

For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

1 Thessalonians 4:3a

What
Does
He Want

AMONG THOSE WHO ACKNOWLEDGE that He exists, there are perhaps an infinite number of opinions or questions regarding what God is all about. Who is He, really? What is He really like? and Why does He do the things He does?

Is Father God a wrath-filled tyrant, scowling down at the earth from His lofty throne, perennially displeased with man? Or is He a doddering old grandfather, absent-minded and uncaring about the insignificant insects scurrying so helplessly about far below? If He *has* a heart, is it a heart of love, impatience, compassion, anger, exasperation, frustration, forgiveness, understanding, pique or tenderness?

Beyond all that, what are His motives and intentions for man? Does He while away the hours inventing ways to trip up man, to throw obstacles in his path, to hamper his progress? Does He wish us ill or good? Is He an advocate of “tough love,” of “spare the rod and spoil the child,” or does He nurture our self-esteem and individual pride through simpering indulgence?

Whatever He is, whatever He is like, whatever He does—why? Why does He bother? In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians he offers a pretty solid, and succinct answer to all these questions.

Who is God, and why does He do what He does?

Answer: Our sanctification.

God the Father wants His children to be holy, pure, set apart to Him. That is, God desires that man be *like* Him, and *for* Him—and like His Son, Jesus the Christ. This is not just something our heavenly Father desires, or hopes for, but something in which He plays a vital part.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

The will of God for His children is their good; if one wishes to call that love, then, yes, that is love—but far more. It is *godly* love: clear-headed, sensible, mature, informed, sacrificial and just. A shadow of this sort of love exists in human form, but it is easily fooled. God is not fooled, nor is His sanctification always pleasant. It is good, but sometimes painful. That is godly love.

What proof have we that the Father's love is only for our good? Our sanctification was born at the cross; our one and only opportunity for salva-

tion cost God the Father the sacrifice of His own Son.

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

John 3:14-16

For every believer there will come a day, an unspeakably glorious day, when the progressive sanctification God has wrought in our soul, our spirit, our thoughts and behavior—that slow climb of the soul from the bowels of depravity to the spiritual likeness of the Son—will be completed, manifested inside and out permanently, when we see Jesus face-to-face.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21