

We come this morning to our 15th and final sermon in our series entitled Gospel Holiness—having seen its necessity, nature, mistakes, source, cause, means, activities, and beauty—we come this morning to—Its Completion...

These three verses consist of the apostle's prayer for the Thessalonian Christians—[1] in v11 he expresses his desire to see the Thessalonians, [2] in v12 he prays for their present growth and sanctification, and [3] in v13 he describes the end or finished product—that is—the completion of their sanctification—in their glorification...

- I. Who Establishes Us?
- II. What Does He Establish?
- III. When Does He Establish Us?

I. Who Establishes Us?

1. Before I come to directly answer this question—I first need to briefly explain this Greek word rendered—establish...
2. The word literally means—"to make stable or firmly plant"—it refers to something fixed in an unshakable condition...
3. The apostle sometimes uses the word to refer to a present stability associated with Christian growth and maturity...
4. 1Thess.3:2—"and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions..."
5. Here—"establish" refers to a comparative fixed and stable condition—a stableness associated with our sanctification...
6. Notice—"establish" is the opposite of being "shaken"—it's being made stable, fixed, sturdy, strong, and unchanging...
7. In our text—it refers to an establishment associated with our glorification—that fixed condition that saints will know for all eternity...
8. Thus we learn that Christians are being established in a progressive sense, and they will be established in a perfect sense...
9. Perhaps I can put it this way—as we are growing in holiness, we are becoming what we shall be for all eternity...
10. In other words—there is a definite connection between what we are gradually becoming and the finished product...
11. For example—think of a builder—everyday he works on a house—and then finally after several months—he's finished...
12. The finished product isn't different from what was being made—each day there's further work until it's completed...
13. This is similar to us—Christ is the Master builder—and He is building His church collectively and each stone individually...
14. Each day He is establishing or building His people into a glorious House—and one day—He will finish the work...
15. 1Cor.1:8—"who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ..."
16. The Greek word rendered "confirm" is similar to the word rendered "establish"—it means—"to make firm or secure..."
17. Notice—Christ will confirm Christians unto the end—He keeps them from the beginning through to the end...
18. Thus—what Paul does in our text is—he reminds the Thessalonian Christians that Christ will finish the job...

19. Phil.1:6—"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus..."
20. This brings us to our first question—WHO establishes us—"so that He may establish your hearts blameless..."
21. It seems evident that the "He" of v13 is the "Lord" of v12—which is in fact the "Lord Jesus Christ" of v11...
22. Furthermore—the "He" of v13 is distinguished from the Father—in that Christ establishes us before the Father...
23. Thus—it is Christ himself who establishes His people blameless in holiness—it is Christ who perfects our holiness...
24. [1] Because of His POWER, v12—"And may the Lord make you increase...so that He may establish your hearts blameless..."
25. In other words—the work of sanctification is ultimately His work—that He completes by His indwelling Spirit...
26. Christ is our greater than Solomon—who builds God's new covenant temple, Matt.16:18—"I will build My church..."
27. Now—here we must keep in mind—that this construction takes place in the midst of great opposition and enmity...
28. This can be illustrated by Zerubbabel—who was responsible to rebuild the temple in the midst of great hostility...
29. If you remember—when the remnant returned from Babylon to Jerusalem—they rebuilt the temple and city...
30. Yet—there was great opposition both from without and within Israel—Zerubbabel acted as a king or a prince...
31. Zech.4:6-9—"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel; not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts...The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish *it*..."
32. 2Thess.3:1-3—"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. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one..."
33. [2] Because of His CHARGE—that is—because of the commission given to Him from eternity by His Father...
34. Thus—the apostle says—He will establish us—"before our God and Father"—that is—He presents us to God...
35. The Son will establish our hearts blameless in holiness—out of faithfulness and obedience to His Father's charge...
36. Jn.6:39—"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all he has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day..."
37. Notice—a people was given to Christ in eternity past—and the Father charged Him to present them blameless...
38. Thomas Manton—"Christ is under an office and obligation of faithfulness, he has a trust of which he must give an account; he is to take care of the persons of the elect, to justify, sanctify, and glorify them in his own day..."
39. [3] Because of His LOVE—that is—Christ will finish the work because He's wed to His people and He loves them...
40. In other words—He not only presents them without blame because of love for His Father but also love for His people...
41. Eph.5:25-27—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish..."
42. [a] A word to husbands, Eph.5:25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..."

43. [b] A word to parents—that is—there is a sense in which both parents must view their task similar to Christ's...
44. [c] A word to pastors, 2Cor.11:2—"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ..."

II. What Does He Establish?

1. 1Thess.3:13—"so that He [Christ] may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father..."
2. [1] He establishes our HEARTS—this refers to the inner man or the soul—the mind, affections, and the will...
3. He mentions the "heart" because it's central to all else—Christianity is a first and foremostly a heart religion...
4. This of course in no way implies that our bodies will not also be perfectly established at Christ's second coming...
5. But—it simply underscores that all TRUE holiness—has its origin first on the inside, and then on the outside...
6. Ps.45:13—"The royal daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors..."
7. 1Thess.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..."
8. Notice the phrases—"may your whole spirit, soul, and body"—that is—your heart and body—"be preserved blameless..."
9. [2] He establishes our hearts BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS—"blameless" means—"without blame or fault..."
10. Thus—without blame (blameless) means—He will fix our hearts for all eternity—in a sinless and faultless condition...
11. Remember—holiness is not only negative but positive—the removal of all sin and the possession of all grace...
12. Thus—throughout the NT—we are repeatedly told—that Christ will present us to God holy and without blame...
13. Eph.1:3-4—"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him..."
14. Eph.5:25-27—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish..."
15. Col.1:21-22—"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight..."
16. [a] It's the perfection of love—this is seen from v12—"may the Lord make you increase and abound in love..."
17. Robert Murray McCheyne—"When I stand before the throne, dressed in beauty not my own, when I see thee as thou art, love thee with un-sinning heart, then, Lord shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe..."
18. [b] It's conformity to Christ—that is—the finished product is Christ-likeness—perfect conformity to Christ...
19. Think again of our builder—often times they place a painting in front of the building—of what it will look like finished...
20. This way everyone can look at the painting and see how the actual building will look like when it's finished...
21. This is similar to us—Christ Himself is what we will all look like—He is goal into which we are conformed...

22. Thus—Christ is not only the Master Builder, but He is also the pattern into which His people are being changed...
23. [c] It's eternal and unchanging—this again is what the imagery of "established" entails—to be eternally fixed...
24. Thus—the holiness that saints will know in heaven—is a better holiness than Adam originally knew in Paradise...
25. [3] He establishes our hearts blameless in holiness BEFORE our GOD and FATHER—that is—at the final day...
26. In other words—Christ is able to establish us blameless before God—so that not even God is find a fault with us...
27. Now—let me remind you—that our acceptance with God is NOT based upon our holiness but Christ's holiness...
28. Yet—Paul speaks about a holiness of heart that will even be able to stand the holy scrutiny of God Himself...
29. Rev.7:13-14—"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb..."
30. Rev.19:7-8—"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints..."

III. When Does He Establish Us?

1. Our text not only teaches us WHO and WHAT, but also WHEN—"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints..."
2. In other words—Christians will only be perfectly established in holiness—when Christ return or second coming...
3. Now—the second coming of Christ is a major theme throughout this letter—in fact it's mentioned in every chapter...
4. 1Thess.1:10—"and to wait for His Son from heaven" 2:19—"for what is our hope, or joy, or crown or rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming" 3:13—"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" 4:15—"until the coming of the Lord" 5:23—"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..."
5. [1] It's PERSONAL—"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—that is—when Christ Himself returns for us...
6. The Greek word rendered "coming" literally means—"presence or arrival"—it refers to the arrival of a person...
7. Brethren—we fail to anticipate the second coming because we fail to anticipate seeing our Savior face to face...
8. 1Thess.1:10—"and to wait for His Son from heaven"—that is—we are waiting to see Him and be with Him...
9. [2] Its GLORIOUS—"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—notice He returns as the LORD Jesus Christ...
10. Now—I trust that most of us are well aware that Scripture speaks of two comings—one humble the other glorious...
11. The first time our Savior came He was in a humble condition—the second time He shall be in an exalted condition...
12. Jude 1:24—"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy..."
13. [3] It's CORPORATE—"at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints"—that is—Christians who've died in the Lord...
14. 1Thess.4:14—"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus..."

15. Thus—our perfection will be shared with all the saints of all time—we shall become—the congregation of the righteous...

IV. Applications

1. Here—I want to suggest three applications from this passage that should grant us no small amount of comfort...
2. But before I do so—I want to return to the illustration of the builder constructing a house that I gave earlier...
3. [1] Our present holiness is imperfect—if we WILL BE perfected—then of necessity we are not presently perfect...
4. [2] Our present holiness is increasing—that is—Christ is presently establishing our hearts until they are finished...
5. [3] Our future holiness will be perfect—that is—behold the painting—and see what awaits us, child of God...