of **holoteles**...

is "wholly attaining the end, reaching the intended goal," hence has the force of no part being left unreached. The prayer is that the divine sanctification may extend to every part of their being, leaving no area untouched by the pervasive power of divine holiness. It is tragically true that "many are satisfied with a partial Christianity; some parts of their life are still worldly" (Lenski) ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Denney** writes that our "inward life, in all its aspects, is to be sanctified through and through. All our powers of thought and imagination are to be consecrated; unholy thoughts are to be banished; lawless, roving imaginings, suppressed. All our inventiveness is to be used in God's service. All our affections are to be holy. Our heart's desire is not to settle on anything from which it would shrink in the day of the Lord Jesus. The fire which He came to cast on the earth must be kindled in our souls, and blaze there till it has burned up all that is unworthy of His love. Our consciences must be disciplined by His word and Spirit, till all the aberrations due to pride and passion and the law of the world have been reduced to nothing, and as face answers face in the glass,

so our judgment and our will answer His." ([1 Thessalonians 5 Commentary](#))

**AND MAY YOUR SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED COMPLETE AND WITHOUT BLAME AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: kai holokleron humon to pneuma kai e psuche kai to soma amemptos en te parousia tou kuriou hemon Iesou Christou tereitheie. (3SAPO):**

- Hebrews 4:12
- 1Th 3:13; 1Corinthians 1:8,9; Ephesians 5:26,27; Philippians 1:6,10; 2:15,16; Colossians 1:22; Jude 1:24
- [1 Thessalonians 5 Resources](#)

**Hiebert** observes that "The prayer that they may be wholly sanctified is now carried forward with the petition that they may be preserved in all parts of their being until the return of Christ. Sanctification and preservation go together. (Ibid)

Regarding the phrase **your spirit and soul and body** Hiebert explains that "All three areas (spirit, soul and body) stand in need of the sanctifying and keeping (preserving) power of God. It is a prayer that is applicable only to believers. The three terms are arranged in the order of merit, the highest first. The enumeration begins with that which is highest and purest in man and ends with the outward and material part of man. The divine sanctification begins with the inner and spiritual and reaches down to the outward and material. The precise implication of this threefold enumeration for the essential cure of man has been much debated. (Ibid)

The sanctifying work of God includes not only the immaterial part of the believer (spirit and soul), but also the body.

**Matthew Poole** rightly observes that "true sanctification reaches to the whole man - spirit, soul, and body. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

**Spirit** ([4151](#)) (**pneuma**) describes the immaterial part of the human personality in contrast outward and visible aspects of physical flesh and body (**soma**).

**Soul** ([5590](#)) (**psuche** [word study] or **psyche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") is the breath, then that which breathes, the individual, animated creature. However the discerning reader must understand that **psuche** is one of those Greek words that can have several meanings, the exact nuance being determined by the context. It follows that one cannot simply select of the three main meanings of psuche and insert it in a given passage for it may not be appropriate to the given context. The meaning of **psuche** is also contingent upon whether one is a dichotomist or trichotomist. (Click an excellent article on [Soul](#) in the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology; see also ISBE article on [Soul](#)) (See word study on **psuche**)

**BAGD's** lexicon makes the point that "It is often impossible to draw hard and fast lines in the use of this multivalent word. Generally it is used in reference to dematerialized existence or being... Without psuche a being, whether human or animal, consists merely of flesh and bones and without functioning capability. Speculations and views respecting the fortunes of psuche and its relation to the body find varied expression in our literature. ([Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

**Body** ([4983](#)) (**soma**) describes an organized whole made up of parts and members and generally describes any material body, in this case the human body.

**MacArthur** - In view of the prevailing Greek culture, it is significant that Paul included the **body** in his benediction. That culture— influenced by a philosophical dualism which taught that man's spirit is inherently good and his **body** inherently evil—held the **body** in low esteem. That philosophy provided a convenient rationale for dismissing as inconsequential whatever immoral physical behavior people might have engaged in...If sanctification is to be complete, it will extend to every part of the believer, especially the body, which thinks, feels, and acts in response to the holiness of the inner person. (Ibid)

**Ryrie** for feels that "**spirit** and **soul** and **body** should not be understood as defining the parts of man, but as representing the whole man.

Nevertheless as alluded to earlier, this passage has been the subject of considerable debate over the question "Is man a trichotomous (three part) or dichotomous (two part) being?"

**Hiebert** writes that...

All agree at man in his essential nature is both **material** and **nonmaterial**. The body is the outward, material part of man, the instrument through which the inner life expresses itself. It is an essential part of man as created by God (Genesis 2:7), and in the biblical view man is incomplete without a body. Our salvation will not

be completed until we receive our glorified bodies at Christ's return (Heb 11:40-note; Php 3:20, 21-note).

**Spirit and soul** relate to the nonmaterial part of man. The Bible at times speaks of man as a bipartite being, referred to as composed of "**body and spirit**" (James 2:26-note; 2Cor. 7:1-note) or of "**body and soul**" (Matt. 10:28). But here, as in several other places (e.g., He 4:12 [note]), man is viewed as tripartite. This raises the thorny problem of what is meant here by **spirit** and **soul**. Both terms are used with various shades of meaning in the Scriptures...

The common suggestion that these terms are simply a rhetorical piling up of words for emphasis is rejected by Ellicott with the remark that such a position is "plainly to set aside all sound rules of scriptural exegesis."

Bible students who accept the accuracy of Scripture have always believed that a distinction between the two terms was intended here. If there is no difference between them it is difficult to see how the Spirit of God can distinguish them, as in He 4:12 [note]. That there is a distinction between **soul** and **spirit** is clear from Paul's use of the adjectives *psuchikos* (soulish) and *pneumatikos* (spiritual) in 1Corinthians 2:14, 15 and 1Cor 15:44.

The **spirit** is the highest and most distinctive part of man. It is the life principle imparted to man by God Who is Spirit, enabling him to know and communicate with God. But with the fall, man as a spiritual being was separated from God and spiritual death resulted. The impartation of a new spiritual nature in the new birth is necessary so that man can again have direct communion with God.

The **soul** may be viewed as the self-conscious life of man, the seat of personality. The self-conscious personality reaches out in two directions. In its relation to the world, the **soul** is entirely dependent upon the body for its information and responses. Through his spirit, man reaches up to the spiritual world, Godward. The fallen man has an awareness of the reality of God and the spiritual world, but in his unregenerate condition he had no direct communion with God. Thus, the unregenerated man can only understand a religion of the senses. With the new birth, he is brought into direct relation with God through the renewed spirit, enabling him to worship God in spirit and truth.

Hebrews 4:12 [note], however, suggests that it is very difficult to distinguish between **spirit** and **soul**. Scriptural usage indicates an overlapping of functions. Nor need we try to keep them in watertight compartments. Students of Scripture are not agreed as to whether the distinction between spirit and soul in our passage is substantial or functional. **Trichotomists** hold to the former, **dichotomists** to the latter.

We agree with those who, like Marshall, conclude that this triple designation, most naturally understood, presents a trichotomous view of human nature, "taking it in the sense that Paul here distinguishes three aspects of the Christian's personality, his life in relationship with God through the 'spiritual' part of his nature, his human personality, or 'soul,' and the human body through which he acts and expresses himself. (Ibid)

**Guzik** writes that the **trichotomist** view has "some merit, but also has problems. One might say that Mark 12:30 divides man's nature into four parts (heart, soul, mind, and strength), and that 1Corinthians 7:34 divides man's nature into two parts (body and spirit). In some passages the terms soul and spirit seem to be synonymous, other times they seem to be distinct and hard to define precisely. It seems that there are indeed these three different aspects to the human person, yet the specific meaning of spirit or soul must be determined by the context. (Ibid)

**Vincent** - It is useless to attempt to draw from these words a technical, psychological statement of a threefold division of the human personality. If Paul recognised any such technical division, it was more probably twofold; the body or material part, and the immaterial part with its higher and lower sides ([1 Thessalonians 5](#))

**John MacArthur** feels that the view of man as **trichotomous** cannot be Scripturally substantiated writing that...

No Scripture text ascribes different, distinct substance and functions to the **spirit** and **soul**. Trichotomists nevertheless usually propose that **spirit** is man's Godward consciousness and **soul** is his earthward consciousness; however, neither the Greek usage of **spirit** (*pneuma*) nor of **soul** (*psuche*) sustains that proposition. The nonmaterial part of man does have myriad capacities to respond to God, Satan, and the world's many stimuli, but it is untenable to arbitrarily separate the spirit from the soul. The two terms are used interchangeably in Scripture (cf. Heb 6:19; 10:39; 1Peter 2:11; 2Peter 2:8). **Spirit** and **soul** are familiar and common synonyms that Paul used to emphasize the depth and scope of sanctification. Some suggest that an acceptable translation of this portion of Paul's prayer could be, "May your spirit, even soul and body," in which case "spirit" would refer to the whole person, and "soul and body" to the person's nonmaterial and material parts. References from Paul's other epistles provide clear evidence that he was a dichotomist (Ro 8:10; 1Cor. 2:11; 5:3, 5; 7:34; 2Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:18; Col. 2:5; 2Ti 4:22).

Some claim Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart," supports a trichotomist view of man's essence because it suggests splitting soul and spirit. But a careful look at the verse's language refutes that contention. The writer did not say the sword of the Word penetrates a person's inner being and separates his soul from his spirit. He said only that the sword cuts open the soul and the spirit of the person. He used a second metaphorical expression "piercing ... both joints and marrow" to further depict the deep penetration God's Word makes into the inner person. This verse poses no special difficulty for the dichotomist position. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

**Milligan** adds that "your spirit and your soul and your body," but this triple subject must not be pressed as if it contained a psychological definition of human nature. St Paul 'is not writing a treatise on the soul, but pouring forth, from the fulness of his heart, a prayer for his converts' (Jowett), and consequently all appeals to the verse in support of a Pauline system of Trichotomy as against the Dichotomy found elsewhere in his Epistles are beside the mark. At the same time it will not do to regard the three subjects as of '*mere rhetorical significance*' (de Wette): they are evidently chosen in accordance with the general O.T. view of the constitution of man to emphasize a sanctification which shall extend to man's whole being, whether on its immortal, its personal, or its bodily side... (St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians. 1908)

**Preserved** ([5083](#)) (**tereo** from **teros** - a guard or warden) means to keep an eye on, keep something in view, to attend carefully, or to watch over it. It conveys the sense of protecting, watching over and guarding something which is in one's possession. To watch as one would some precious thing. It means to observe attentively, to keep watch over and to retain in custody.

**Complete** ([3648](#)) (**holokleros** from **holos** = all, the whole [holos gives us *holograph*, a 360-degree, three-dimensional depiction of an object] + **kleros** = part, share, lot, allotment or all that has fallen by lot) literally is the "whole lot" and thus means having the entire allotment, complete in all its parts and in no part wanting or unsound. The idea is that which retains all that was initially allotted to it and is wanting nothing for its wholeness. **Holokleros** means without lack or deficiency, complete and whole in all its parts and thus conveys the idea of "with integrity" (English word integrity is from Latin "integer" meaning entire, intact, whole - cp English word "integer" meaning a whole number, a complete entity, a thing complete in itself!)

**Holokleros** was used of unhewn stones, as having lost nothing in the process of shaping and polishing. **Josephus** (Ant. iii. 12, 2) uses **holokleros** of an unblemished victim for sacrifice.

**Barclay** writes that **holokleros** means "entire, perfect in every part. It is used of the animal which is fit to be offered to God and of the priest who is fit to serve him. It means that the animal or the person has no disfiguring and disqualifying blemishes. Gradually this unswerving constancy removes the weaknesses and the imperfections from a man's character. Daily it enables him to conquer old sins, to shed old blemishes and to gain new virtues, until in the end he becomes entirely fit for the service of God and of his fellow-men. ([James 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Moulton and Milligan** write that **holokleros** "is common of material or physical soundness and completeness

There are 2 NT uses of **holokleros**, the other use being in...

**James 1:4** (Here James' exhortation is given to motivate them to comprehend the value of trials in the believer's life so that he or she is enabled to by faith "consider them all joy" -- note "not fun" but "joy") And let **endurance** (see *hupomone*) have its perfect result, that you may be **perfect** (see *teleios*) and **complete** (**holokleros**), lacking in nothing. (**Comment:** Observe that James tells us in essence the "definition" of **holokleros** -- "lacking in nothing." The idea is complete in all respects. Consummate.)

**Vine** comments on the distinction between "**perfect**" and "**complete**" noting that **complete** "signifies that every grace should be manifest in the believer that is present in Christ, John 1:16 (*"For of His fulness we have all received grace upon grace"*) (whereas) **perfect** (*teleios*) signifies that every grace should be developed and matured.

There are 6 uses of **holokleros** in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) (Lev. 23:15; Deut. 16:9; 27:6; Jos. 8:31; Ezek. 15:5; Zech. 11:16). In the LXX **holokleros** is used of the **full** week, Leviticus 23:5 (see below), of the **unhewn/uncut** stones of the altar, Deut 27:6, Joshua 8:31, and of the growing vine tree, Ezekiel 15:5. In the use in Leviticus note that **holokleros** translates the Hebrew word **tamiym** which is elsewhere used to describe character, the first use in fact referring to **Noah** as "**blameless** (**tamiym**) in his time" (Ge 6:9)...

**Leviticus 23:15** 'You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven **complete** (Hebrew = **tamiym** = complete,

sound, whole; Lxx = holokleros) sabbaths.

**Deuteronomy 27:6** "You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of **uncut** (KJV = whole) (Hebrew = shalam = complete, perfect, whole; Lxx = holokleros) stones; and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God (**Comment:** And God still requires "whole" stones to build His "altars" today! cp notes on "living stones" in 1 Peter 2:5 and saints "being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" -Ephesians 2:20; 21; 22)

**Joshua 8:31** just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of **uncut** (KJV = whole) (Hebrew = shalam = complete, perfect, whole; Lxx = holokleros) stones, on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

**Ezekiel 15:5** "Behold, while it is **intact** (KJV = whole) (Hebrew = tamiym = complete, sound, whole; Lxx = holokleros), it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything!

Here in **1 Thessalonians 5:23**, **holokleros** is used in an ethical sense to convey the thought that all the virtues that belong to the sanctified believer may be complete in them. In one sense, **holokleros** describes the perfection of Adam before the fall. In the present context the prayer is that no part of the Christian personality should be lacking in consecration.

**Luke** uses the corresponding noun form **holokleria** in Acts, where **Peter** testifies...

And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this **perfect health** (**holokleria** - state of soundness or well-being in all parts, wholeness, completeness) in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:16)

**Comment:** Latin *integritas*; used of an unimpaired condition of body, in which all its members are healthy and fit for use and thus the Latin Vulgate translates the Greek as *integra sanitas*. Peter's use in context speaks of the lame man's physical healing or wholeness, although there is clearly application to the ethical sense, where faith likewise produces an "internal healing" of our soul and spirit in the regeneration or new birth.)

**Bishop Trench** has a lengthy note comparing **holokleros** and **teleios**...

**Holokleros** signifies first, as its etymology declares, that which retains all which was allotted to it at the first (Ezek. 15:5), being thus whole and entire in all its parts (*holokleros kai panteles*, Philo, De Merc. Meret. 1); with nothing necessary for its completeness wanting.

Thus Darius would have been well pleased not to have taken Babylon if only Zopyrus, who had maimed himself to carry out the stratagem by which it fell, were **holokleros** still (Plutarch, Reg. et Imper. Apoph.). Again, **unhewn stones**, as having lost nothing in the process of shaping and polishing, are holokleroi (Deut. 27:6; 1 Macc. 4:47); **perfect weeks** are *ebdomadas holoklerous* (Lev. 23:15); and a man *en holoklero dermati* is 'in a **whole skin**' (Lucian, Philops. 8). We next find **holokleros** expressing that integrity of body, with nothing redundant, nothing deficient (cf. Lev. 21:17-23), which was required of the Levitical priests as a condition of their ministering at the altar, which also might not be wanting in the sacrifices they offered.

In both these senses **Josephus** uses it (Ant. iii. 12. 2); as does **Philo** continually. It is with him the standing word for this **integrity** of the priests and of the **sacrifice**, to the necessity of which he often recurs, seeing in it, and rightly, a mystical significance, and that these are *holokleroi thusia holoklero Theo* (De Vict. 2; De Vict. Off. 1, *holokleron kai panteleos momos ametochoon*. De Agricul. 29; De Cherub. 28; cf. Plato, Legg. vi. 759 c). **Teleios** is used by Homer (Il. 1. 66) in the same sense.

It is not long before **holokleros** and **holokleria**, like the Latin 'integer' and 'integritas,' are transferred from bodily to mental and moral entireness (Suetonius, Claud. 4). The only approach to this in the Apocrypha is Wisdom xv. 3, *holokleros dikaosune* (righteousness): but in an interesting and important passage in the Phaedrus of Plato (250 c; cf. Tim. 44 c), **holokleros** expresses the perfection of man before the Fall; I mean, of course, the Fall as Plato contemplated it; when to men, as yet *holokleroi kai apatheis kakon*, were vouchsafed *holoklera phasmata*, as contrasted with those weak partial glimpses of the Eternal Beauty, which are all that to most men are now vouchsafed. That person then or thing is holokleros, which is 'omnibus numeris absolutus,' or *en medeni leipomenos*, (not lacking in anything) as James himself (James 1:4) explains the word...

The distinction then is plain (Trench's discussion of **teleios** has been left out after the ellipsis [...]). The **holokleros** is one who has preserved, or who, having once lost, has now regained, his completeness: the **teleios** is one who has attained his moral end, that for which he was intended, namely, to be a man in Christ;



however it may be true that, having reached this, other and higher ends will open out before him, to have Christ formed in him more and more. In the **holokleros** no grace which ought to be in a Christian man is deficient; in the **teleios** no grace is merely in its weak imperfect beginnings, but all have reached a certain ripeness and maturity. **Holoteles**, occurring once in the N. T. (**1Th 5:23**; cf. Plutarch, De Plac. Phil. v. 21), forms a connecting link between the two, holding on to **holokleros** in its first half, to **teleios** in its second. ([Perfect - Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#))

As distinguished from the preceding word **holoteleis**, **holokleros** is qualitative, while **holteleis** is quantitative. The **holókleros** is one who has persevered or, having once suffered loss, has now regained completeness. In the **holókleros** individual no grace which a Christian man should possess is deficient. (2Pe 1:3-note)

**John Stott** writes that "If these words can be distinguished, then probably the former implies 'a totality from which no part is excluded' and the latter 'an integrity in which each part has its due place and proportion'. (1 & 2 Thessalonians. The Bible Speaks Today. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A, IVP)

In sum, Paul issues a prayer designed to make us **wholly holy** inside and out, not just on the "outside" (which of course is the essence of hypocrisy - **hupokrisis**) like the "super" religious Pharisees who Jesus "raked over the proverbial coals" declaring to them...

You blind Pharisee, first **clean** (**aorist imperative** = Not a suggestion but a command. Do it now! It is your urgent need!) the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. (Mt 23:26)

**Without blame** ([274](#))(**améemptōs** [**word study**] from the noun **ámemptos** from **a** = negates following word + **mémphomai** = find fault) means irreproachably, faultlessly. The noun describes that which is without defect or blemish and thus describes **not being able to find fault in someone** or some thing (cf use in He 8:7 {note} regarding the Old Covenant). The idea is that the person is such that he or she is without the possibility of rightful charge being brought against them. **Améemptōs** was used in the Greco-Roman world of people who were characterized by extraordinary civic consciousness.

This adverb is used in 1Th 2:10 (note) to describe the life of Paul and his companions as they conducted themselves before the Thessalonians, their conduct being such that there was no legitimate ground for accusation. This doesn't mean that their enemies didn't accuse them—because they did—but that the charges could not "stick".

The adverb **améemptōs** (differs by mark over the "o") is the very word archeologists have found on Christian tombs from ancient **Thessalonica**. When people wanted to identify a deceased friend or loved one as a Christian, they inscribed **améemptōs** or **blameless** on his or her grave, such behavioral blamelessness (not just the imputed and forensic aspect) is the Lord's desire for His Bride, the Church.

**Barclay** adds that **améemptōs** - expresses what the Christian is to the world. His life is of such purity that none can find anything in it with which to find fault. It is often said in courts of law that the proceedings must not only be just but must be seen to be just. The Christian must not only be pure, but the purity of his life must be seen by all. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press](#))

With this background it is easy to see why Paul prayed for the saints at Thessalonica to be **without blame**.

**Ray Stedman** sums up the prayer calling on us to...

recognize that God is able to minister to the whole man -- spirit, soul and body. God can touch you in all those areas. Then you can rest on his faithfulness. He will do it! Choose to obey and he will give you power to perform; but he will not give you the power to perform until you make the choice to obey!

And always remember the end: it is **until the coming of our Lord Jesus**. All through this letter this has been the great hope set before us. Jesus is coming again. God's kingdom will come on earth. There is only a limited time of testing to go through now. It cannot go on forever. One lifetime is very short. I often think of the motto that used to be prominent in many homes,

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.

I would like to change one word in that: "Only what's done by Christ will last." That is where the apostle leaves us, with the hope of the coming of our Lord, and the resources God has provided, so that we may live in a new and different way in the midst of this modern age. (Read his full sermon [1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 Loving Christianly](#))

**At the coming of the Lord** (see Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming) - Paul associates one's behavior with the truth of Christ's return in order to motivate the saints' diligent, zealous pursuit of holiness (see related topics Holiness Quotes; exposition of "be holy" in 1Pe 1:15,16-note; name of God = The Lord Who Sanctifies; The Lord Who Sanctifies Part 2; Holiness by J. C. Ryle). On that glorious day when we see our Lord face to face, the process of sanctification will be perfect and complete (cp 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:3-note)! In the meantime, expecting to see Jesus Christ at any moment is a great motivation for holy living (see Doctrine of Imminency). What (really "Who") you are looking for will greatly impact what you are living for! (Or at least it should!) (cp Paul's parallel thoughts on what living in the light of our Savior's return in 2Ti 1:12-note)

**Hiebert** agrees writing that "It is in view of that anticipated coming that the prayer for their preservation is offered. Were there no future parousia, this preservation would be quite pointless. The prayer for their preservation is significant view of what that day will disclose. It will assure that then they will be and as blameless. (Ibid)

**Coming** (3952) (**parousia** [word study]) is a combination of two Greek words **para** = with, alongside + **ousia** = being (**ousia** is the participial form of the verb **eimi** = to be) which together literally mean to be alongside. Most lexicons in fact state that **parousia** is derived from **pareimi** (from **para** = near, with + **eimi** = to be) which means to be present, to be nearby, to have come.

**Parousia** then literally means a **being beside** or a **presence**. The word denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with.

**Parousia** conveys the thought of an arrival (advent or coming) of a person to a place plus the idea of their presence at that place until a certain event transpires. The word **parousia** has no English equivalent and therefore is often transliterated in writings.

**John MacArthur - Parousia** refers to more than just coming; it includes the idea of **presence**." Perhaps the best English translation would be "**arrival**." The church's great hope is the arrival of Jesus Christ when He comes to bless His people with His presence. That glorious truth appears in more than 500 verses throughout the Bible. ([MacArthur J. James. Moody](#)) (Bolding added)

**MacDonald** observes that here at the end of this epistle Paul "seems to point to the Judgment Seat (seebema) of Christ, which follows the Rapture (see harpazo). At that time, the Christian's life, service, and testimony will be reviewed, and he will be rewarded or suffer loss. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

While I certainly would agree with the excellent commentator **William MacDonald**, there is no question that the certainty of Christ's Second Coming at the end of the **Great Tribulation** (the last 3.5 years of the 7 year period of testing) just prior to the establishment of His **Millennial Kingdom** will also be a blessed stabilizing hope to those individuals who experience new birth in the hard to bear seven year period known as the Tribulation or **Daniel's Seventieth Week**. For more discussion of the relationship of the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ see the comparison of the Rapture versus the Second Coming.

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**Oswald Chambers - Intercessory introspection** - And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless. 1 Thess. 5:23. - "Your whole spirit ..." The great mystical work of the Holy Spirit is in the dim regions of our personality which we cannot get at. Read the 139th Psalm; the Psalmist implies—"Thou art the God of the early mornings, the God of the late at nights, the God of the mountain peaks, and the God of the sea; but, my God, my soul has further horizons than the early mornings, deeper darkness than the nights of earth, higher peaks than any mountain peaks, greater depths than any sea in nature—Thou Who art the God of all these, be my God. I cannot reach to the heights or to the depths; there are motives I cannot trace, dreams I cannot get at—my God, search me out.' Do we believe that God can garrison the imagination far beyond where we can go? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" —if that means in conscious experience only, may God have mercy on us. The man who has been made obtuse by sin will say he is not conscious of sin. Cleansing from sin is to the very heights and depths of our spirit if we will keep in the light as God is in the light, and the very Spirit that fed the life of Jesus Christ will feed the life of our spirits. It is only when we are garrisoned by God with the stupendous sanctity of the Holy Spirit, that spirit, soul and body are preserved in unspotted integrity, undeserving of censure in God's sight, until Jesus comes. We do not allow our minds to dwell as they should on these great massive truths of God.

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**Oswald Chambers - Instantaneous and insistent sanctification** - And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. 1 Thess. 5:23–24. - When we pray to be sanctified, are we prepared to face the standard of these verses? We take the term sanctification much too lightly. Are we prepared for what sanctification will cost? It will cost an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth, and an immense broadening of all our interests in God. Sanctification means intense concentration on God's point of view. It means every power of body, soul and spirit chained and kept for God's purpose only. Are we prepared for God to do in us all that He separated us for? And then after His work is done in us, are we prepared to separate ourselves to God even as Jesus did? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized the meaning of sanctification from God's standpoint. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us. Are we prepared for what that will cost? It will cost everything that is not of God in us. Are we prepared to be caught

up into the swing of this prayer of the apostle Paul's? Are we prepared to say—"Lord make me as holy as You can make a sinner saved by grace"? Jesus has prayed that we might be one with Him as He is one with the Father. The one and only characteristic of the Holy Ghost in a man is a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, and freedom from everything that is unlike Him. Are we prepared to set ourselves apart for the Holy Spirit's ministrations in us?

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**THE GREAT PHYSICIAN - 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23** - May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. - Is there no balm in Gilead?" asked Jeremiah. "Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of ... my people?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Gilead, a region east of the Jordan, was famous for its medicinal salve, but Jeremiah warned that not even Gilead's balm could heal the soul. But the Great Physician can heal. He can give physical healing, and we should pray for one another to be healed (James 5:16). God sometimes heals miraculously and other times through medical science. Sometimes He doesn't grant physical healing because He has other plans and purposes for us (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). He can give emotional healing. When Jeremiah was devastated by the terror of war, he felt like a man mangled by a lion or trapped in a tomb. But as he recalled God's unfailing mercy, hope returned to his heart (Lamentations 3:6, 10, 21-24). The Lord can give spiritual healing. "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Whatever your need, the Great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus. (David Jeremiah - Sanctuary)

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**Alexander Maclaren** - Earthly faithfulness is possible only by the reception of heavenly gifts. As surely as every leaf that grows is mainly water that the plant has got from the clouds, and carbon that it has got out of the atmosphere, so surely will all our good be mainly drawn from Heaven and Heaven's gifts. As certainly as every lump of coal that you put upon your fire contains in itself sunbeams that have been locked up for all these millenniums that have passed since it waved green in the forest, so certainly does every good deed embody in itself gifts from above. And no man is pure except by impartation; and every good thing and every perfect thing cometh from the Father of lights.

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**Spurgeon** has the following exhortation...

**Thomas Manton (Ed: Puritan writer)** says: If an earthly king lie but a night in a house, what care is there taken that nothing be offensive to him, but that all things be neat, clean, and sweet? How much more ought you to be careful to get and keep your hearts clean, to perform service acceptably to Him; to be in the exercise of faith, love and other graces, that you may entertain, as you ought, your heavenly King, who comes to take up His continual abode and residence in your hearts!

We know a house in which an empress rested for a very short time, and the owner henceforth refused to admit other inmates. Such is his devotion to his royal guest that no one may now sit in her chair or dine at the table which she honoured. Our verdict is that he makes loyalty into absurdity by this conduct; but if we imitate him in this procedure in reference to the Lord Jesus we shall be wise. Let our whole being be set apart for Jesus, and for Jesus only. We shall not have to shut up the house; for our beloved Lord will inhabit every chamber of it, and make it a permanent palace. Let us see to it that all be holy, all pure, all devout. Help us, O Purifier of the temple, to drive out all intruders, and reserve our soul in all the beauty of holiness for the Blessed and Only Potentate.