

**Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians**  
**(1) Introduction to the Epistle and Paul's Greeting**

**Introduction:**

Let us begin with reading the first full chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

<sup>2</sup>We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, <sup>3</sup>remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. <sup>9</sup>For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess. 1:1-10)

Today we will begin a study in a book of the Bible that I have never taught through verse by verse. I do not know how long we will be in this book. It only has five chapters, but the subject matter itself may be conducive to more detail and more time. Today we will need to say some words of "introduction" to this epistle, as we would do so at the beginning of a study of any book of the Bible. And then we will give attention to the Greeting of the apostle in verse 1.

**I. "Introduction" to the Epistle**

Let me first say a word about the word itself, "introduction." In the arena of formal biblical studies, the "introduction" of a book has a technical meaning. We should not view an introduction as a few brief chosen words to set the stage of our study; rather, an introduction has to do with specific information about a book of the Bible. Normally an introduction addresses matters of authorship, the date in which a book is written, the place where the book was written, the identification of the original readers including the place to which the book was sent, the canonicity of the book, the occasion for the writing of it, and usually the major themes of the book are identified. And so, if you were to obtain a book entitled, "An Introduction to the New Testament", you would have before you important and foundational information about every book within our New Testament. This information is important to understand for it will affect how we read and interpret any book of the Bible before us. Let us now consider some of these questions.

**A. Authorship**

The Apostle Paul is attributed to be the author of this epistle. But in addition, we read in verse 1 that this epistle was also from Silvanus and Timothy also. But we should understand the apostle to be the

principle writer of this epistle (although he may have dictated his letter to a scribe, who may have been Sylvanus). Silvanus is the Latin name. His Greek name was Silas. He would be the same Silas who had travelled with Paul on his second missionary journey. Silas would have been with Paul when they first came to the city of Thessalonica and started the church there in the region of Macedonia.

## B. Destination

Thessalonica (or *Thessaloniki*) was the capital city of the province of Macedonia, a region just north of the Balkan Peninsula of Greece. It was located on an important Roman trade route which bridged the west with the east, which was known as the *Via Egnatia*. Rome had granted this province to govern itself, so it had its own system of government with its leaders called politarchs. Here is a map of the region:



There were a number of Jewish people living here in the first century, having its own synagogue. Paul evangelized this city on his Second Missionary journey, in which would have had both Silas and Timothy in his company. Here is the account of that visit:

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." <sup>4</sup>And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

<sup>5</sup>But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. <sup>6</sup>But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. <sup>7</sup>Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus." <sup>8</sup>And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city

when they heard these things. <sup>9</sup>So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. (Acts 17:1-9)

We read that the ones who received Paul's gospel were some of the Jews and "a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women." These Greeks had probably been "God-fearers", Gentiles who had turned away from the pagan morality of the Romans and embraced the God and ethical standards promoted by the Jews. Here is an assessment of many of these "Greek" converts in this church:

No doubt the stable core of the young church were the God-fearers, who were particularly open to the reception of the gospel. They had a real dissatisfaction with pagan morality and had turned their attentions to the purer ethical teaching of the Jews. They had, moreover, been attracted to the lofty conception of Jewish monotheism as contrasted with the puerility<sup>1</sup> of idol-worship. Yet they had found themselves dissatisfied with the narrow nationalism and ritual requirements of Judaism, and the advent of Christianity supplied their demand for an adequate and even greater conception of God than that which Judaism provided, a nobler ethic centered in the remarkable personal example of Jesus, and a universal outlook which came as a breath of liberation after the tightness of Jewish exclusivism. It is not surprising therefore that at Thessalonica so great a company of these serious -minded proselytes embraced the message.<sup>2</sup>

The result of many of these Jews and Greeks coming to Christ through the gospel, was that they left the synagogue and joined themselves with Paul and Silas. A new church had begun. The Jews who had remained in the synagogue, who had not embraced the gospel, became envious and angry, no doubt due to the loss of their members and attendees. These Jews stirred up a mob to attack and persecute Paul and his ministry companions. These opposers of the gospel brought some who had converted before the Roman authorities. This resulted in the crowd and the leaders of the city being "troubled." We read that it was "then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea" (Acts 17:10). But in just a matter of three weeks or so, a new, vibrant church was begun. It could only have been perhaps a few weeks or at the most a few months before Paul and his companions were forced to leave the area. Of course because Paul had to leave soon and abruptly, he was not sure of the stability and well-being of this church, so later he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the brethren and assess their spiritual condition. When Timothy returned to Paul at Corinth reporting to him their spiritual state, Paul wrote this first epistle to the Thessalonians.

### C. Date of writing

We read in the Book of Acts of several recounted details that can be precisely dated, collated with known (secular) Roman history.<sup>3</sup> One of these is stated when Paul was serving in the church at Corinth over a period of 18 months. We read in Acts 18:11ff these words:

<sup>11</sup>And he (Paul) continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

<sup>12</sup>*When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia*, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, <sup>13</sup> saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." (Acts 18:11-13)

It was during Paul's stay at Corinth that Timothy and Silas returned to him from their trip to Thessalonica, reporting to Paul the status of the church. Because of the reference to Gallio's position as

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. silly, trivial, childish

<sup>2</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 564.

<sup>3</sup> Actually there are four of these events that can be dated with fair precision. I wish I could recall all of them....

proconsul, it is believed that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians at Corinth in the year AD 50 or 51. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians not long afterward.

Among Paul's letters, therefore, 1 and 2 Thessalonians are perhaps the earliest of his letters contained in our New Testament. Some, however, believe that Galatians preceded these letters, perhaps having been written in AD 49.<sup>4</sup>

#### **D. Occasion of the Epistle**

Paul's epistles are sometimes referred to as "occasional" epistles for Paul wrote these letters in response to some "occasion" or situation in the churches. Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians in response to the report he received from Timothy and Silas respecting the church in Thessalonica, having received it. Paul declared this was the case in 1 Thessalonians 3:1ff.

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, <sup>2</sup>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, <sup>3</sup>that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. <sup>4</sup>For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. <sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. <sup>6</sup>But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you-- <sup>7</sup>therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. (1 Thess. 3:1-7)

We read of their return to Paul in Corinth in Acts 18:5. It must have been shortly thereafter that Paul wrote this epistle from Corinth.

What were the issues that concerned Paul that he felt compelled to address? These must be gleaned from the contents of the epistle itself. There have been as many as 7 major issues that Paul believed he should address. They include the following:

- (1) Paul desired to express his joy and satisfaction that they were stable and progressing in the faith.
- (2) He answered charges that had been levelled against him that he had been self-seeking and cowardly in his ministry among them. These charges apparently originated with the unconverted Jewish opponents to his gospel.
- (3) He encouraged the Christians to persevere in their own hardship and the opposition they were encountering. (Cf. 1 Thess. 2:14ff)
- (4) He speaks of the superiority of Christian ethics over that promoted by the pagans (1 Thess. 4:4ff)
- (5) He corrected their errant belief concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
- (6) Perhaps due to his encouraging the brethren to respect their leaders, there may have been resistance or failure to do so in the church (1 Thess. 5:12)
- (7) He may also have been cautioning them about a right regard for ecstatic manifestations (1 Thess. 5:19f).

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<sup>4</sup> Other scholars believe that Paul wrote Galatians in AD 54 or 55. The date hinges on what region of "Galatia" Paul addressed, either the region in the south or that of the north, in what is modern day central Turkey.

The content of the epistle is quite practical in nature, containing counsel and direction for young Christians in a rather recently established church.

## II. Paul's Greeting (1 Thess. 1:1)

We read **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.*”<sup>5</sup> Paul did not feel the need to append his name with his office, as he did in his epistle to the Galatians, which reads, “Paul, *an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)*” (Gal. 1:1). Paul simply referred to himself by his first name to this church. This indicates that he knew the church had high regard for him and would value highly his letter without him having to cite his apostolic office.

The brevity of the inscription clearly shows that Paul's doctrine had been received with reverence among the Thessalonians, and that without controversy they all rendered to him the honor that he deserved. For when in other epistles he designates himself an Apostle, he does so with the purpose of claiming for himself authority. Hence the circumstance, that he simply makes use of his own name without any title of honor, is an evidence that those to whom he writes voluntarily acknowledged him to be such as he was.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from Paul identifying himself first, he mentions both Silvanus and Timothy. **Silvanus** was a man well attested in the early churches. The other name by which he is known is Silas. Silas was his Greek name; Silvanus was his Roman (Latin) name. He was Paul's companion and assistant beginning with Paul's second missionary journey. The occasion for him joining Paul was the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, which resulted in their separation from one another. We read of the emergence of Silas in the communication of the recommendation of the church at Jerusalem to the church at Antioch regarding what would be expected of the Gentile converts to Christianity. This is from Acts 15:

<sup>22</sup>Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and **Silas**, leading men among the brethren.

<sup>23</sup>They wrote this letter by them:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,  
To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:  
Greetings.

<sup>24</sup>Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment—<sup>25</sup>it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup>men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>We have therefore sent Judas and **Silas**, who will also report the same things

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<sup>5</sup> The KJV and the NKJV adds these words after “peace”: “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” These words were probably an addition by a scribe copying this epistle many centuries after Paul originally penned the letter.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, **Calvin's Commentaries**, vol. 21, **Commentary on the First Epistle to the Thessalonians** (Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), p. 236.

by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup>For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: <sup>29</sup>that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Farewell.

<sup>30</sup>So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. <sup>32</sup>Now Judas and *Silas*, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. <sup>33</sup>And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles.

<sup>34</sup>However, it seemed good to *Silas* to remain there. <sup>35</sup>Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

<sup>36</sup>Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." <sup>37</sup>Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. <sup>38</sup>But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. <sup>39</sup>Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; <sup>40</sup>but Paul chose *Silas* and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. <sup>41</sup>And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:22-41)

Silas served alongside Paul. In 1 Corinthians 1:19 Paul wrote of the faithful preaching of Silas (and Timothy). He had preached also at Thessalonica, and so, when the church received this epistle with Silas named (along with Timothy) by Paul, they must have welcomed the epistle all the more. Silas may be the same man whom Peter later named as his amanuensis (scribe), who had written Peter's words for 1 Peter. We read in 1 Peter 5:12 these words, "By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand."

Along with Silas, Paul mentioned **Timothy** in his greeting: "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians..." Timothy was a young man at this stage of his ministry. He joined Paul on Paul's second missionary journey (Cf. Acts 16:1). And so, he had not travelled long with Paul when this epistle was written. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. He had not been circumcised as a child, but Paul later had him circumcised so that he would be accepted by the Jewish brethren (Acts 16:1-3). But His mother and grandmother had trained him well in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5). His faith was both strong and sound. And although he seemed to be rather timid, perhaps due to his youth and lack of experience, in time Paul entrusted great responsibility to Timothy (Cf. Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19). This is seen in several passages:

So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. (Acts 19:22)

For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Cor. 4:17)

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. (Phil. 2:19)

That Paul included both Silas and Timothy in his greeting does not necessarily mean that they contributed significantly to the epistle before us. Paul tended to write in the first person plural ("we",

“us”), rather than the first person singular (“I”; “me”). Paul was a blessed man, but he was also a humble man.

We need not doubt that he (Paul) consulted the others, nor that they endorsed what he wrote. The steady use of “we” may be meant to associate the others more closely with these Epistles than was usually the case with Paul’s collaborators. But Paul was chiefly responsible for the form the letter took.<sup>7</sup>

Paul had addressed his epistle *“to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* This letter was to the local church, not only to its pastor or the elders, but to the church as a single entity. The New Testament holds forth the church very highly.

The high view of the local church is clear in that he identified the church at Thessalonica as being *“in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* The apostle viewed this church within the same sphere as God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul declared that the church was in union with God Himself and His Son. This conveys the affection that God has for His people. This conveys the concern and protection He affords His people. This conveys that God is in covenant relationship with His people, His church.

Christians are not simply people who have heard about God and trust Him. They live “in” Him day by day. All their deeds are done in Him. It is Paul’s usual habit to speak of being “in Christ,” though “in God” occurs, as in Colossians 3:3.<sup>8</sup>

A true church is one that is “in” God and Christ. **John Calvin** noted that the apostle was saying

“that there is truly among the Thessalonians a Church of God. This mark, therefore, is as it were an approval of a true and lawful Church. We may, however, at the same time infer from it, that a Church is to be sought for only where God presides, and where Christ reigns, and that, in short, there is no Church but what is founded upon God, is gathered under the auspices of Christ, and is united in his name.”<sup>9</sup>

Take note also *the high view of Jesus* that the apostle sets forth to this church. He addressed the church that was in to the church of the Thessalonians in “God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ.” Although He distinguishes the two “persons” of The Father and the Son, He joins them together as equal in stature with the simple conjunction, “and.”

Throughout these two Epistles (i.e. 1 & 2 Thessalonians) he constantly associates the Father and the Son in the closest of fashions (cf. v. 3; 3:11-13; 5:18; II Thess. 1:1, 2, 8, 12; 2:16f; 3:5...). No higher view could possibly be taken of the Person of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

To say it in another way, in these words the apostle sets forth the divinity of Jesus in that the church is in God the Father *and in the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Consider also the lofty title that Paul ascribes to Jesus. He is *“the Lord Jesus Christ.”* The Greek word for **Lord** is *kurios* (κύριος). This is the same word that is used for “Jehovah” (or better, “Yahweh”) in the Septuagint (LXX), which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. When

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<sup>7</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 21, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Thessalonians* (Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), p. 236f.

<sup>10</sup> Morris, p. 48.

the New Testament uses this Greek word, “Lord”, being applied to Jesus Christ, it is a statement that Jesus is God, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup>

The name, **Jesus**, is our Lord’s proper name. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, **Joshua**. It means, “Jehovah is salvation.” The angel told Joseph, the betrothed of Mary,

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:20f)

And then Paul refers to our Lord as “the Lord Jesus **Christ**.” It is the Greek word for the Hebrew word, **Messiah**. Messiah means “anointed one.” Jesus is the Christ, that is, the Anointed One, the Messiah. This means that He was called and equipped by God His Father to secure the redemption of His people. Jesus of Nazareth was sent into the world to accomplish God’s work of salvation in you, if you come to Him. Jesus is the Christ, the One appointed by the Father and equipped by the Spirit to this very thing.

Now more specifically, the term “Christ” speaks of our Lord being anointed to His three-fold office, and each office is necessary for our salvation. *First*, we were in need of Christ as a **Prophet** to reveal God to us and our sinful and condemned standing before Him. *Second*, we were in need of a **Priest** to intercede with God on our behalf and make sacrifice for our sin. And third, we were/are in need of a **King** to subdue sin within us, to lead us, and preserve us to His heavenly Kingdom. And our Lord Jesus was anointed by the Father to perform this three-fold function on our behalf. In Him alone were all of these duties entrusted and He alone was equipped to execute them.

In the Old Testament there were examples of men endued with two of these three offices. We read of *kings* who were also *prophets*, such as David. The Old Testament records of a *king* who was also a *priest*—Melchizedec. There was also a *priestly prophet*—Samuel. But only our Lord Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows to possess this three-fold office to execute on our behalf. Thus He is to us a **Priest**: having sacrificed Himself on our behalf and He lives to apply the benefits of His sacrifice to us. He is to us a **Prophet** Who declares and reveals the will of God to us; He is our Teacher. And He is our **King** Who delivers us, leads us, protects us, and provides for us.

And so He *is* all that we need. A children’s catechism instructs them in the Christian faith. It asks the questions and gives the answers:

Question: Why do you need Christ as a prophet? Answer: Because I am ignorant.

Question: Why do you need Christ as a Priest? Answer: Because I am guilty.

Question: Why do you need Christ as a King? Answer: Because I am weak and helpless.

When we speak of Jesus **Christ**, we are saying that Jesus was called and equipped by God to serve us in this threefold office in bringing us salvation.

After Paul identified Himself and the church to which he was writing, he gave this Christian greeting: **Grace to you and peace.**” This was a customary greeting of Christians in letters of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. We find Paul having used this or a similar greeting in a number of his epistles. But simply because this reflects a customary greeting, we should not read over it too quickly, and thereby dismiss its significance. Actually, if the early Christian writers (and God Himself) were so moved to use these words in a customary greeting, then we can conclude that these words express very important, even vital and fundamental needs for Christians. And so it is, if God would desire us to have grace and peace, then we must be in very much need of these two graces.

Now it is true that each Christian has already encountered these things upon initially receiving Christ as Lord and Savior. **We were saved by God’s grace** – God’s favor toward us, working powerfully

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



in us and on our behalf. And certainly, upon our initial faith in Christ we experienced *peace*. We read of all true Christians, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

Now we should understand the term, “peace” as the Hebrews understood the term. We tend to think of “peace” to describe a state in which there is no conflict. But this does not reflect the biblical idea. Here is a good explanation of this matter:

Peace among the Greeks meant much the same as it does with us, namely the absence of war or strife. But among the Hebrews it was a positive concept. When a Hebrew said, “Peace be with you,” he did not mean, “I hope you won’t get in a fight,” but rather, “I pray that you may prosper.” The Hebrew *shalom* meant prosperity in the widest sense. The root is concerned with “wholeness.” The man who enjoys peace is thus the one whose life is well rounded. Peace is regarded as a gift of God, and there is a very definite spiritual aspect to the completeness it denotes.

Paul’s greeting then, reminds his friends that all is owed to God. It is in the nature of prayer that His grace and His peace, with all the richness of the concepts denoted by these terms, may be granted to the Thessalonians.<sup>12</sup>

Actually when we speak of God’s peace, we are speaking of two aspects of peace. We have addressed this before--several times. (1) There is an **objective peace**, which describes our state before God. Whereas before we came to Christ we were at war with God and He with us, when we repented of sins and believed on the Lord Jesus, the hostility ceased between God and ourselves. We have since that day enjoyed a state of peace with our God. (2) But there is also a **subjective peace**. We are able to sense peace, or a tranquillity of soul, a settling of our guilty conscience respecting sin. Most of us probably did so when we were first converted, when we sensed our free and full pardon of sin through faith in the crucified and risen Savior. But the true Christian may experience this subjective peace at any time in his or her life if Scriptural principle and teaching is understood and followed. Paul wrote of this peace in Philippians 4:6 and 7:

<sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup>and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This subjective peace is available for the child of God regardless of external happenings or circumstances. This peace “surpasses all understanding.” The child of God may enjoy peace in the most terrible of situations who are enduring the most terrible of circumstances. And so, whereas the objective peace that we have with God, the state of peace between the believer and God, is always the same and is unchangeable for every true child of God, the subjective feeling of peace and well-being varies greatly between us. It varies for any number of reasons. Some trouble themselves because they have refused or failed to order their lives according to the means by which God gives grace to His people. As a result their sense of peace has been shaken, even removed for a time. May the Lord restore a sense of peace to any troubled Christian here. May we each use the means God has appointed so that we might be in a position in which He will bless us with this grace of peace.

By the way, the order of the words is always the same in the greetings of the New Testament letters: “*Grace* to you and *peace* from God.” I believe that the order is important. One must first encounter God’s saving grace and then only afterwards is there God’s peace. Does not the Scripture say at the announcement of the Savior’s birth: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor (grace) rests” (Luke 2:14). First there comes grace from God. Then afterwards His peace follows.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

But the need for the “grace and peace” of God was not just a *past* need, when we came to Christ; it is a *present* need as well; so much so that God here, and as other New Testament writers to their readers, greeted the saints with this desire: “**Grace to you, and peace.**” We are in continual need of God’s *grace* to *strengthen* us, for the Christian life is full of challenges. We are in continual need of God’s *peace* to *comfort* us, for the Christian life is full of disappointments.

Now in the King James Version and also the New King James Version, there are additional words in our verse. It reads that grace and peace come to the believer “**from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**” Paul did not pen these words to this epistle, but he did elsewhere, namely in Philippians 1:3, which reads, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are in continual need of God’s blessing of His grace and peace to us. These are essential to living before God. Both the Father and His Son are the Dispensers of grace and peace.

**Concluding remarks:**

Let me close by making a general statement about the work of God in our world. We spoke of the “God-fearing” Greeks, or Gentiles, many of which embraced the gospel when Paul came among them proclaiming the gospel (Acts 17:4). They were ones who had not fully embraced Judaism, but they had already turned from the immoral paganism of the Roman world. They were receptive and responsive to the claims of the gospel, when Paul proclaimed it to them. Similarly, the Lord is preparing people today to hear readily and respond heartily to the claims of Christ. The Lord is the One who creates the “hearing ear and the seeing eye” (Prov. 20:12). And although many in the fallen world will react to us and reject us as we make our biblical standards of morality and ethics known in our world through our speech and actions, there will be those whom the Lord has sensitized their consciences and to whom He has given a distaste for the wicked morality of the pagan world about us. The Lord is preparing them to hear and respond to our Gospel message. Like those who heard Paul, “some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women”, so may the Lord do the same in our day. We have a message of hope and a message of righteousness that will resonate with those who have ears to hear. May the Lord bless our evangelistic efforts in today’s world.

Next week, Lord willing, we will consider the instruction of 1 Thessalonians 1:2ff, from which we can answer the question, “How you may know that you are one of God’s elect.”

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He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen.  
Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (Rev 22:20f)

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