

LSB 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 Called Out of This World Ones

1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is only fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another increases all the more, 4 so that we ourselves boast about you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

Paul opens this letter and sets the distinction of a dichotomy, a natural division of two opposing groups, in his opening sentence. And then he proceeds to speak about the **faith** of the Thessalonians, and the **love** of the Thessalonians in the opening paragraph, and in vs 4 Paul launches into what is the **hope** of the Thessalonian believers, because *Hope* is ultimately what this little book is about.

What is faith?

What is love?

What is hope?

What is faith? Faith is the belief of truths unseen yet revealed by God in a way that those truths become life altering because they have authority over our daily life. Faith causes us to be separated from this sinful world that is at war with God.

We believe we are purchased out of this sinful world by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. By faith we live not as this world lives in rebellion, but we live separated from this world, unto God. Faith in words in an ancient book has caused our divorce from this world.

What is love? Love is how we step out of this dog eat dog world and selflessly consider others of more value and worth than ourselves. We love

with an otherworldly gracious love independent of whether we are loved in return. Our love comes from God and is channeled through us from Him to others. Agape love is unmerited, unearned, undeserved grace that we receive and then channel through us from God to others.

What is hope? Hope is what the rest of the book will be about. We hope for deliverance and rest in a new world promised to us by the author and rightful owner of this world who is coming to retake this rebellious world for Himself and crush the rebellers in this world.

Our hope is in our Saviour receiving us to Himself before that day of judgement. We will see Him and be clothed in our new bodies, clothed in His perfect righteousness, sins and sinful bodies of death left behind, we will be the perfect holy bride of Jesus, in heaven, before His return with us, in judgement that is horrific on this world.

Our hope is in the ultimate victory of the Kingdom of God, the authority to reign of God, in this world, and the end of all sin and rebellion of the current ruler of this world, Satan, who rules all of the sinful rebellion we see at present.

That is why we pray; *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* That is our hope. And the dichotomy, the polar separation of the two kingdoms opposed to each other and at war with each other is introduced to us in Paul's opening sentence of his greeting to the saints at Thessalonica.

And Oh, by the way, anyone who comes out of Satan's wicked kingdom and is washed clean in the purchasing blood shed by Jesus is a saint. We are all saints if that is true of us. No matter how bad I act, I am in fact, sometimes in position only, a saint. Chosen out of this world. Called to belong to God. All of my sins forgiven. Part of my hope is for that positional truth to become practically fulfilled in completeness.

Vs. 1 *Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians*

in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

We can form an entire theology just in those opening words of Paul. Everything Paul writes pre-supposes a dichotomy, a clash of cultures of two distinct groups, the saints of God, and the warring world. Two groups of people inhabiting the same real estate who are in opposition to each other.

Paul defines his team. Himself, Silvanus or (Silas), and Timothy, and the letter is from all three according to this opening greeting, though Paul assumes authorship.

And then Paul directs the letter to the intended initial recipients, although you'll recall in the previous letter, Paul is adamant that the letters be circulated and read by everyone possible, and we found ourselves in that ultimate group. So this letter is to the Thessalonians, and by extension also it is to us today. IF . . . IF . . . and only IF we belong within the confines of the next two word ideas.

Paul says P, S, & T *To the **church** of the _____* and we can write our name in the blank by extension and association, but association is important because Paul is going to define the group that can be included in this general letter. We need to open up, to unpack that greek word translated as church. Let's look at the greek word translated *church*;

1577 *ekklēsia* is a compound word (from 1537 /ek, "out from and to (something else)" and 2564 /kaléō, "to call") – properly, people called out from the world and to God, the outcome being the Church (the mystical separated body of Christ) So the compound word means to be called out of something and placed into something else. Out from, and into, something else, by a calling.

Ekklesia is a very very common word in the new testament, always translated, the church. Did you know that by the original definition, the very word church defines the fact that we have left one group and become

members of another group. Ekklesia means to call out from one entity and then to be placed into something else. Basic meaning. Out of the world, placed into Christ. By calling. Called out of (the world ruled by satan) and placed into (God).

Why is it that today, the church (so-called) is working hard to be indistinguishable from the world surrounding it? The original descriptor is that we are the people called out of the rebellious world of God haters and placed into the peaceful Kingdom of God lovers.

It's a huge distinction of a more huge dichotomy. Rebellious haters of God = the world. Peaceful lovers of God who are at peace with God and who have been called apart from the rebellion and forgiven are on the opposite pole of this dichotomy.

Ekklesia, Called Out Ones, only has meaning if we define who and what we have then been called TO. And Paul in the next words completes the definition.

Vs. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

We are called out of the rebellious sinful warring world, and placed IN . . . God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I used to be in the condemned world, but now I have been called out of that world and placed into Christ.

Beloved, if God is Almighty, and He is, and if He's coming to crush the rebellion in this world, and He will, then the only safe place to be is IN Him.

That's the dichotomy. There's only two groups. Those who are at war with God, and those who are not only at peace with God but are actually mystically IN God, and by definition of poles, now at war with this world's ruler, Satan and his hosts.

Paul's greeting is succinct. P, S, & T **TO** the called out ones at Thessalonica, or as we said, fill in the blank, the called out ones at Tonopah Nevada, who have been called out of this world at war with God and placed into God the Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ. The very definition of church, or ecclesia.

That's who we are. And if that *isn't* distinctly WHO you are, it's time to ask some questions, because, trust me, that's the only safe place to be in this conflict of the ages. There's no middle ground in this conflict. None. You are either a called out one who has been placed IN Christ, or you are at war with God and in line for ultimate judgement.

That's a hard distinction. You think of the sweet little old ladies who live up and down the block and you say to yourself, really, those sweet folks are at war with God and in direct line of horrific judgement. We struggle with that. But this book is black and white. You're either a citizen of this rebellious sinful world, or a citizen placed inside God. Forgiven, called out apart from this world, and placed in God. Sorry, those are the only two distinct groups.

And then we get even deeper into that dichotomy and we find that only those folks who have placed their trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross to effectually forgive sin are the called out ones.

The "Jesus" of all other religions doesn't eliminate sin. Sweet folks, but their sins are held to their account. And we could go on and on. Only the folks who by faith have trusted in the effectual work of the biblical Jesus to forgive their sins, on that cross, will be saved. If you're part of a group who is working their way to God by working out your own righteousness, you're lost.

Vs. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

We could amplify that verse and say; *Vs. 1 Paul and Silvanus and*

*Timothy, To the **called out of** this world ones who are at Thessalonica and who have been **placed into** God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:*

Paul didn't need to go that far because the folks he wrote to knew exactly what he was stating first hand. 2000 years later, not so much. We need to be refreshed about what Paul states in this introduction.

Those folks who were at Thessalonica who had been called out of this world and placed into God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ were living that distinction first hand. For many of them, becoming a christian had cost them their families, their livelihoods, their jobs, their position in the community, right down to peace itself.

They had believed and instantly they were distinct from and at war with the people who they lived amongst. Right down to divisions in family. Sometimes even marriage partners. It was a distinct separation. We've lost that. But it may be returning to a town near you very soon. Get ready.

*2 **Grace** to you and **peace** from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Why would anyone choose to go to war with the world they live amongst because they have left that world and are now polarly separated and opposed to it, in love? That's sort of non-sensical. We are folks who instinctively take the path of least resistance and the path that we think will lead to our happiness and thriving. That's Paschal's law.

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”

— Blaise Pascal

It seems counter-intuitive, and especially to our world, that anyone would

choose to separate themselves from the pleasures of this world and be joined to a God who has a very distinct morality and who demands your obedience to Him as your Lord. Why would anyone choose *that*.

And the answer is in vs. 2. We were at war with God. And somewhere along the line we realized, it's going to go badly. It's going to end badly, this war with the Creator and owner of the world. He'll win. Hell awaits the rebellers. Our consciences continually condemned us.

And the more we read about God and His Holy perfections, the more frightening was the condemnation. He is Holy, we are not. Of course punishment must come. He is the owner and creator of everything. We stood condemned. And everything we did to try to alleviate that was useless, hopeless. At war with God, waiting for what was deserved.

Most people solve that problem, temporarily I might add, by eliminating God. They go to wild ends to eliminate Him. Rediculous fables about how all that IS came from nothing, by mere chance, over trillions of years. We are simply a meaningless rock flying through space with the unlikely happnstance of intelligent life in a protected environment that we can survive in. None of it means anything. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we turn back into dust.

DNA was a real setback for those folks. It disproves quite handily the whole remedy of no God and everything is because of chance. They know it. But they choose to dismiss God anyways. Please don't confuse me with the facts. I've made my choice to be Godless and I have therefore elected myself as God and will dismiss everything that is natural in His creation because, He . . . isn't.

So to choose to come apart from this world and it's temporal pleasures is wildly counterintuitive to the inhabitants in the world around us. Who does that?? Why??? Go to war with this world and sign up for a bunch of old rules in an ancient book. That's insane.

But then, perhaps, honesty kicks in. Creation. This beautiful intelligently arranged world must have had a designer. We can see the beauty peeking through the corruption. It's there. Undeniable beauty and perfection amidst undeniable corruption and death and evil.

The good time charleys dismiss God. But the honest folks need answers. Where did the beauty come from. Why are we here? What happened that brought in evil and sin and death and corruption? Wait a minute . . . I'm both. There is beauty and value in me, but there's also sin and corruption? I have an intelligent soul that transcends this world. But I'm fallen, sinful, my conscience condemns me. What will the creator who is Holy and perfect do with me and my sin?

Most people answer that question . . . with a beer. Lots of beers. Quiet the noise. Dull the pain. But then Paul comes along in vss. 1 & 2 with the real answer to the ultimate question.

There is a group of people who have come out of this world, been called out of this rebellious sinful corruption, and they have been placed into God the Father, and the Lord, who is Jesus, the Christ.

Their sins are forgiven. They are quite literally purchased. Bought out of this world by the blood of the Son of God, shed in their place, He paid their full penalty for their sins, and they are placed inside God, forgiven.

But like the guy on TV says, there's more. Vs. 2 *Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Let's start with that second word. Peace. PEACE!! The whole world is at war with God, cursing Him, throwing dust in the air declaring their vitriolic hatred of Him, and we will see in just a few verses, God will respond to that. He is coming in fiery judgement against this rebellion. Horrific judgement.

And we who are in Christ, by association with Him, have placed ourselves

in the war this world has against God. The world can't reach God, but they CAN reach us, who belong to God.

But God has given to His elect . . . peace. Real peace. Inner peace. Don't need the beers to dull the pain; peace. The war is over for His elect, His chosen, His called out ones, His ecclesia. We came out of the war of this world against Him, and into His peace. And even though we are stranded here in this world that hates God, we have peace inside of us, from God.

Many years ago a russian fellow who had gotten out of Russia somehow, this was in the 1980's, and he's in Panorama City and he walks into Grace Church there to see if there is any employment opportunity for his particular talent. He's a gymnast. A trapeze artist. Is there something he can offer that is employable. Maybe teach an aerobics class?

And guess what. God saved him. He heard the gospel and believed. And I tear up every time I think of his testimony at his baptism. I wasn't there, I only heard it second hand on a cassette tape. He's in the baptismal and is going to share how it is that he came to believe, in his broken english, and he just sort of burst out with his strong russian accent; *How good it is to believe. **How good it is to believe!*** We have peace with God and from God

Beloved, Peace is good. Isn't it? To have been called out of the condemned rebellion and placed in God's camp with His elect saints, sins forgiven, at peace with God. Peace is good. How good it is to believe!

But then there's that first word. Grace. ***Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

Grace. Unimaginable favor and wealth poured out on me. I'm at peace because the wrath I deserved was poured out on Jesus, in my place. But there's more. God didn't stop with peace.

God has adopted me into His family and given me wealth that is waiting for me in heaven, of such a splendor that words cannot adequately describe it

and my limited brain can not even completely conceive or understand it.

I love the little acronym. G R A C E God's Riches at Christ's Expense. I have incomprehensible wealth waiting for me, when I see Jesus, face to face. It's held in trust. It's in an account in heaven with my name on it. Protected by God. Waiting for me. I'm no big deal in this world, and getting less of a deal daily, but in heaven I have unspeakable wealth, waiting for me to get there and enjoy it. God's riches at Christ's expense.

Some of it spills over even in this world. Paul tells the Thessalonians, I wish for you, I pray for you, grace and peace. Beloved, that's enough, even in this world, that I would never go back. Go back to war with God?? Never. The intangible is tangible, inside my heart. Peace. Wellness. Grace can be understood even in this world, in the wellness and thriving and blessing that has been mine.

I have a beautiful wife and 3 spectacular children who have given me 8 awesome grand children. I have a roof over me and you can tell, I eat pretty well. And the Lord has showered me with good things to enjoy. Toys galore. It's almost shameful how much blessing He has poured out on me. Grace and peace.

The bad guys can come and take all the physical stuff away, and that could happen, but the peace inside is untouchable. And the real wealth, in another world, is also untouchable. I have an inheritance in another world that is Protected by God. Grace and Peace are mine, and the world at war with God cannot touch those things.

That's the introduction to this book. We could skip over it quickly, but there was a LOT there, just in vss. one and two. Who we are. What we have. Called out of this world at war with God and given peace and unspeakable wealth by God. Pretty amazing truths.

And now Paul launches into his subject. Faith. Love. Hope. And he's going to skim the surface of Faith and Love and launch into what is most

necessary. Hope. We hope for the reality of that wealth that is ours.

3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is only fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another increases all the more, 4 so that we ourselves boast about you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

Their faith was growing abundantly. Have you ever wished and prayed for more faith. Lord, I need more faith. Please. Give me more faith. He will. There's a simple formula.

Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Romans 10:17

Read the book, study the book, contemplate and meditate on the book, listen to reliable men teaching from the book, and your faith will grow abundantly.

That tells me that this group had some excellent elders who were good teachers. Abundant faith is no accident. There were good teaching elders that God had blessed these folks with, and they were thriving.

Ephesians 4 says that teachers are a gift God gives to the church. We can state confidently that there were excellent teachers at Thessalonica because Paul tells us, their faith was not only abundant but increasing. That only happens one way. Not because you're sitting around on your thumbs asking God for faith. It comes from hearing the word of God

And then the next thing is simply a by-product of the word and the faith that comes. Love. A church that is serious about this book is a church where love just happens. Those things go hand in hand. Faith results from the depths of the truths in the book, and love also results.

The word of God doesn't make you joyless and loveless. That's what the world accuses us of. We know the opposite is true. People who enjoy

God's gift of good teachers are people who enjoy abundant faith and real affection for one another.

One of the nicest compliments I've ever gotten was from some ladies who came here to put on a little special for the ladies here and one of the traveling ladies said, rather surprisedly, this is a healthy church. This is a healthy church. As if that was a bit unexpected from her experiences travelling around to different churches.

We're small, but the word of God has made us robust. There is faith here and there is certainly love here. That's in some small way because we are faithful to God's word here. Growth would be nice, but we're glad God has gifted us with the faith and love we have together in this group.

3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is only fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another increases all the more,

Notice first of all who gets the honor and thanks for the increase. They were enjoying abundances of faith and love, but Paul doesn't thank them. Paul is thankful to the source of all blessings. God has blessed them with all of the increases. God gave them the gifts of teaching elders. God blessed them with the written Word. God has caused all of the increase.

No credit goes to elders or people. Paul says it's only fitting that all of the thanks for all that these folks are, goes to God. He is the source of everything.

He called them out of the world. He forgave their sins in the shed blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus. He sent Paul to give them the good news. And it was God who chose them, individually, and actually supplied the faith that moved each one of them out of this world and into the kingdom of God. God is the one who gets all of the glory for all the blessings He showers on us. Then Paul says, we get to boast about what God is doing in your midst.

4 so that we ourselves boast about you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

And there we are at only verse 4 and Paul's trifecta is complete. Faith and love in vs. 3. And in vs. 4 we are introduced to hope. The word itself isn't there, but the idea is what the rest of the book will be about. The reason for the letter. Hope in the midst of trouble. Perseverance caused by hope.

Paul says, wherever we go, to all the other churches, we love to boast about you. Because you through faith and love are enduring affliction and persecution. They were persevering against all worldly odds. When that happens; God is on display.

Paul boasts about their perseverance. hupomoné (hoop-om-on-ay') The word means a patient endurance of one who remains steadfast, waiting, patient during difficulty. Immovableness.

The world raged against these saints in far excess of anything we've ever experienced here. So far. Some of them were enduring incredible costs in order to be christians. Real loss. Real trouble. Real cost. A little island of believers clinging to each other in the midst of a raging sea surrounding them. The hurricane was blowing, but they were un moved.

For Paul that was reason to boast. When that happens, God is on display. When a 150 mph wind blows and it clears a little and you check, and all of the firmly planted trees are still in place, against all odds that's God that did that. Paul's boast about them glorify's God.

You've got Satan on one side throwing everything he's got at this little group, and God on the other side, holding them firm, against all odds. Probably not much fun if you're one of the trees, hanging on for dear life, in the midst of the storm. But always, there is the peace inside, and even the joy, the grace God provides in trouble.

We would do well to consider a case, a man who was in the midst of the horrors of God's judgement against his people in Judah. Jeremiah, the prophet.

Read through the 66 verses of Lamentations chapter 3 for a look inside a soul in deep distress, that is ultimately stayed on the only thing left. The doctrine of God. The never ceasing love and mercy and faithfulness of God, even in the midst of horrific judgements.

Do a search this week for Phil Johnson, Lamentations 3 and listen to that sermon. Are we ready for what we may have to endure if God leaves us *in* this world as He unleashes His righteous wrath on our nation? Will we be like the Thessalonians and persevere, unmoved in the hurricane blowing against us?

We asked the question earlier that the world asks; Why would anyone do that? Trade this world and it's pleasures for God. The world sees that as insanity. But then when they are exposed for what they are, they turn up the heat.

When christians choose God, and the distinction is apparent, it's pretty black and white, what happens is the world's bankruptcy is on display. And the world hates that. Righteous living is a mirror that the world despises. Because it shows them as sinners. The contrast is trouble.

If everybody's sinning, no one is better, no one is worse. But throw some actual real christians in that mix for the contrast to become apparent and the evil becomes angry. Evil rages against righteousness.

Ephesians 5 says: 11 And do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead even expose them. 12 For it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

When christians quietly endeavor to live godly lives in submission to the authority of God's clear morality, the world's darkness and sin can't help but be exposed. That's why Paul says; *And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* 2 Tim. 3:12

If we are indistinct, that's a problem. We are the called out of this world and placed in God ones, the ecclesia, who dwell at Tonopah, Nevada.