’Til We Meet Again

Here, There or in the Air

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

Introduction:

We are at the end of this Epistle. In this section we say “good bye” to the apostle Paul.

Recently, we had dinner with some of our friends from MCC. They have a unique farewell saying: They start off with “We will see you” Then someone says, “Here” then the others will join in with, “There or in the Air”

Before Paul “goes,” he gives some parting thoughts.

1. A Parting Mediation – 5:23

“Now may ﻿﻿the God of peace Himself﻿﻿ ﻿sanctify ﻿﻿you completely and may your whole spirit, soul, and body ﻿﻿be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sanctification means “to set apart to God” –

It has Three Aspects: (1 John 3:2-3)

* Our Past – (Positional) Sanctification – 3:2a

At salvation, we are set apart completely. That is our standing before God. Beloved, ﻿﻿now we are children of God; (saints) We are all saints - even the Corinthians.

* Our Promised Sanctification – 3:2b:

“We know that when He is revealed, ﻿﻿we shall be like Him, for ﻿﻿we shall see Him as He is.”

This is our position becoming our state. This process should be going on right now. Notice the relationship between seeing Him and being like Him. When we see Him fully (face to face), we will be like Him, fully. We will come back to that thought later.

* Our Present Sanctification (our State) - 3:3

“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

This latter one (Present Sanctification) is Paul’s emphasis here.

“sanctify ﻿﻿you completely” - “Wholly” (KJV) is found only here in the New Testament and is made up of two words, complete and end. So, both ideas of wholeness and completion are included.

This does not mean that we are perfect now. But it does mean that we should be holy, set apart in life and thinking to the Lord and His purposes. The word “whole” here refers to our spirit, our soul, and our body.

“Each of these three parts should be preserved holy to God and be used by God: Our physical bodies, our spiritual or intellectual life, and our psychological or natural life.” (Walvoord, Kindal)

Now back to that idea of seeing Jesus and becoming like Him: Can we see Him now? Yes! Where? On the pages of Scripture!

2 Corinthians 3:18

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding ﻿﻿as in a mirror ﻿﻿the glory of the Lord, ﻿﻿are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as ﻿﻿by the Spirit of the Lord.

So, the more we see Him on the pages of Scripture, the more we will be like Him. That is the process of our present sanctification.

Some take this verse to prove the threefold nature of man - body, soul, spirit (called Trichotomy). [See Theo.III notes, page 18ff, for more details]

II. A Parting Declaration – 5:24

﻿﻿“He who calls you *is* ﻿﻿faithful, who also will ﻿﻿do *it.*”

We can’t sanctify ourselves; but we can and must make ourselves available to God so that He can by His Holy Spirit separate us to Himself. And He is faithful to do that. This verse reminds us of Phil. 2:12-13,

“…work out your own salvation (present sanctification) with ﻿﻿fear and trembling; for ﻿﻿it is God who works in you both to will and to do ﻿﻿for *His* good pleasure.”

God works through your “will-er” and your “do-er”. He makes you will-er will and you do-er do. We won’t be totally sanctified in this life, but we should be moving toward that goal while we are here.

III. A Parting Application – 5:25

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“Brethren, pray for us.”

Paul often asked for prayer. In 2 Thess. 3:1-2, he wrote:

“Finally, brethren, ﻿﻿pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, and ﻿﻿that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; ﻿﻿for not all have faith.

Church leaders need prayer, especially missionaries. They face difficulties in a foreign land with different cultures, often defiant governments and religions. Also local church leaders in small churches are often volunteers working a full-time job elsewhere. Brethren, pray for them all, daily, hourly, moment by moment as circumstances indicate.

IV. A Parting Reception – 5:26

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“Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.”

At Miami Christian College, the student handbook said, “No kissing.” One of the co-eds used to say, “Greet one another with a Holy No No!”

It does sound a little strange in our culture. But many cultures, even in our day, men kiss each other on the cheek – even 2-3 times. In the early church, it was men with men and women with women. We might paraphrase it, “Greet one another with a holy handshake.” Notice that it is a “holy” “whatever it is” not romantic.

V. A Parting Exhortation – 5:27

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“I charge you by the Lord that this ﻿﻿epistle be read to all the ﻿﻿holy brethren.”

Paul put the leaders under oath to read the letter to all the brothers. In the first place, there was only one copy. No one could be allowed to take it from the leaders to whom it had been entrusted. Eventually copies were made and distributed. Then, when the printing press was invented by Gutenburg in 1440, they became available to more and more, then eventually to all. Secondly, many of them could not read. So it had to be read to them.

VI. A Parting Benediction – 5:28

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. {Amen}”

We have come full circle: The first verse of 1 Thessalonians reads: “Grace to you and peace ﻿﻿from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Everything that God does for us is by His grace. He created us by His grace. He did not need us. He was not a lonely God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit had perfect fellowship.

But God decided to reveal Himself, to whom?

There were angels (Job 38:7). They saw God’s power and God’s justice. When 1/3 of them sinned, God cast them out of heaven with no salvation possible. So, they did not see His love, kindness, goodness or His grace. All of these attributes and more were abundantly displayed in His dealings with mankind.

Man fell just as the angels had. Only this time, God’s showed His Grace by providing salvation with no cost to man. God is the center of history. History is His story. For the next month or so, we will turn our attention to God’s ultimate revelation of Himself, when God became one of us so that we could be one with Him through the sacrifice of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So long, Paul, we will see you next year. Here, there or in the air.