

Richard Cimino
 Sunday Morning
 February 15, 2009

Thessalonians 1:1

The Church in Thessalonica – Who They Were and What They Had

As we look at the first verse of this letter we are going to see three important truths about the Thessalonians:

I. WHO the Thessalonians were because of Jesus

II. WHERE the Thessalonians were because of Jesus

III. WHAT belonged to them because of Jesus



I. WHO THEY WERE because of Jesus

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

KEY OBSERVATION: They were not merely Thessalonians, they were the the CHURCH of the Thessalonians. The word “church” in the New Testament never refers to a building or a place. “Church” always refers to a people: Either the total number of believers who have ever lived or a local group of those believers in a particular city and/or in a particular house.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 To the church of the Thessalonians

Acts 11:22 refers to the “church in Jerusalem,”

1 Corinthians 1:2 refers to the “church of God which is at Corinth,”

1 Corinthians 16:19 says, “The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.”

In Colossians 4:15 Paul sends greetings “to Nympha and the church in her house.”

And Paul’s letter to Philemon is also addressed to “the church in your house.”

So we have the CHURCH UNIVERSAL. The universal body of Christ including all believers of all times. Then we find the CHURCH LOCAL. This is made up of Christians associated by their geographic togetherness in a city, sometimes so few in number that they could all meet in one home.

KEY INSIGHT:

“Church” comes from the Greek word, *ekklesia*.

Ek meaning, “out from” / “away from” and *Kaleo* meaning, “called aloud.”

Because of Jesus THEY WERE the men and women in Thessalonica who were “called out from” and “away from” a life lived without the true and living God.

REMEMBER who they were BEFORE Paul preached the Gospel? They, with the rest of the Thessalonians, worshipped Greek, Roman and Egyptian idols. But Jesus had called them out from that –called them away from that. Because of Jesus they were the women and women who were called out from and away from the world system that is living in opposition to the true and living God. As written in *Romans 1:6* ...called to belong to Jesus Christ...

II. WHERE THEY WERE because of Jesus

To the church of the Thessalonians IN God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

CRUCIAL OBSERVATION: These called out ones not only have a geographical address (Thessalonica), they also have a SPIRITUAL POSITION. They were IN God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. THAT is why Christianity transcends any religious system or ideology.

It is an amazing reality in which a man or woman at the point of saving faith is CALLED OUT and PLACED IN. THAT is the way God works. He does not merely CALL us OUT and AWAY FROM - He calls us TO something.

EXAMPLE: God did not merely call Abraham OUT from and AWAY from the Ur of the Chaldees. He was also calling Abraham INTO a land. It was a place He had NEVER been. It was a place of which Abraham knew NOTHING.

Just like you and me, God CALLED us (heavenly calling / High calling) OUT from and AWAY from our old life INTO a place we had NEVER been before, a place and a life of which we KNEW NOTHING!

THIS IS GREAT! God did not call us OUT from one religion (every man is religious / worships something) INTO another religion. He did not call us out of darkness into a subculture or a religious system. He called us OUT of darkness into His marvelous light!

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

So here is this Ekklesia in Thessalonica and they are IN God and His Son Jesus Christ. What a great place for an assembly of believers to be. What a great place for Metro to be. The passage continues with...

the Lord Jesus Christ:

It's important to realize that there is no such thing as, “He's accepted Christ as his savior but he hasn't made him his Lord yet.”

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Jesus = His NAME

Hebrew word for Joshua means, “God has become our salvation.”

Christ = His mission = the anointed One (Hebrew = Messiah)

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion – to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

KEY POINT: Lord Jesus Christ tells us everything about His divinity and His Mission - and the Church is IN all that He is and all that He does!

III. WHAT THEY HAD because of Jesus

The verse continues with...

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

GRACE and PEACE are two terms that are CRITICAL to the Christian life. We don't want to let them become Cliché.

KEY INSIGHT #1 - We find these two words in every epistle.

We have said on a number of occasions - When God repeats Himself, pay attention! These words are inseparable. They have been called the Siamese Twins of the New Testament.

KEY INSIGHT #2 - Grace is always first - even in the three times He says grace, mercy and peace. Why this order?

Before Christianity, this word was only a common Greek greeting.... “Charis” The greeting was reserved only for friends, not enemies. You wouldn't extend “charis” to a guy who had cheated you in a business deal or had an affair with your wife.

As God has done so often, He has taken something common to fallen man and ELEVATED it. Because of Jesus Christ, Grace has come to mean “Getting what you don't deserve.” In light of this we can understand how it is that God's grace PRECEDES every other blessing from God. His Grace PAVES THE WAY for every blessing that we receive from Him especially the blessing of peace.

DON'T MISS THIS: God's Grace MUST always come before peace.

Romans 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God...

Colossians 1:21 Says that we “were alienated from God...”

The New Living Translation puts it this way - You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. *Colossians 1:21*

In that state we deserved judgment, “For the wages of sin is death,” *Romans 6:23*

we deserved wrath “were by nature children of wrath...” *Ephesians 2:3*

THIS IS CRUCIAL:The Gospel declares that when we were His enemies, deserving judgment and wrath, He gave to us something we did not deserve.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6 KJV For when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.

I John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation (wrath appeasing sacrifice) for our sins.

THE RESULT of God giving to us what we don’t deserve (grace) is peace.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

TWO POINTS OF APPLICATION (that fit perfectly with our last study in 1 Samuel 27)

- 1.) *Living In Grace*
- 2.) *Extending Grace*

LIVING IN GRACE

I want to remind you this morning of the graciousness of God, the goodness of God and encourage you to stay IN His Word where we LEARN of His grace.

Acts 20:32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

NOTE WELL: We need to UNDERSTAND and LIVE IN the grace of God or we will be robbed of peace.

A) *We need to LIVE in the grace of God BECAUSE we are involved in spiritual warfare.*

One of our adversary’s greatest weapons is condemnation-guilt. In Ephesians 6 we have the great passage on spiritual warfare and God’s provision for the believer in that fight.

Ephesians 6:15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

The New Living Translation says it this way, “For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.” *Ephesians 6:15*

I used to think this was all about getting ready to go out and proclaim the Good News. But it is not about that! It is all about spiritual warfare!

In Paul's day the Roman soldiers would strap spikes onto the bottom of their shoes so they could stand their ground in battle. Without those spikes and they would slip and fall under the force of their adversaries attack.

Turn with me to Romans 5.

Romans 5:1-2 1Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

KEY QUESTION: When the devil tries to condemn you with your failures, how do you stand?

If you are trying to dig in and fend off those attacks on the basis of your performance and good works YOU WILL GO DOWN! We MUST live in the grace of God! Put on those spiked shoes, the gospel of peace, the grace in which you stand.

B) There is another reason why we need to be LIVING IN GRACE.

If there is no peace in your life, it may be due to the fact that you are trying to relate to God on the basis of works, rather than relating to Him, coming to Him, on the basis of grace. Danger! We can begin in grace, but slip into legalism.

We feel so glad to be saved, so amazed at His love and so overwhelmed that He would forgive our so many sins. But then we begin to learn a few Bible verses, do a little witnessing, do a little serving and before we even notice it we begin to think that God saved us because of how much he knew we could do for Him.

That's when the devil can beat us up. "You didn't witness today, God doesn't love you as much today as yesterday when you witnessed to 5 people."

CRUCIAL INSIGHT: God does not love you any more or any less on the basis of your works, or absence of works. That is why Paul so wanted the believers to whom he wrote to know and experience more and more about grace --- God's riches at Christ's expense. We not only need to LIVE in and REST in the grace of God personally, but we need to extend (minister) grace to each other.

EXTENDING GRACE

Paul told us in Romans 8 that we are justified and glorified (past tense). As a result of what Jesus did on the cross, God sees us right now as glorified. He sees the finished product. We are His WORKMANSHIP (The Greek word, *Poema*).

Here's an analogy. He's like a painter beginning His masterpiece, or a potter with a lump of clay. We are His workmanship, a work of art, He is the potter, we are the clay. We might look at it and quite bewildered because we only see a bunch of vague colors - a lump of clay. But the artist sees the finished work of art! THAT is how God sees us --- A finished work.

But it is not how we see each other. We can only see a work in progress.

EXAMPLE: The David we see in 1 Samuel 27 was NOT the David we see in Psalm 63.

The question facing David in 1 Samuel 27 (and that same question that faces each of us) was - Is the love of the LORD --- and His kindness --- and His goodness --- and His mercy BETTER than anything else in the world?

By David's decision and actions 1 Samuel 27, David essentially said - NO, it is not!

BUT -- DESPITE what David said in his heart at that moment in 1 Samuel 27, "Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul." *Samuel 27:1*

He would one day be king – He became king and one day after leading Israel to the zenith of its national greatness, David's own son Absalom attempts to overthrow him as king. As an aged man David is once again a refugee king – and once again finds himself on the run in the Judean wilderness.

AT THAT TIME David says...

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. *Psalms 63:1-2*

Psalms 63:3 KJV Because Thy lovingkindness is BETTER THAN LIFE, my lips shall praise Thee."

AT THIS moment David doubted the lovingkindness of God toward him. But God saw the David of Psalm 63! And David was carried along by the grace of God from 1 Samuel 27 to become the man of Psalm 63.

We need to be LIVING and GIVING the grace of God to one another BECAUSE we are ALL works in progress. And as we all know -- a work in progress can be messy, it can make OUR lives miserable, like remodels / additions / repairs to a home.

The one we can ALL relate to is the misery of Road Repairs! As an example, Thursday I was at this very spot in my prep I realized I was late to pick up my daughter and her friend from school. On the way back we had to take a different route because of road work. We had to go home by way of Cirby. I HATE that road, it's been under construction for over a year (seems like a decade.) As we were coming up to Riverside there was THE sign - "Road Work Ahead – Expect Delays!"

We are all a work in progress - "God at Work." We should all have signs tied to us that say, "God AT Work - Expect Delays!"

When God is molding and shaping our lives we can be difficult to live with, we can make life difficult for those around us. When we are going through a major shaping/breaking period in our own lives, we want grace. "Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet."

REALITY: We need to be filled with the grace of God and extending the grace of God to those around us who are under construction.

Paul was never unsettled by seeing lives under construction BECAUSE for Paul, Grace wasn't a cliché, nor was it merely a theological concept. It was something very real from God.

1 Timothy 1:13-16 13though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Paul had experienced the undeserved love of God and THAT is why he wanted grace for the children of this gracious Father.

Ephesians 4:30-32 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day

of redemption. 31Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving (gracing) one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

CHRISTIANS - WHO are you?

You are the called out ones.

CHRISTIANS - WHERE are you?

In God and the Lord Jesus Christ

CHRISTIANS - WHAT does God give you?

Grace and Peace.

Paul used the word grace over 120 times. John only uses the word grace 7 times in 5 letters. But he says in *John 1:14* And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father,) full of grace and truth.

And then he endlessly says Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus....You find the name of Jesus used over 240 times in his gospel. He in essence says - If you want to see grace then you have to see Jesus.

Peter only uses the word grace a few times. BUT his defining word was manifold grace of God - the word means various colors, variegated -- many colored. Peter learned God's grace that way because of the many ways that he failed. The way that he failed Jesus the night before Jesus died; the ways that he failed even as an apostle when he had to be rebuked by Paul.

When Peter's world was gray and dark blue, the many colored grace of God would come flowing in like brilliant light. I think it is no coincidence that God had a guy named John MARK pen Peter's account of the life of Jesus. It's known to us as the Gospel of Mark. You see John Mark was a miserable failure on the first missionary journey of Paul. He was such a miserable failure that Paul would not permit him to go along on their second journey. Paul knew that the mission field was no place for spiritual immaturity.

Imagine how the various colors of God's grace flowed from Peter -- and shined into the heart and mind of John Mark. Because Peter could say to Mark,
"I also failed. I denied Him three times. I have heard a rooster crow in my ears for fifty years now. Believe me I understand how you feel -- but blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who begot us again to a living hope by the resurrection Jesus Christ from the dead. There are great promises given to us Mark by which we can be partakers of the divine nature."

- GRACE BROUGHT us into the Kingdom
- GRACE KEEPS us in the Kingdom
- GRACE IS THE ONLY WAY that we can look forward to at the end of the world

It is GRACE from BEGINNING to END! We are sitting here this morning because we have come to know the same GRACE OF GOD That the Thessalonians had come to know 2000 years ago.

IF you are not a Christian this morning, God is CALLING you OUT from and AWAY from the kingdom of death and darkness.

He wants to bring you INTO a personal and living relationship with Himself. He wants you to experience grace

and peace.

IF you are a Christian this morning,

Are you Living in the grace of God?

Are you Extending the grace of God?

[Edit this entry?](#)