

March 17, 2018

## **To the Thessalonians** **Thessalonians 1:1**

Our sermon text this morning will be the first verse of First Thessalonians—First Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 1. Before we read that, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, as we gather now to hear from you through your word and through the preaching of your word, I pray, Father, that you would help me as I speak. Please help us all as we listen. Please help me to speak according to your will. Please help me to preach in a way that is pleasing to you, our Father. Let me not be one who pleases man. And may we be given ears that hear, and eyes that see, and hearts that are understanding and obedient. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

First Thessalonians 1, verse 1: "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." Amen.

So, we start a series, and I'm going to give you a lot of background information today that helps us to understand exactly what's happening in Thessalonica, exactly what the dynamic is of the things that are troubling the church of Thessalonica.

Thessalonica was a major city in the Macedonian region of Greece. The population then was probably around about 100,000 people, including quite a large Jewish population. Some people estimate that the population of Thessalonica at that time was possibly 10% Jewish. So obviously, there would have been a very big and busy synagogue where Paul first preached the gospel in Thessalonica.

The current day city is called Thessaloniki, *Thess-a-lon-ee-chi*, or *Thess-a-lon-ee-kee* is the way the Greek's say it I'm told—*Thess-a-lon-e-kee*—and it has a population of over one million people. It's located on a harbor on the Aegean Sea. It's a city that's on the junction of highways. It's surrounded by fertile land for farming. At that time, at the time that Paul was there, there was mining, there was forestry, and there was fishing. It was a busy city. It was a wealthy city. It was prosperous. It was the major city in Greek Macedonia, and it still is, the capital, we would call it a state capital here in Australia.

Thessalonica became a free city, a free city under the Roman Empire, through the fact that in the Roman civil war that followed the death of Julius Caesar, they backed the winners. They got on the winning side. They backed Augustus Caesar and Marc Antony. And so in backing a winner, they received a gift. They received a reward for being on the right side, or the winning side of the civil war, and that reward was it became a free city.

Now what does "free city" mean? A free city in Roman times was a city that had its own appointed, or elected self-government. There simply was one Roman official over that elected self-government, and basically, as long as they caused Rome no trouble, Rome did not trouble them. They did not have to accommodate the legions, they could pass their own laws, they could

tax at their own rate of taxation, they could mint their own money. They were less troubled by Rome. That was the advantage of being a free city.

To remain a free city, there were certain things that were done within the city to demonstrate their loyalty to Rome, and that becomes an important background factor as you seek to understand First and Second Thessalonians. They had to have a very public worship of the emperor. The Roman Emperor cult was strong in Thessalonica.

And when you think about the way that the Romans spoke about the emperor in this emperor cult, you immediately understand why the Christians are going to come up against their local government. Caesar was called both “Lord,” *kýrios*, and a “god.” Caesar was called both the savior and the bringer-of peace. Caesar’s communications from Rome were called the gospel, the good news—good news from Caesar.

So here you have these Christians going to Thessalonica, and what are they saying? Jesus is Lord. Jesus is *Kýrios*. Jesus is the one true King. He reigns over all. All gods are not gods. They are nothing. They are idols. Caesar is not a god, he’s just a man. The one true Savior and the one who brings peace is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this message is the one true gospel, the good news.

So you see, the gospel as it comes to a city like Thessalonica is a trouble-making gospel. We read in the book of Acts—what did they say of the apostles? “They’re turning the world upside down. They’re bringing a message that is against the decrees of Caesar. They say there is another king who is not Caesar.”

Why would they have been so defensive? Why would they have been so aggressive? Well you see, they don’t want to lose their cozy relationship with Rome. It’s a free city. They’ve got lots of advantages. It’s prosperous. If you could be a free city under the Roman Empire, you were privileged. It was the kind of place where you could make money and actually manage to save and hold onto a fair bit of your own money. You don’t want to make an enemy of Caesar. You don’t want the legions to come in and discipline you.

And so the gospel is nothing but trouble in the eyes of the Thessalonians. What we call the gospel is nothing but trouble in the eyes of the Thessalonians. Isn’t it interesting. You know, one of the things you might sometimes hear said is that the battle for society is a battle for the definition of words. And when you lose the definition of words, you lose the battle. Things are constantly being redefined in our day and age, aren’t they?

The apostles came along and said, We’re going to redefine some words. The word *Kýrios*—that’s a word now that speaks of God the Son of God. The word gospel is a word now that speaks of the news that comes to us from God through the Scriptures. The word Savior applies only to Jesus Christ. The only one who brings peace? That also is peace with God—it’s not peace in the Roman Empire. We don’t care about peace in the Roman Empire. We care about

peace with God—the wholeness and the fullness of peace. They were bringing alternate definitions to the same words.

What does a Christian mean today when a Christian speaks about love—and when I say “Christian,” and I ask the question “What does a Christian mean,” I mean the Christian who’s obedient to Scripture, and a Christian who is well taught from the Scripture? What do we mean when we say “love”? What does the world mean when the world says “love”? There’s a battle for words going on here. There’s a battle for definition.

As far as I’m concerned, the most loving thing that I can possibly do is faithfully proclaim the gospel. It’s good if I help people along the way in any opportunity I get. But the most loving thing that I can do is faithfully proclaim the gospel. Why? Because the very best gift that can be given to a person is eternal life. The very best gift that can be given is not prosperity in this day and age; it’s not to be at peace with government. The very best gift that can be given is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

But the world says, “Your definition of love is incorrect. We don’t like the way that you Christians speak of love, because when you Christians speak of love, you speak of sin. You say God loves you, in spite of the fact that you are a hopeless sinner, dead in sin, and are a hater of God. You say God loves you and will save you if you repent and seek forgiveness.” And the world says, “That’s not love. Love is accepting everything. Love is accepting everybody. Love is saying that everything is good. Love is toleration.”

These days, the world, I think, if you wanted to get something close to the world’s definition of love, you could go to the lyrics of a song like John Lennon’s “Imagine.” Imagine that everybody was nice to everybody else. I hate that song. You’ve heard me refer to it a number of times. I detest that song—just a meaningless piece of sentimentalist dribble is all that it is. “Just imagine that it was so nice if everybody was nice to everybody else. And imagine that there was nothing that meant anything.” That’s what he’s saying, and that’s what the world is pretty close to saying—love is nothing real, nothing worth caring about, just doing whatever you please and letting everyone else do whatever they please.

Scripture doesn’t say that’s love. Scripture actually says that if we aren’t proclaiming the gospel to them, what we’re doing is we’re leaving them in the state that they are in, and the state that they are in is dead in their sins and on the road to hell. That’s not love. It’s a tough ask, isn’t it? We’ve got to redefine a word. Every time we preach the gospel, we’ve got to define a word, “love.”

So there’s this constant battle going on for the hearts and souls of people, and that battle happens through words. Words are important. God communicates through words. If we were to look in the Scripture, we find that Jesus is called the Word. “In the beginning was the Word.” In Isaiah 55, God says that His word goes forth and accomplishes the purpose for which He sent it, and that it will not return to Him empty. It will do the thing that He plans for it to do.

The best way Moses could describe God's act of creation was with words, and when he spoke of God creating, he put, or he repeated, words from God. "In the beginning was God." God created the heavens and the earth. And then God said, "Let there be." God created by words.

So the background of the book of Thessalonians, or First and Second Thessalonians, is conflict with the emperor cult, conflict with the government that reigns over them, conflict with the local authorities, conflict with idolatry—that's the background. That's what's behind it. And in that conflict, Christians are seen to be threatening the wellbeing of the city.

It's considered that if this church grows and takes off out of control, we're going to lose our status. We're going to lose our status as a free city. We're going to have the hard fist of Rome fall upon us.

So, it's not the good news that comes from the gospel, from the church's gospel, the proclamation of the word of God—that good news is not welcome. That proclamation of the true King is not welcome. As we get into the book and down into our exposition of the words of God, remember that.

Okay, so let's have a look at it. I've got five points just from the introductory verse that I want us to understand. Point one: The letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy—point one. It comes from three people, although obviously, Paul is the apostle of those three people. Paul is the apostle, Silvanus and Timothy were his helpers, his fellow preachers. Paul is the apostle. Paul is the one who met the Lord Jesus on the road to Emmaus. It's a very typical letter according to the format of the day. The person who writes identifies himself in the very first line. He sends a greeting, and he identifies the recipients.

"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy." Why did Paul mention the other two? Well, First Thessalonians has been written in response to the fact that Timothy had just visited Thessalonica. Paul could not stay there. He was persecuted. He was basically driven out of the city by that large Jewish segment of the city's general segment.

So the church was started, it began, and then the man who started it, or the man whom God used to primarily start it, was separated from it. He had no idea of how it was going. It was completely left up to the providence of God to support and to strengthen this church. Paul was driven from Thessalonica to Berea, and then from Berea he ended up in Athens, and then from Athens he ends up in Corinth. And he's most likely writing to the people from Corinth, probably between 50 and 52 AD, making this one of the earliest letters in the Bible.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. He names Silvanus and Timothy for the purpose of assuring the people of Thessalonica, or the church of Thessalonica, that the things that they had heard from Timothy came with his approval and with his authority. Timothy was a preacher and teacher to be trusted. If Timothy spoke to you, he spoke to you because I sent him. And the things that he said, I support.

Paul doesn't call himself an apostle. There's not much need in this letter for him to defend his apostleship. This is not like, for example, the letter to the Galatians. Turn quickly to Galatians chapter 1. Galatians is considered to be the earliest letter that the Apostle Paul wrote, the first epistle that he wrote. Let's just read the first three verses. Galatians chapter 1, from verse 1:

“<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— <sup>2</sup> and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Notice how he starts: “Paul, an apostle.” It's assertive. He's asserting his authority—“Paul, an apostle.” Not only does he assert his authority, but he makes sure that the Galatians hear what he's got to say. “I'm not an apostle because a man made me an apostle. I'm not an apostle because someone took a vote.” “Not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers who are with me.”

You see, there's a different mood between Galatians and First Thessalonians from the very start. First Thessalonians is not written as a warning and a correction. It's not written with a polemic built into it. It's more a letter of encouragement. Paul is very pleased with the things that he's heard from Timothy about the Thessalonians. He's pleased that they have faith, hope, and love. He's pleased that they are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He's pleased that they preach the gospel and that the word of God is sounding forth from their lips. Paul is pleased with the church at Thessalonica, compared to the greeting to the church of the Galatians. You see the difference. The church of the Galatians had not brought upon him pleasure, or the churches of Galatia I should say, had not made him happy. They had followed after false teaching.

*[Point 2]* So back into First Thessalonians, “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church.” And we'll stop there. To the church, to the ecclesia, to the called-out ones. From Paul's Jewish background, the word means gathering of the people of God. When the people were gathered around Moses in the presence of God, that was, in the Greek Septuagint of the Old Testament, the ecclesia—the gathering of the people.

To Paul's Jewish background, he's calling them, therefore, an assembly of the covenant people. He's using a phrase to describe the Thessalonians that in the Bible is used to describe the people of God. The Thessalonian church would most likely have been a mixed church. From our reading in Acts, we know that some of the Jews were converted, and that one of the reasons that the other Jews were angry is not only were some of the Jews converted, but there were Gentiles also converted. Other people were being called into this gospel community that the Apostle Paul was proclaiming. From a Greek background, the word simply means that it was a society with a defined membership. You could have an ecclesia of leatherworkers, an ecclesia of carpenters. It was nothing other than a society with a defined membership.

So both things kind of work here, both the Hebrew and the Greek background, because Paul actually then goes on to further define who the people are. “To the church of the Thessalonians.” And that’s my third point—they’re of Thessalonica. Notice it’s a geographical definition—the church of a place, the church in a certain area. It’s not a racial definition. Whoever is in that church is of the church.

Once again, I think of the book of Galatians. In chapter 3, verse 28, Paul says there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female. What’s he saying? He’s saying that those who are justified through faith in Christ have taken upon themselves a Christian identity, an identity that is to be found in God. And this Christian identity overcomes, overrides, and transforms all other categories. If you’re in Christ, you’re in Christ. That’s what Paul is saying here, “to the church of the Thessalonians.” He gives it a geographical area.

And then the fourth point, “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” He now gives them a spiritual citizenship. It’s a very interesting phrase, “*in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The main location that matters is their spiritual location. They’re in Christ. They’re in Christ, and by association, if they’re in Christ, in the mind of the Apostle Paul, they’re in God the Father. They’re citizens of heaven. They’re in a relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, but He’s first mentioned down in what we would call verse 5, where Paul speaks of the fact that they were converted in full power of conviction by the Holy Spirit.

They’re *in* God the Father, they’re *in* God the Son. We need to think a little bit more about that. They are, at one time, both in the Father and in the Son. Yet the Father did not die for them. Jesus died for them. Not that I’m saying the Father does not love them. That is a heresy. Jesus came to the earth because “God so loved the world.”

Think about this: “In God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice that word “Lord,” Kýrios. God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ. What’s important there? The Old Testament covenant name of YAHWEH was translated in the Septuagint, in that Greek translation of the Old Testament, always it was translated as Kýrios.

When you read your Old Testament today, most of our modern English translations follow this practice: if you find in your Old Testament capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, behind that, if you went back to the Hebrew, is YAHWEH—YHWY—the covenant name of God. But the practice of the Jews was never to say that name out loud, and when they translated the Hebrew into Greek, rather than translate the name YAHWEH, they simply substituted the word “Lord,” Kýrios, or in the Hebrew it was Adonai.

Notice now what Paul has done. Connected by one preposition only—the word “in”—the Thessalonians are *in* God the Father, and they are *in* the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice, therefore, that the Son, in a direct relationship with the Father, is still called LORD. He’s still called Kýrios. It’s important that you notice these little things.

Paul's a Hebrew. In another place, he calls himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Paul's mind, Paul's whole way of thinking, has been shaped by the Shema—Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 to 9. "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one, and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one, and you shall love Yahweh your God." That shapes the Apostle Paul's thinking.

It's impossible that a faithful Jew, which is what Paul was before his conversion—it is impossible that a faithful Jew can think of God in any other way than as one. Yet here, he says that the Thessalonians are in God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ. He calls Jesus LORD in exactly the same context in which he speaks of God being their Father. To the Jewish mind, it's very clear. Paul has just called Jesus "God." It's very similar to the concept of Psalm 110. How does that start? "The LORD says to my Lord"—It's actually, "YAHWEH says to my Adonai."

"The LORD says to my Lord." That's the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament, again and again and again. Why? Well, the apostles, with the help of the Holy Spirit, with instruction from Jesus, I imagine, in the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension, they came to realize that David was speaking of two people, but one God. "YAHWEH says to my Lord." Yahweh says to my Lord.

Who was David a worshiper of? He was a worshiper of YAHWEH. He worshiped no other. For all his faults and all his sins, he was never an idolater. He never offered worship to any other god than God. Yet he says that he has Yahweh, and he has one whom he calls "my Lord." "The LORD says to my Lord." And there at the start of Psalm 110, it seems you have two different persons being called God, though David was a strictly monotheistic Jew.

Well, the Apostle Paul is a strictly monotheistic Jew. He doesn't believe that he's given up on monotheism, even as he calls two people "God." That's the effect of saying, "In God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ." He's calling two persons "God."

And so, what do we get? Where are we? Six, seven, maybe eight words into the text, and we're into Trinitarian theology. It's the very fabric that underlies our New Testament. Don't let anyone ever tell you this is not important. You can't understand the Scripture if you don't understand this. You're not a Christian if you do not submit to this teaching.

I'm not saying that you must be able to teach it. I realize that it's not a simple concept. Okay, if you want simple theology, you go to the Jehovah's Witness. They've got simple theology. They can train a child by rote to repeat their theology. It's simple. It's really simple. There is one God, and anyone else in Scripture who seems to be a god is "a" god, not "the" God. And that's all they say. It's an old heresy—the Arian heresy—just dressed up again and republished. It's an old heresy—the heresy that Jesus was a created being.

That's not the way the Apostle Paul thought. The Apostle Paul acknowledges in his writings three persons to be God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is Christian

teaching, my friends. We don't have any choice in this issue. A person can be saved and not really understand much Trinitarian doctrine. I was one of those people. All I knew was that I needed forgiveness of sins, and that it came through Jesus Christ, and I said He was the Son of God, and I said He was Lord. But it was years before I could give you any kind of explanation of what I was actually saying. I didn't have theological maturity—and I'm not saying I've got it now, but now, compared to then, I know a lot more than I did when I was first saved.

A person can be saved having very little knowledge and very little understanding; but, when you as a Christian hear good teaching concerning the Holy Trinity, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—three persons being the one God—you actually don't have a choice. You must submit and accept the teaching, because not to is to make your God an idol. It's to actually worship a different god. If you want to worship the God revealed in Scripture, well then you worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one true living God—three persons being the one God, three persons sharing the one essential nature, the one being. We're not given a choice: God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the last thing I want us to look at is where Paul gives his greeting. It's simply, "Grace to you and peace." Grace to you and peace. I find from my studies during the week that there's actually a little bit of a play of words going on here. We won't turn there, but if we were to turn to Acts chapter 23, verse 26, we'd see there the writing of the Roman centurion to his superior officer, and it starts with the word, "Greetings." The word "greetings" and the word "grace" are very similar in the ancient Greek. You change a few letters to get from greetings to grace, or from grace to greetings, and the word "greetings" was the standard way of opening your letter in ancient times. You put your name, you put the name of the person to whom you are writing, and the next word you write is, "Greetings."

If we were to sit down and write a letter, we'd start with "Dear." They started with "Greetings." Paul changes his standard way of addressing people through letters to "Grace." He changes those few letters. It's just a little play on words. He takes what was a standard greeting throughout the Roman Empire and turns it into a Christian greeting by just changing a few letters. "Grace." He makes it his standard salutation. He makes it a Christian salutation. "Grace."

And we know, or we should know from our reading of Scripture, that with Paul, that word "grace" is loaded. "For by grace you have been saved, and that through faith, not of your own doing, that no man may boast." "For by grace you have been given the gift of faith." "For by grace, God has made us His own through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul is telling them both that you have been established in grace, and he's hoping that they will receive further grace. All Christian growth, my friends, comes through the grace of God, though we must do it.

Turn to Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2, starting at verse 12: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you,



both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

What’s the Apostle Paul saying there to the Philippians? “Do it! Be Christian! Be obedient! Struggle with yourself. Struggle with your sinful nature. Struggle with your wrong desires. Do what is right! Work out your own salvation!” “Work it out, with fear and trembling.” Why? “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Our Christian growth, our ongoing sanctification, happens because, one, we are obedient. But why are we obedient? Because, two, God works in us to make us obedient. If God is working in us to make us obedient, what is that other than the outpouring of grace? It’s God doing something in us. It’s God doing something through us. We’re not Christlike because we’re good. We’re not Christlike because we’ve got something in and of ourselves that makes us better than the people around us. We’re Christlike because God works *in* us to will and to work for His good pleasure. And if God is working, basically what Paul is saying is that God is working, therefore, Christian you be working! You be working!

God doesn’t owe us anything for our good works. He does not owe us anything. The truth is that if we’re doing anything that is both faithful and obedient, if we’re doing anything that is pleasing to God, that thing that we are doing is a gift from God, and we owe Him all the more praise for His grace—all the more praise for the gifts that He gives us. He hasn’t just given us saving, or salvation. He hasn’t just given us salvation alone.

We’ve been cleansed from our sins, and that’s no small thing. We’ve been forgiven our sins, and that’s no small thing. But we’ve been given the gift of the Holy Spirit that we may grow in Christlikeness, that we may be the people that God wants us to be. That also is no small thing. What He wants from us He gives to us, that we can give it back to Him.

So even the good works that we do only increase our debt to God. And I use the word “debt,” not that I’m that worried about trying to pay Him back. I know I can’t pay Him back, never, not under any circumstance. We’ll never pay God back. God actually says don’t even try—just obey from moment to moment. But it’s good for us to always remember what we owe to God for His goodness to us. It’s a motivation to worship and humility.

So Paul wishes for the Thessalonians “grace.” He remembers to them the grace that saved them, and he wishes for them ongoing grace. May it keep happening. May you continue to grow. May you continue to made Christlike. “Grace to you and peace.”

In the Hebrew mind, peace is shalom. It’s not just the absence of conflict, it’s the presence of blessing. It’s the presence of the favor of God. To be at peace with God is to be a person who is blessed by God. To be at peace with God is to be at completion, or to be fulfilled. It’s to have your life fulfilled. It’s to be living a life of goodness and purpose and joy.

So even in Paul's greetings, "Grace to you and peace," he's remembering what God has done. He's praying that God will do more. And he's rejoicing in the promises of God. Remember that Christ is our peace. So he's saying, "More of Christ for you. More of Christ to you. More of Christ in you. Be Christlike. Be obedient. Be faithful."

As I've already said, as we work our way through the letter, we'll see that Paul is very happy with the fact that they are imitators of both himself and of the Lord, that they are indeed faithful Christians. Many of the things that we see in the book of Thessalonians are indicators of what is true faith in a true church, and he's saying, "Let there be more. Let there be more." I'm going to call it a holy dissatisfaction. A holy dissatisfaction.

We as Christians should know that we are not what we once were. God has saved us. God is transforming us. But we should also know we are not yet what we ought to be. We should be, in many ways, dissatisfied with our current Christian life, but rejoicing in the gift and the goodness of God, rejoicing in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

So, rejoicing in the fact that God has made us His own and brought us into Himself, brought us into His church—and I mean the one, true church, the spiritual church that you find everywhere, that you find wherever the gospel is preached—rejoicing in where God has placed us, and rejoicing in what God has done for us.

But at the same time, dissatisfied with our current condition and wanting more, wanting to grow, wanting to increase in knowledge and love, wanting to grow in grace and faith and Christlikeness. We have a holy dissatisfaction with where we currently are, because we desire to be what God wants us to be. We desire to get to where we ought to be. We know that in this life we'll never quite get there. No matter how far down this road of sanctification we go, we'll never get there.

Sinless perfection is a myth. I don't honestly believe that any Christian in this life will ever know that thing that's been called "sinless perfection." We'll know that when we come into the presence of the Lord Himself, on the other side of this life. That's when we'll know what sinless perfection is like. First John chapter 3, verses 2 and 3. "We are God's children, and what we will be has not yet been revealed, but we will see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself, as He is pure."

So my friends, grace to you and peace. Grace to you and peace. Remember the grace of God, remember that we must grow in the grace of God, remember the peace that we have been gifted in, and that we must grow in that peace. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we thank you for the gift of life that you have given to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank you for your goodness and your mercy to us. We pray, Father, that you would help us to grow in grace and in peace. We pray, Father, that you would help us to bring every thought captive to the word of God, that we may be pleasing to you. And help us, Father, to live according to your work. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.