

**Theme:** The Lord’s benediction is grounded in the gift of the Savior. Because Jesus Christ came into the world his blessings flow to his people every day, not just Christmas day. His benediction rests upon us because God is with us.

**Background:** One more Christmas message – to last us all year.

**Introduction:** Buildings, ships, planes and people need stability to stand firm.

**I. The Assurance of Blessing – The 1<sup>st</sup> Benediction (2:16,17)**

Context: Persecution – The Lord’s coming return and judgment

- God’s chosen and called
- Therefore: rest easy?? No; stand firm!

A. God in the flesh (16a)

- Paul brackets God with Jesus Christ
- Plural subject – singular “who” and singular verbs *loved/gave*
- Took our flesh/nature and kept it

B. Comfort and hope

- He has given “eternal comfort” and “good hope”
- He will comfort our hearts

C. Established in action

- “In every good work and word” – the outward evidence of that inward security

**II. The Root of Blessing – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Benediction (3:5)**

Context: Wicked and evil men – the power of the evil one. The Lord will guard you.

A. The Lord at work

- If objective: in our love for God and our perseverance in waiting for Christ
- If subjective: God’s love for us and Christ’s perseverance with us
- Could well mean both – since one leads to the other

B. The love of God

1. “Brethren loved by the Lord” (2:13)
  - It’s why he chose, called and comforts them
2. Our God loves us (2:16)
3. Our hearts can be directed and filled by “the love of God” (3:5)

NOTE: Underneath all God’s blessings is his love. (Psalm 136)

**III. The Fruit of Blessing – The 3<sup>rd</sup> Benediction (3:16-18)**

Context: Conflict is threatening the peace of the church. Paul expects repentance and unity

A. His Peace

- Lord of Peace = points to the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6,7)
- Whose kingdom is peace (Ephesians 2:14,15)

## B. His Presence

- The Lord be with you all.
- We are back to Christmas! “Immanuel, God with us”
- With you all

Aside: Paul writes in his own hand – so they can be sure of the authenticity of the letter and the writer. Does he do so in all his letters?

## C. His Grace

- There can be no peace without the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ
- It is his unmerited favor – receiving what we do not earn or deserve
- Grace and peace go hand in hand

**Conclusion:** Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in the midst of persecution, confusion and conflict. Everything seemed to be shaking. They needed stability.

We need that stability, certainty, security in our lives just as much as the Thessalonians did. There are two things of which we can be certain:

1. “In this life you will have trouble” (John 16:33)
2. “Christ has overcome the world”

God’s benediction, his declaration of blessing *stands firm* in our living Immanuel.

Receive his benediction.