

Though the Apostle Paul gave instructions to the Thessalonians for living godly lives, his ultimate confidence was in God. His closing to the letter has this confidence as the underlying basis for his prayer, his requests, his exhortation, and his final blessing. The same confidence can be ours as we understand who our great God is and what He has done for us.

I. His prayer: confidence that God sanctifies and preserves His own (5:23–24)

Paul desires for the Thessalonian believers that God will do a complete work of sanctification so that when they meet Jesus face to face there will be nothing of which they can be accused. He is confident that God who called them will also bring about their holiness.

1. His confidence is focused on God as the author and finisher of their salvation.

The syntax and wording emphasizes God. As the God of peace, He has made peace with Him possible in Jesus Christ. His very character of faithfulness guarantees that He will do what He has set out to do. Cf. Hebrews 12:2; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 1:6.

2. Paul's confidence in this prayer is also revealed in the scope of their salvation.

The repeated idea reveals the thoroughness of salvation: “through and through,” “spirit, soul, and body,” and “whole” or “entire.” Paul is confident that God is concerned about the whole person.

Every believer may have the confidence that God is at work, even as we struggle to “work out our salvation” (Philippians 2:12–13).

II. His requests: confidence that God has joined believers as one family (5:25–26)

The believers in Thessalonica, largely Gentiles, had become in just a few short months or even weeks Paul's spiritual family. The use of “brothers” three times in three verses shows that this permeated his thinking about them and freed him to request their prayer and desire his greetings to all.

1. Paul requested prayer.

Thereby Paul showed his understanding of a common need, a spiritual equality, and a mutual responsibility, because God had made them one family.

2. Paul requested that they greet “all the brothers with a holy kiss” (v 26).

The kiss was already a common family greeting. As a “holy” kiss, it probably had reference to their “sanctified” status, as fellow “saints” in the family of God. It recognized that they belonged to God and to one another (cf. Romans 12:5 and Ephesians 4:25). Paul was confident that God wanted tensions in His family reduced (cf. 4:6, 11; 5:12) and that He would work toward that end.

Even though believers today struggle with sin and hence with tensions among believers, we can strive to lessen those tensions and be confident that God desires harmony, since He has created one new body, His family.

III. His exhortation: confidence that God has revealed His truth to all believers (5:27)

Paul may have seen a temptation to exclude some from the reading of this letter or he may have wanted to give the leaders authority in reading it. Either way he expresses a confidence that God had revealed His truth for all of them.

1. Paul was confident that God had given a true, authoritative word. Such a strong command (“I put you under oath”) would only exist in the context of such confidence.**2. Paul was confident that God intends all to hear and heed His Word.****3. Paul was confident that God uses His Word for the sanctification of believers.** Cf. Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; Colossians 3:16.

Believers can and should have confidence that God has spoken in Scripture in a way that we can understand, even though not exhaustively.

IV. His blessing: confidence that God provides grace in Christ (5:28)

Though familiar to us, Paul's closing was not a customary closing. The difference adds importance. His wish for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with them is not a doubt in the provision of grace, but a desire that they live by God's grace which is fully sufficient and absolutely necessary.

God is faithful. He will work in His children to accomplish His purposes in calling them to Himself. He has given us His word. He has formed us into one body. True believers belong to one another in the family of God. He gives all that we need. You can be confident that God is indeed at work.