

Pray it Again, Saul

The Recorded Prayers of the Apostle Paul

Text

First Thessalonians 5:23-24

Introduction

Anyone recognize the following quote:

"When you travel around as much as I do, you're bound to run into yourself at some point."

It's the sixth doctor, in the *Doctor Who* series, from an episode titled, "The Two Doctors."

I've tried to watch *Doctor Who*. I just can't. I don't get it. Maybe someone here can explain it to me afterwards.

The quote highlights a common syfy plot point, where a character encounters himself or herself in the future. In *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, Charles Xavier figures a way to get advice from his future self.

We are looking at the recorded prayers of the apostle Paul, in their chronological order from his writings. His second prayer is near the end of First Thessalonians:

1Th 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.

1Th 5:24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

All commentators agree that the emphasis in this prayer is on God's faithfulness to bring you to completion as a perfect person in glory.

It is, therefore, **like looking at your future self.**

I think all of us might wish we could get advice from our future self. I know it would change a lot of my past decisions.

I believe we can take advice from our future, completed self.

Knowing what God will perform and complete, we can look at our lives along the way there from a heavenly perspective, and advise ourselves accordingly.

Paul addressed the Lord as "the God of peace." In Colossians we're told, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:19-20).

The Cross of Jesus Christ was the means by which God made peace with lost mankind, and thereby reconcile men to Himself, as well as reconciling all of creation.

Look a few words ahead, to where Paul said, "spirit, soul, and body." Man is made up of those three parts.

I don't want to get sidetracked on this, but not everyone agrees we are made of three parts. Christian scholars we respect say man is only two parts - *material*, the body, and *immaterial*, the spirit or soul.

Indeed there are passages that only mention two, not three, parts. But there is one important passage that indicates God can discern between the soul and the spirit:

Heb 4:12 (ESV). For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing to the division of soul and of spirit**, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

If soul and spirit are interchangeable, and basically the same thing, then so must "joints" and "marrow" be the same; and "thoughts" and "intentions" be the same. They are not.

Spirit and soul are different - although I'd be quick to add that only God can truly discern between them.

What does that have to do with "the God of peace?" The spirit is the part of man that is able to communicate with God. After all, the Bible says God is a spirit, so we must have a spirit to know Him.

When Adam and Eve sinned, man as a spiritual being was separated from God, and spiritual death resulted.

Ever since the Garden, we are born spiritually dead, with only a soul and a body. The soul is our self-consciousness. Through it we have an awareness of God, and of things spiritual; but we cannot have direct contact with God.

As soulish beings, we can practice religion, but we cannot have a relationship with God Who is a spirit.

When we go to the Cross, and receive Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit takes residence in us, AND a spirit is imparted to us, and we again have communication with God.

God made peace with us by the Cross so we that might be born spiritually and know Him.

"Sanctify" means *to set apart and to consecrate*. We've been set apart, consecrated to God. We are His, and He is at work in us.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely..." puts the emphasis on what God will definitely do. He will "sanctify you completely." It is worded to describe sanctification as a process occurring now that will be completed at the return of Jesus for you.

I don't mean to suggest that we simply "let go, and let God." I'm not saying there are no Christian disciplines to practice. I'm not saying there aren't sins to flee.

I'm saying that **these** verses - **this** prayer - isn't about those things. It is about what God will definitely do in me, and in you.

"And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"May" isn't *maybe*, because in the very next verse we are told God is "faithful" to do it. This isn't an exhortation for you to work hard to persevere, but it is a promise that God is able to "preserve" you until He returns.

The return in question is the resurrection and rapture of the church. Now obviously if you die before then, you are absent from your body, and present with the Lord.

You're not quite finished, though, because you won't have your new, glorious resurrection body until the Lord returns.

God is able; He has the power; to preserve you "blameless." It is a promise that, for His part, God can be counted on to aid you in your walk with Him.

He will never... He cannot ever... Let you down, or fail to help.

Just remember this: His help is most often by giving you grace to endure your situation until it comes to its prescribed end.

[1Th 5:24](#) He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

God "calls" you. He calls all men, everywhere, by having been lifted-up on the Cross. It is the universal solution to the universal problem of sin.

The Thessalonians were called by God when Paul preached to them the Gospel.

What Paul was saying here is that God is the Caller. He initiated your salvation, and since He is "faithful," you can believe He will "do it" - meaning that He will complete it, that He will complete you.

Why pray about what God has promised, and has the power, to perform and bring to completion?

Why not, for one thing. It extols the glory of God.

But one thing I get from this is that I am looking at my future self. I'll be perfect.

What advice can I give myself from my future, perfect self?

I don't know where to begin. For one thing, I can reassure myself that God really does love me, and have a glorious plan for my life. I may not see it now; or ever, in this life. But I will when I'm wholly sanctified.

For another thing, I can encourage myself to avoid sin, and pursue holiness, since that is where God is leading me. Why get sidetracked along the way? My future self sees sin for what it is, and for what it does. My future self warns me that my sin will surely find me out, and cause nothing but harm to myself and those I love.

In my suffering I can trust that all things really will work together for my good.

My future perfect self would tell me to obey God, rather than to disobey Him, even when it's hard, or when it's not my desire; because He knows what He is doing, and what is needful for my molding and shaping.

I think you get the idea. Let your future, finished, perfect self influence your flawed self.