

Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches

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***Philippians 1:3-6** I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Dear Friends

As your minister, it is a great privilege that I have in bringing this weekly devotion to you. Our theme today is 'The Gospel Community'. **1 Thessalonians 5:23-28.** *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. Brothers and sisters pray for us. Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

Prayer - Heavenly father as we relate to you this day in your word, we acknowledge that you have not only created a world of beautiful sight and sounds, but you have provided us with the ability to enjoy it all. You have not only created us to live in relationship with you and with each other, you have not only made us in your own image, you have also designed us that we can think, plan and reflect on who we are and what we might become. You have not only planned that we should have the gifts and the skills with which you have filled our lives, but from the first you planned for us to rest, to make time and space just 'to be'.

We thank you for every opportunity you provide to step outside our daily routine and to take a pause from the activity each day brings. Sovereign Lord be Lord not only of the things we do, the service we offer and the activities that control our every waking moment, but also be Lord of our silences, the moments of stillness and the sense of freedom they bring.

Father God, you have drawn us together into you as one, familiar faces, shared stories, different gifts, gathered to be your family, together to express your love for others. But just now we feel scattered, splintered, separated, our life stifled by continuing lockdown restrictions. In this time apart - watch over the lonely, the sick and the anxious, bless young and old, families and singles. Engage our hearts as one in digital worship, expanding our faith.

Remind us that, although separated from each other, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, no trouble or hardship, neither death nor life, not what is happening at present, nor what might come in future, nothing in all creation. We are victors even over this virus, more than conquerors through him who loved us. So, hear us Lord, as we pray for one another, in these days. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

As we come to these concluding verses of 1 Thessalonians, they speak of our relationship with God and with one another as the whole of the book is reflected in these couple of verses. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are being changed from the inside out day by day. God's process of changing us covers every area of our lives: body, soul, and spirit. In this passage we find the answer to three questions which may be on your mind as we have been on the Thessalonian journey. Who is changing me? How is He changing me? When will it be finished?

Who is Changing Me? - Paul identified the One who is changing us. He wrote, **V23.** *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.* Paul could have identified God as the God of Power or the God of Grace or the God of Glory, but in this context, He calls Him the God of Peace. Why? We live in such a chaotic restless world, that peace is a rare commodity. God's Will for your life is that He will bring you to a place where you experience real peace, the peace that passes all human understanding. There are three big words that describe what God wants to do in your life. The words are justification, sanctification, and glorification. You have been saved; you are being saved; and you will be saved. If you are trusting the Lord Jesus now, then, In the past you

have experienced justification: God saved you from the penalty of your sin. In the present you are experiencing sanctification: God is saving you from the power of sin. Giving you the courage to say no to sin. In the future, you'll experience glorification: (you'll receive a glorified eternal body), you'll be saved from even the presence of sin. People are searching for ways to improve their lives, but they will be frustrated by every attempt of self-improvement. As Augustine wrote sixteen centuries ago, "Lord, you have made us for Yourself; and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you." God Himself; the God of Peace is the One who created you. He is the only one who can change you.

How is He Changing Me? - Paul wrote, "*Sanctify you through and through.*" Don't be scared of the word "sanctification." In its simplest form, it means, "to improve."

The reformer, John Calvin called the process of sanctification as "the entire renovation of man." We understand what it means to take an old house and renovate it into something better. It is a complete change; it is not just improving a couple of rooms and leave the rest old and ugly; it is a complete renovation. That's the idea Paul was conveying in this verse. God's process of changing us covers every area of our lives: body, soul, and spirit.

In the Book of Genesis God said, "Let us make man in our image." (Genesis 1:26) So you and I are made in the image of God. That doesn't mean we look like God; it means we are designed like God.

Sanctification is the process through which God is changing you for the better in all areas of life. When you are born again, God's Spirit comes to take up resident in your heart. That means God works on us from the inside out.

When Will He be Finished? - Paul wrote, "*May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" God will keep on working on us until one of two things happens—until Jesus returns or until we die. And in either case, that's when we'll meet Jesus. Paul prayed that we would be kept blameless at the coming of Christ. There's a big difference between being faultless and being blameless. Faultless means you haven't done anything wrong. However, when it comes to our sin, we have to say, "It's all my fault." Therefore, Paul used a legal term translated "blameless." It means you are guilty, but you are pardoned for your crime. None of us are faultless, but we may stand before God blameless! We're all in the process of being changed. None of us are there yet. That's why we should be patient with each other. But when God looks at you and me, He sees not what we are now, but what we will be when He's finished with us. That's the power of an artist. They can look at an empty canvas and see a picture. Like those guys that can create majestic eagle on a tree stump using a chain saw, they would tell you that they just cut away everything that doesn't look like an eagle.

That's what God is doing in us. He is cutting away everything that doesn't look like Jesus, it's a lifetime process.

So, what's our part? - We must cooperate with God. We must make ourselves available to Him. If your car isn't running right you wouldn't take it to a mechanic and say, "Here, fix my car, but don't touch the engine." You'd give them full access. That's why we must fully surrender our lives to God. Here, God, I give you access to every part of my life. Change me. Make me like Jesus. The words of Adelaide Addison Pollard's hymn sum it up for us!

1. Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way; Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.

Mould me and make me After Thy will, While I am waiting, Yielded and still.

2. Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way; Search me and try me, Master, today.

Whiter than snow, Lord, Wash me just now, As in Thy presence Humbly I bow.

3. Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way; Wounded and weary, Help me, I pray.

Power, all power, surely is Thine, Touch me and heal me, Saviour divine.

4. Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way; Hold o'er my being Absolute sway.

Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see Christ only, always, Living in me.

Who is changing me? The God of Peace!

How is He Changing Me? By Sanctifying Me!

When Will He be Finished? When I Meet Jesus!

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." **Philippians 1:6**