

Thessalonians

A Careful Study Of Thessalonians

February 13, 2022

I. Introduction

A. **2 Thessalonians 3:16-18** . . . Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! [17] I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. [18] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

B. Pray

II. The Lord's peace, the Lord's presence, the Lord's grace

A. [16] Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually (*that is, without interruption*) grant you (*give you or bestow upon you*) peace in every circumstance [*way*].

1. Whether you see this verse as a prayer or a statement of blessing, it reminds us that God is the source of peace, the Lord of peace, and the giver of peace. We are the privileged recipients of God's peace.
 - a. However, we know from other scriptures that we must do certain things to both receive God's peace and live in a state of peace.
 - (1) For example, we must believe in God and live accordingly.
 - (2) We must rely on His goodness, faithfulness, provision and protection – rather than follow the world's way of taking matters into our own hands and doing what is best for ourselves regardless of its effect on others.
 - (3) And we must say no to anxiety, tell God our troubles, be grateful for the good we have, and patiently wait for Him to work everything out for good.
 - b. In addition, we know from Jesus' words and life's experiences that the continuous and undisturbed peace we get from God can only be experienced within, because the peace that exists in the world comes and goes with changing circumstances and is easily disrupted by the fickle or erratic behavior of people.
2. Way back in **Numbers 6:22-27**, God confirmed that He is the source of every good and perfect gift – including peace.
 - a. In those verses, God gave Aaron and his sons the words they were to speak over the Israelites to gain God's blessings for them. We read these words in **Numbers 6:24-26**, "The LORD bless you, and keep you; [25] the LORD make His face shine on

- you, and be gracious to you; [26] the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.”
- b. Jesus affirmed that true peace has a divine source in **John 14:27a**, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives (*not is the same way*) do I give to you.”
 3. I know you know this, yet I want to remind you that the word of God tells us that we must take appropriate action if we are to experience God’s peace.
 - a. For example, in the second half of **John 14:27**, Jesus said, “Do not let (*allow*) your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”
 - b. In **Philippians 4:6–7**, God tells us that we are to “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And (*when you fulfill the requirements of vs 6, then*), the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
 - c. In **Colossians 3:15**, God says we have to “Let (*or allow*) the peace of Christ [to] rule in our hearts, to which indeed we were called in one body; and [we are to] be thankful.”
 - d. In **2 Timothy 2:22**, we are told to “Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and **peace**, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”
 - e. John Owen, a 16th Century Puritan put it this way, “See to it that your faith brings forth obedience, and God in due time will cause it to bring forth inward, unshakeable peace.”
 4. The point of these scriptures is that we **do not** have to allow anxiety and fear to rule over our hearts and minds. We can choose a different path. We can go a different way. For example,
 - a. We can choose to trust God instead of distrusting Him.
 - b. We can choose to patiently wait for God to act on our behalf instead of becoming impatient or fearful that the worst is going to happen.
 - c. And we can choose to remain obedient to God’s will and word regardless of the circumstances instead of choosing ungodly means to deal with the person or situation that is threatening our peace.
 5. As for peace in the world or even in the home, it can flip-flop like the weather. In fact, Jesus pointed out the precariousness or lack of peace in the world when He said, “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (**John 16:33**).

6. Sadly, the precariousness of peace is even experienced in church life. Churches and individual Christians have allowed conflicts to fester unresolved – for years. It is all too common for church life to include pride driven conflicts, power struggles, damaged or broken relationships, and the splintering of a church into two or more separate groups who no longer fellowship with each other. This should not be.
7. Though we should want peace in our world, the peace that comes from God is vastly different from the peace that the world is able to attain.
 - a. The world's peace is outward. God's peace is first and foremost inward.
 - b. The world's peace manages what is going on around you. God's peace manages what is going on inside of you.
 - c. The world's peace depends on removing or suppressing the outward reasons or causes for conflict, anger, anxiety, fear, and revenge. God's peace depends on removing the inward reasons or causes for anger, anxiety, fear, and revenge. But it goes a step further. It replaces those things with trust in God's goodness, along with love, joy, patience, and contentment.
 - d. For the world's peace to prevail, human power and means are required to control people and the circumstances in which we live. For God's peace to prevail, you must control yourself and patiently rely on His power to protect you, provide for you, and bring good out of whatever circumstances or people you face.
 - e. The world's peace is fragile and often has a short life-span because it is dependant on humans in power exerting power over others, or the cooperation of everyone involved. In contrast, the power in God's peace is God himself. And it's life-span knows no end because it is like an anchor that can never be moved no matter how fierce the storm, or how high the waves, or how strong the wind.
8. God's peace is true peace, and it lasts throughout eternity. It is the only peace that requires a power outside of you and yet dwells ever so powerfully inside of you.

B. [16b] The Lord be with you all!

1. Again, this is either a prayer or a statement of blessing – and a comforting one at that.

2. However, the word of God says that God **IS** with His people. For example –
 - a. In **John 14:23**, “Jesus said, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.’”
 - b. In **Matthew 28:20b**, Jesus said, “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - c. And in **Matthew 18:20**, Jesus said, “Where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”
 3. The reality is, if we are God’s child, He is with us. And yet, when we are going through a trial or tribulation or enduring some form of sickness or suffering, it is comforting to be reminded that God is with us.
- C. [17] I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.
1. It was customary in those days for important people to have a secretary who would write what they wanted to say in a letter.
 2. Then, to confirm the true author of the letter, the author would often write something in his own handwriting so the readers would be assured of the authenticity of the letter.
 3. This is what Paul was doing. He did the same thing in 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; and Philemon 19.
- D. [18] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
1. We often use the word grace in relation to God’s salvation freely offered to us through Jesus Christ. For example, it is common for Christians to acknowledge that they are saved by grace.
 - a. An example of saving grace is well stated by the hymn, “Grace Greater than Our Sin” by Julia H. Johnston. Here are some of the words from that hymn: “Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt! Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Freely bestowed on all who believe!”
 2. However, the word grace covers more of God’s activities toward and for us than is represented by Christ’s death, His resurrection, and our eternal salvation.
 - a. An example of the word grace being applied in its larger sense is found in the hymn, “He Giveth More Grace” by Annie J. Flint.
 - b. As I read these words keep in mind that each activity of God mentioned is an act of grace. “He giveth more grace when the

burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength when the labors increase. To added affliction He addeth His mercy. To multiplied trials His multiplied peace. His love has no limits, His grace has no measure, His power no boundary known unto men; For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”

- c. Or as John the Baptist said, “For of [Christ’s] fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (**John 1:16**).
- 3. God’s word gives us examples of God’s grace in real life situations
 - a. **Acts 4:33–35**, “And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **abundant grace** was upon them all. [34] For there was **not a needy person among them**, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales [35] and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”
 - b. **Acts 6:8**, “And Stephen, **full of grace** and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.”
 - c. **Romans 12:3–6**, “For through **the grace given to me** I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. [4] For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, [5] so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. [6] Since we have gifts that differ according to **the grace given to us**, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.”
 - d. **1 Corinthians 15:10**, “But by the **grace of God** I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the **grace of God** with me.”
 - e. **2 Corinthians 9:8**, “And God is able to make **all grace** abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”
 - f. **2 Corinthians 12:9**, “And [God] has said to me, ‘**My grace** is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”
 - g. **2 Timothy 2:1-3**, “You therefore, my son, be **strong in the grace** that is in Christ Jesus (*you have it, so use it to its fullest*).”

[2] The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. [3] Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

- h. **Titus 2:11–14**, “For the **grace of God** has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, [13] [and to] look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, [14] who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”
- i. **Hebrews 4:16**, “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the **throne of grace**, so that we may receive mercy and **find grace** to help [us] in time of need.”
- j. **Hebrews 13:9**, “Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be **strengthened by grace**, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefitted.”

III. Conclusion

- A. Peter exhorts us to “**grow in the grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (**2 Peter 3:18**).
 - 1. In other words, beyond opening ourselves to and making full use of the varied ways we can experience God’s grace, we are to intentionally and specifically grow in our understanding of God’s grace, why we need God’s grace for salvation and daily living, what is required of us to receive God’s grace in its varied forms and functions, and how to use God’s grace to its fullest.
 - 2. Paul closes his second letter to the Christians in Thessalonica with a prayer or blessing for them to experience God’s peace in every situation, for an awareness of God’s presence, and for them to experience the varied expressions and fullest possible measure of God’s grace. May we have similar desires for each other, our missionaries, and the Body of Christ around the world.