

1 Thessalonians 1:1 - 10 The grace and peace of God's elect ones.

Legacy Standard Bible

1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father, 4 knowing, brothers beloved by God, your election, 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full assurance; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of an entrance we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Last week, as you know, we finished 3 1/2 years and 156 messages together in the gospel of Luke. What a joy and blessing that has been, especially for me as I am privileged to dig in deep and study these things that are direct revelation from God. The very words of God to us.

And I said we would begin Galatians, and here we are in 1 Thessalonians. Are you amazed at that? I'm not. That's how God's Holy Spirit leads and directs us forward. And that's a weekly thing for me. That's why this privilege is so special that you have given me to pastor you and teach in this pulpit. I never know from week to week what the Lord will bless me with to say.

Nothing is premeditated or pre-planned. I am wide open to what God will

bring to this little congregation in these studies. I often will read through a text that will be our next section or verses and laugh to myself as I say, I wonder what the Spirit will give me to say about that!

That isn't boasting. Far from it. It's a little bit scary for you folks. I don't have any certificates framed on the walls of my study. Nothing but 52 years of constant study with men who I believe are the leading Bible expositors of our age. Add to that an unbroken line of historic teachers who are rock solid sound Bible expositors, and a commitment that this book is the living Word of God and that foundation is my confidence.

And my confidence is biblical. Jesus told His disciples; John 16:13
“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

And again in John chapter 14:26 Jesus says;
“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

So, it's no surprise to me that I intended to begin Galatians, in fact was reading and studying Galatians with a view to how I would begin that book when I got an email from Carl that said;

Hi Jim, You said you wanted to do Ephesians and some of the books of Paul the apostle. You might consider doing 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. It is relevant with Israel today. God has Russia down near the Black Sea. It's only a hop, skip, and a jump to Israel, so it would be very relevant. The church, our church, needs to know what to do during this time. And, that is, to preach the gospel to every creature on earth while there is time. You might consider having some tracts to pass out to people we meet when we eat out. And, we can do other things of that nature. I think we would feel bad if Christ returned and we weren't concentrating on delivering the gospel. Love you in the Lord, Carl

So that's exciting. The Lord used Carl to steer us in a slightly different direction, and I say slightly because I'm happy as a clam in salty water no matter what book I'm teaching in this book. Paul is Paul! And as it turns out, Galatians is Paul on steroids with his hair on fire trying to steer people in deep trouble who are heading over a cliff, out of trouble, and Thessalonians is Paul as happy with a group of people as he ever got to be.

You read through 1 Thessalonians and Paul just keeps saying, you guys are awesome, just keep doing what you're doing, only even more so.

So then, as we work through the two letters to the Thessalonians we will compare ourselves, individually as believers, and corporately, as a church, to this church that Paul says, you guys are doing great and all I could ever ask you to do is to keep being greater than you already are.

We want to be that kind of a church, so what better place to begin, than to see if we align with the church at Thessalonica, and how we can do it better. Would Paul write the same letter to us? If not, why not? What do we need to do to be a church like the church at Thessalonica?

Let's begin with some background; From google Maps:

"Thessaloniki is a Greek port city on the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea. Evidence of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman history remains, especially around Ano Poli, the upper town. The ruins of Roman Emperor Galerius' 4th-century palace include the Rotunda that has been both a church and a mosque. Much of the city center was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1917. The rebuilt 20th-century city has a modern European layout." end quote

The city still exists and is vibrant today. It's at the top of Greece as the land mass wraps around towards the top of the Aegean Sea. If you continue east it's about 350 miles to Istanbul which is on that thin strip that separates the Aegean Sea from the Black Sea. More east and you drop down into Turkey proper which is where the book of Acts sort of takes place on Paul's missionary journeys.

Thessalonica was founded in 315BC by Cassander who was a general of Alexander the great. And Cassander had a wife who was the half sister of Alexander the great, and her name was Thessalonica. So he named this strategic city on the road to the Orient after his wife.

Where is Thessaloniki in relation to Vladimir Putin? Pretty close really. If you go north and east 600 miles through Bulgaria and Romania you will be in Ukraine. So, less distance than where I live to where my daughter lives on the Columbia River and you're in a war zone.

Climate wise, Thessaloniki is on the 40th parallel. We're on the 37th here. Eureka California, Redding California, and most of Hwy 80 north of Reno is on the same parallel. Thessaloniki is at sea level, so the climate there I think would be pretty luxuriant. It is beautiful in situation. It has thermal pools, hot pools that people enjoy to this day.

And at the time Paul was there, it was a big city, an important city, a capitol city in Macedonia because it's on the trade routes that connected Asia Minor with Greece and Rome. Everything siphoned through Thessalonica. It was a busy vibrant worldly gentile place. It was a seaport, so it was equal in wickedness to Corinth.

Archeological digs have uncovered every sort of vile sexual stuff imaginable there. It was a godless place, except there were some jews there.

Let's begin some background of Paul's letter by reading Luke's account of Paul's entrance to Thessalonica in context of what was happening to them at that point in their church planting journey. Let me just read a portion from Acts chapter 17;

1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths

reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and setting before them that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is that Christ.”

Hello?? Does that not sound familiar from our last 3 weeks or so in Luke. Again and again, from the afternoon of the morning of the resurrection, on the Emmaus road and later that night in Jerusalem at the gathering of believers this theme is repeated over and over.

The Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. That event is what makes christianity different from all other claims. Jesus suffered for us. The just for the unjust. He died the death we were due. He gave to us His righteousness to claim as our own. He took our sins to that cross.

But that wasn't all. He defeated death, once for all, the firstborn from the dead. Jesus conquered death. He rose again from the dead on the 3rd day. And He promises us that we will also in Him conquer death and live with Him in glory. Paul's message is very simple. *THAT* Jesus is the Christ. The one who suffered and died in our place. The one who rose again from the dead. That Jesus. Well, let's continue with our history lesson from Luke at Thessalonica.

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews, becoming jealous, taking along some wicked men from the marketplace, and forming a mob, set the city in an uproar. And attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the assembly. 6 And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” 8 And they disturbed the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received the bond from Jason and the others, they released them.

10 And the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with not a few prominent Greek women and men. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, shaking up and disturbing the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brothers sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

Paul establishes a real church at Thessalonica in the midst of an uproar from the jews. That prase about the christians turning the world upside down is from this passage. The non-believing jews here were real stinkers.

The brothers, brand new brothers by the way, infant church at Thessalonica, they hustle Paul out of town for his own safety. And they take him to Berea where the jews were more noble than the rabble rouser jews at Thessalonica.

But when the jews at Thessalonica find out Paul has brought christianity to Berea they follow him there and make an uproar there too. Berea is only about 40 miles from Thessalonica. So they have to get Paul as far as Athens so these folks don't kill him.

Meanwhile, the church at Thessalonica is established in just a very few hours really. 3 Sabbath days in the synagogue and we don't know what other little time Paul may have had there before it got too hot to stay. We assume he was able to spend a few weeks there before the jews got so hot and drove him away. But that little church, born in fire, turns out to be a landmark church.

And some time goes by and Paul is sort of helpless to know if they have

survived or not. The jews followed Paul everywhere he went and tried to effectively undo everything he began. That's what happened at Galatia.

Jews followed Paul there, after Paul had departed and told the Galatians, no, Paul didn't get the full memo. You have to convert to judaism first, and be circumcised and follow the Mosaic law in order to become a christian. And they would turn the whole thing from free grace of God into a works salvation thing where you're working your way to heaven keeping laws.

That effectively killed real christianity for those who bought into it. We'll get to that in Galatians when we get there. Adding works to grace kills grace. There's nothing we can do to earn salvation. It is a free gift God gives to His elect. Jesus did all the works for us in our place. Jesus gives us His righteousness.

Now that isn't to say you just go off and sin all you like. No no no no. It was for freedom that Christ set you free. Don't be captured again by sin. But trying to gain salvation by works is useless. Worthless. Filthy rags.

So the church at Thessalonica is born in persecution and trouble. Trouble on every side. Jews persecuting the church. Jews trying to undo what Christ did by introducing works righteousness. Perils on every side. And Paul wonders, have they survived? Did we work there in vain. Is it all crushed to pieces?

Let's begin at Vs. 1 of 1 Thessalonians. And bear in mind, this letter is the result of Paul sending Timothy to see what has survived. A few months have passed. Did the church survive in Thessalonica, or did Satan effectively squash it. And Timothy comes back with excellent news. They not only have survived, they're prospering and doing great. They're a model church!

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

First off Paul simply begins by identifying himself as the letter's originator. And he does that in a unique way when we compare it to all of his other letters. This is the only time that Paul uses no authoritative identifiers.

To Corinth it is *Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*

To Galatia it is *Paul, an apostle - not sent from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father!*

That's the usual. His credentials are called into question by those who are trying to destroy what God has begun through his apostleship and Paul normally is very defensive of his God ordained, God given authority to be doing the very task he's doing. Normally the fight is on right at the greeting.

But not here. With this church he gets the pleasure and privilege of simply being Paul. A humble equal with Silvanus which is the Roman equivalent of the Jewish Silas. It's the same person. Silvanus to Romans and Silas to Jews, and Timothy whom Paul has brought along with him beginning in Lystra.

These three are a ministry team of equals, although Paul is actually apostolic in every sense of the word with the other apostles in Jerusalem. Jesus has caused that. God the Father and the Lord, Jesus, have made Paul an apostle equal with the other apostles.

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

His greeting to them is also unique. They are the church of the Thessalonians. That identifies which assembly exactly Paul is speaking to. Just like we are the church at Tonopah. Lots of churches planted in lots of places. Only one at Thessalonica.

But uniquely he refers to them as a church, we'll come back to that word,

they are a church "*in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*."

Paul is constantly speaking in his letters of being in Christ. In Christ. In Christ. We are in Him. He is in us. The union is with Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit living in us is the Spirit of Jesus. We are united with Him and He is united in one with us. That's what we're most used to hearing from Paul.

But this special church at Thessalonica is referred to by Paul as a church in God the Father AND the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, that's the end result of everything. God cast his creation made in His likeness out of His presence because of the defilement of sin. Removed. Cast off and waiting for eternal destruction. Sin did that, and we didn't get a choice, we were born into that very sin that God has eschewed from Him.

Born into judgement. Born into wrath. Look at vs 10 which we are not going to get to today it seems. At the end of this first paragraph. The whole point of everything Paul is doing and the church is doing because of what Jesus has done;

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come. The world systems, the world spoiled by Satan and everyone in it except the elect, this Cosmos is scheduled for wrath and destruction. Only Jesus can rescue His elect from the wrath that is coming. Only Jesus can deliver us safely, in Him, to God.

God created man for His own fellowship, His own pleasure, His own glory in a created being who reflects His glory. Spoiled. By Satan and sin, men are spoiled. Ruined by sin. Defiled and removed from God's presence.

Jesus rescues some men. Jesus reverses the curse for some and makes them

pure and righteous and clean, in Him, clothed in His righteousness, purchased out of the wrath to come, for the glory and enjoyment of the Father.

Thessalonica is a church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In God, Out of the world of the wrath to come. To be a church in God is to be a church snatched out of this world set for destruction, removed from the wrath to come, and delivered to God for His fellowship and pleasure and glory.

There is a distinction in the movement of God's elect, Out of harms path, out of this world, separated from this world that is destined for wrath, and delivered as it were to be in God. Removed from being in the world, and placed instead, safely in God.

The very word for church in vs. 1 actually explains what we've been trying to say. The greek word here says so much more than what comes to our minds when we speak of church.

Normally, we think of the building itself. The handsome old stone walls and ceiling and furnishings that we enjoy. But then we remind ourselves, that isn't the church, that's just the building, the church is us. Our congregation. Our little family that faithfully meets here is the church.

And that's correct, that's a step in the right direction. But the greek word for church means much more even than that. *ekklēsia* *ekklēsia*.

It is a compound word in the greek made up of two words combined together. *Ek* which means ***out of*** + *klesis* which means ***a calling***. to call. To call out of. And thus to the first century church, the word Paul uses here for church means the called out ones. The church are the called out ones. The elect. The chosen. The ransomed and purchased out of this world ones.

Election has gotten to be some kind of scary bad word we avoid in the

church these days, but in Paul's day, that's how the christians referred to each other.

1. Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the elect ones of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

And that becomes the centerpiece of everything Paul will say in the next 9 verses.

What are the odds that anyone has survived the pressure and turmoil of the persecutions this church was born into. To be a christian in Thessalonica costs everything. Especially for the jewish population. To be a christian means you are unsynagogued. Thrown out of the jewish synagogue. Locked out of your own culture. And more often than not, it meant you were removed from your own family.

Suddenly you're excluded from culture, family, religion, business, your job perhaps, your customers, your whole world. Gone. Paul knows that. He's seen it in his own life and he once was the one leading those very persecutions. Prison, sometimes. Exclusions, always. That's the cost.

What are the odds, after perhaps 3 months, after just a few weeks with them, that anyone has survived that onslaught? Well, as it turns out, if you are in fact the elect of God, the called out of ones, called out of the world by God himself who chose you and purchased you and has brought you into fellowship with Him, the odds are about 100% that you'll survive the persecution intact.

And that's what Timothy found at Thessalonica when he went to visit and see how they were fareing. A little group of people who had been called out of this condemned world and who were standing firm in their new faith, along with the Holy Spirit who was standing with them.

They are elect. Called out of this world, and into God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Removed from this condemned place and safely put into

God instead. Called out of called into. They came out of the world and were placed in God.

Jesus speaks of this phenomenon when He gives the parable of the soils in Matthew 13. Some seed went on Rocky soil and nothing happened. Like the jews who just got mad and persecuted. Rocky soil. The seed just bounces and lays there until perhaps birds eat it.

Then there was the shallow soil where something that looks like life springs right up and grows like mad . . . until the first affliction comes, trouble comes, and no one ever sees them again.

Weedy soil where the weeds, the cares of this world, overtake and choke out the life of the seed.

And finally there is good soil, where the roots go deep and a good solid plant that can withstand anything comes up and bears fruit. Those are the elect. God causes the increase. They mature and bear fruit.

That's what Timothy found at Thessalonica. Solid fruit bearing christians who were unmoved by the troubles and challenges of this perishing world.

Finally this morning in our exposition of a single verse, we come to Paul's greeting. His salutation.

*1. Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the elect ones of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: **Grace to you and peace.***

Paul says, I wish for you grace. And I wish for you peace. Let's talk about those just for a few moments as we close this morning's introduction to 1 Thessalonians. Grace to you, and peace.

Grace. Grace is what moved God to call us out of this world that is scheduled for destruction. Grace is unmerited favor. In 52 years as a christian I've not come up with a better explanation of what grace is than

the common little acrostic;
God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense.

Grace is God pouring out His benevolent love and blessing on those who deserve His wrath. Grace is God calling you and me out of imminent destruction, why? We don't know. Grace is why.

Perhaps the best way to approach it is to be ridiculous for a moment. Why did God choose to rescue me? Well, it's obvious, isn't it? Of course He would choose me, because I'm the cream of the crop. I'm just superior and of course it makes perfect sense that He would rescue the best, brightest, prettiest, choicest people from destruction. Right? I mean, look at me. It's a no brainer. Hopefully that sounded as ridiculous to you as it did to me.

Paul says not many mighty. Not many noble. God chooses the nobody's. God loves to choose the worst among men. The rejects. The deplorables. And the explanation which doesn't really explain it very well is grace. God loves to pour out His favor on whom He loves to pour out His favor. That's Grace.

And Paul is saying, it was grace that made you the called out ones, and my wish for you is grace upon grace. Grace multiplied. Grace began when God chose you and snatched you out of the fires. And my wish for you is more of that.

And then Paul says, Peace. Grace to you, and Peace.

PEACE! Are you kidding me? Peace? I've been a christian for 3 months and the whole world has gone to war with me. The synagogue has thrown me out. My family has thrown me out. My culture has shunned me. My employer has fired me. The whole world that I knew has gone to war with

me and cast me out. And you say peace!!??

Here is the craziest most mixed up thing about being God's chosen elect people. The whole world can be at war with us, and yet God puts a peace in our hearts that transcends this world.

Jesus told His men on the night of His betrayal; *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.* Jn. 14:27

Later He said; *I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!"* Jn. 16:33

Paul wrote to the Phillipians; *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Ppn. 4:6,7

And the peace of God which transcends all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Paul says I wish you Grace and I wish you peace.

In our current world which is in a mad dash picking up speed for a head on collision, what could possibly be worth holding onto here and forfeiting God's grace and God's peace.

The more insane this world gets, the more I love being a citizen of another world. I have been called out of this one. I stand aloof, protected, at peace with whatever comes next. I'm not the source of that kind of peace. It is the gift of God.

He pours out His grace on me. He removes my citizenship in this world set for destruction and makes me a citizen of heaven in good standing with a

righteousness not my own, the righteousness of Jesus credited to my account. And while I'm still physically in this world, He gives me His peace to dwell within my heart.

The world is headed for a tremendous cataclysmic train wreck. Not me. I'm a citizen of heaven. I have transcendent peace, even in this world headed for destruction. That peace is available for anyone who will ask for it.