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Love Greetings

1Thess. 1:1

Have you ever watched some of the film clips of the German concentration camps where the parents were force to leave their children as they were shipped off somewhere else?

I can not imagine anything more agonizing and torturous than being torn away from my children and not knowing what is to become of them!

This was exactly what had taken place with Paul as he was forced to leave Thessalonica because of persecution and he was hindered from returning, time and time again. 2:17-18

Remember he is writing with the heart of a Father concerned for his children who are but infants “in Christ”.

* By the way this is about twenty years after Jesus death!

Paul had sent Timothy from Athens to establish and encourage them in their faith and persecution. 3:1-3

Having received good news of their faith and love, desiring to see them again from Timothy, when he

returned to Corinth where Paul was, he writes this love letter to the Thessalonians.

Paul in the usual manner and custom of his day begins his letter to the Thessalonians by a salutation and greeting in verse one, which is the shortest of all of them.

We want to look at three things in this opening salutation and greeting.

- I.** The identity of the writer. vs. 1a-c
- II.** The identity of the readers. vs. 1d
- III.** The identity of the regards. vs. 1e

I. The identity of the writer. vs. 1a-c

- A.** Paul was the founder of the church.
 - 1.** His coming to Thessalonica was by the direction of the Holy Spirit as he was hindered from preaching both in Asia and Bithynia and receiving a vision from a man of Macedonia, he came to Philippi.
 - a.** The gospel had come to Europe and Philippi was the first church established in Europe.
 - b.** God saved Lydia and other women, a demon possessed girl, the jailer and his family.
 - c.** Having been beaten and incarcerated they were asked to leave and they came to Thessalonica, a major

commercial city along the “Egnatian Way” with a busy port, to establish the second church in Europe.

2. His name Paul means "little" perhaps in view of his physical stature. vs. 1a
 - a. Tradition tells us he was a man of small stature, bow-legged and had a hooked nose.
 - b. The name certainly described an accurate view of himself before God, even to the point where he called apostles because he persecuted the church. 1Cor. 15:9
 - c. A beautiful picture of his own perspective before God, very small and insignificant not seeking glory. 2:6
3. His name before coming to Christ was Saul which meant “ask” or “pray”.
 - a. Before the Damascus experience he was asking for a letter from the religious rulers to destroy the church. Act 9
 - b. But now he was planting churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe.
 - c. Bond servant of Christ was his title.
4. His name has no qualifying title as in his other eleven epistles, such as servant, apostle or prisoner.

- a. Some declare that his authority was not being questioned but the internal evidence is contrary. 2:3-6
- b. He declares all three to be apostles of Christ. 2:6

- B.** Silvanus was his fellow laborer. vs. 1b
1. His name is from the Latin mythology god Sylvan, who would protect the sheep from the wolves. (Pulpit p.10)
 - * How prophetic as he was one of the leading men chosen by the Jerusalem church to accompany Paul and Barnabus to deliver the decree of the Gentiles at Antioch. Acts 15:22, 27
 2. He became Paul's partner in the second missionary journey when Paul and Barnabus parted, due to John Mark. Acts 15:40
 3. He was a prophet. Acts 15:32
 4. He was a roman citizen. Acts 16:37-38
 5. He was beat and imprisoned with Paul at Philippi. Acts 15:23-24
 6. He was at the founding of the church at Thessalonica and fled with Paul to Berea. Acts 17:1-13
 7. He remained at Berea with Timothy as Paul went to Athens and later met him. Acts 17:14-15

8. Later he and Timothy met Paul at Corinth where he preached the gospel. Acts 18:5, 2 Cor. 1:19
9. He is called a faithful brother by Peter. 1Pet. 5:12

C. Timothy the faithful apprentice. vs. 1c

1. He is mentioned in Paul's epistle and Acts twenty-four times.
2. His name means he who knows God.
3. He is first mentioned as having a good reputation among the believers in Lystra and Iconium, so Paul took him as his student and helper in his second missionary journey. Acts 16:1-3
* Without doubt Timothy was saved in Paul's first missionary journey of Paul and possibly saw Paul stoned in the city! Acts 14:19-21
4. His mother was Jewish and his father Greek, therefore Paul circumcised him to avoid trouble with the Jews, reason being you are Jewish by your mother, not your father. Acts 16:1-3
5. He had a godly grandmother named Lois and his mother's name was Eunice and they both raised him in the Scriptures. 2Tim. 1:5, 3:14
6. He was timid and sickly, so Paul told him to take a little wind for his stomach sake. 1Tim. 5:23

7. Paul had no one like-minded when it came to caring for the church. Phil 2:19-22
8. Paul sent him to Philippi, Corinth and Macedonia, even though he was known to be a bit timid, calling him, his beloved bondservant and faithful son. Acts 19:22, 1Cor 4:17, Phil. 1:1, 2:19
9. He was sent with Silas by Paul from Athens back to the Thessalonians to establish and encourage them in their faith, that they not be shaken by the affliction, for they knew Christians were appointed to them. 3:1-2
10. Paul calls him his son in the faith and the pastor of the church of Ephesus after Paul left. 1Tim. 1:2-3
11. Hebrews says he was imprisoned and released. Heb. 13:23
* Men who had been touched, transformed and used by God as the Thessalonians!

Illustration

Spurgeon, that price of preachers said, "If you plan to be lazy, there are plenty of vocations in which you will not be wanted. But above all, you are not wanted in the Christian ministry. The man who finds the ministry an easy life will also find that it will bring a hard death." **Spurgeon: Ministry, #834**

Application

1. The church needs older men in Christ, Fathers who have known God from the beginning, those who have walked with Jesus for many years and counted the cost, having both the practical experience and the proven wisdom of life. 1Jn. 2:14a-b
 - a. Paul's who are called and anointed to pour themselves into other men and lead in faith, venturing out in new territory.
 - b. Paul's who have a love for the sheep and passion to teach the flock.
2. The church needs young men who are strong, the word abiding in them and who overcoming the wicked one. 1Jn. 2:14c-f
 - a. Silas's who are companions of Paul's and are loyal and faithful, as unto the Lord.
 - b. Silas's who complement Paul's with their gifts and servant type attitude.
3. The church needs children who are touched by God's Spirit knowing that their sins are forgiven, to become the students and helpers of the church as they grow in Christ, in order to stand in the gap when the fathers and young men are taken home. 1Jn. 2:12
 - a. Timothy's who have been touched by God in their youth to respond to the call of God.
 - b. Timothy's who will make a difference in this world, beacon lights of the church.

This was the identity of Paul, Silas and Timothy!

II. The identity of the Reader. vs. 1d

A. The church of the Thessalonians.

* This identified their earthly locality!

1. Only here and second Thessalonians does Paul use the phrase "church of Thessalonians" a local assembly.
 - a. Paul uses the term for the universal church, the assembly of believers, the local church and the house church.
 - b. Paul usually addressed the believers as "the saints".
 - c. In Galatians the plural is used by Paul, "To the churches of Galatia". Gal. 1:2
 - d. Thessalonica was the second church in Europe, Philippi was the first.
2. The word church is "ekklesia" in the Greek.
 - a. The word is made up of two words,
 - 1) The word "ek" which means out from.
 - 2) The word "kaleo" which means to call.
 - 3) The word basically indicates those called out.
 - b. The word is found 115 times in the New Testament.
 - c. Sixty-two times it is found in Paul's letters.

3. The word was used by the Greek to describe a civil assembly of people, such as in Athens:
 - a. Citizens gathered with power to declare war, peace, elect generals and raise funds.
 - b. They began with prayer and sacrifice.
 - c. Later it became known in a wider sense for a convened assembly of citizens. Acts 19:32, 39, 41
 - d. The church was an orderly assembly in-spire of being only three weeks old. 5:12-13, 27
4. Paul is distinguishing the people of the church of Thessalonica from other assemblies in the city.
 - a. Those who have been called out by the Spirit of God, to hear the voice of God.
 - b. There were those called out for many other assemblies at Thessalonica, for they were a free city able to govern themselves, remember.
 - c. They were now completely free to govern their own lives, no longer being slaves of sin, called out of darkness, the church of Jesus Christ, even as He said, "I will build my church". Matt 16:18

- B. The church is declared to be in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - * The first identified their earthly locality while the second identifies their heavenly sphere.
1. The church was in God the Father.
 - a. This is a rare expression by Paul found here. 2Thess 1:1, Col. 3:3
 - b. The Father begot them through the word of truth to be a kind of first fruits. Ja. 1:16-17
 - * By the incorruptible seed, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. 1Pet 1:23
 - c. Before they were in the pagan and evil system under the sway of the evil one. 1Jn. 5:19, 1Thess. 1:9, 2:13
 - * Jesus prayed to the Father not to take us out of the world but keep us from the evil one, to sanctify us by the word of truth and to send us out into the world to preach. Jn 17:15-19
 - d. Now they are sons and daughters of God.
 - * The word of "God" appears thirty-six times in first Thessalonians and eighteen times in second Thessalonians.
2. The church is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. This is Paul's favorite phrase “in Christ”, especially in Ephesians.
 - b. The church was made up of some Jews, great multitude of Greeks and a good number of leading women. Act 124
 - c. This combination of “in God” and “in Christ”, is constant through the two epistles.
* 1Thess. 1:1, 3, 3:11-13, 5:18,
2Thess. 1:1, 2, 8, 12, 2:16
3. This teaches the highest view of Jesus, being joined with the Father.
- a. The word Lord “kurios” is a title for Master, recognized by willful submission contrary to a despot.
 - 1) It appears twenty-five times in the epistle.
 - 2) It identifies those who have bowed their knee and have confessed Him now. Phil 2:10-11
 - 3) The word is used in the LXX for “Jehovah”.
 - b. The name Jesus “Iesous” in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Joshua which is the contraction of “Jehovah-shua” means Jehovah is salvation.
 - 1) This is His human name, the one who would save His people from their sins. Matt 1:21, 1Thess. 2:15, 4:14

- 2) Jesus being God emptied Himself of His glory and took on the form of a servant but remained God always known as the “Kenosis”. Phil. 2:5-8
- c. The word Christ “Kristos”, means anointed, the Hebrew equivalent is Messiah.
 - 1) This is His office, the One chosen by God the Father to redeem man.
 - 2) "You are the Christ". Matt 16:16
* The Thessalonians were an assembly called out by God to hear His voice, living in the sphere and fellowship of the Father and Son!

Illustration

Do you know where the term “Maverick” came from? From Samuel Maverick, a Texan cattleman who refused to brand his cattle. The term came to mean a nonconformist. The church of Jesus Christ is to be a “Maverick”, a nonconformist to the worlds methods and so call wisdom!

Application

1. The church is an amazing organism that is to be the absolute product of God here on earth and we must be oh so careful that we not attempt to change it’s nature.

* It is called “the body of Christ” and “the family of God”, etc.

- a. The church is not a place to pressure people for money by continuous pleading but a place where people are to give faithfully in obedience to God, out of love.
 - b. The church is not a socializing agency but a channel to better society.
 - c. The church is not a place for self-centered comparison but a place of conviction and commitment.
2. The church is to be identified always with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- * Christ is the head of the church!
 - a. The church is not to focus on the things of man but the things of God, which are spiritual.
 - b. The church is not to be a proclaimer of twelve step programs but a proclaimer of the one step, Jesus.
 - c. The church is not place it's confidence in inferior behavioral modifications but on the superior spiritual transformation,

This was the identity of the readers!

III. The identity of the regards. vs. 1e

- A. Paul pronounces the grace of God upon them.
 - 1. This was the common Greek greeting.
 - a. The word "karis" communicates personal benefit, favor and beauty.

- b. The New testament uses the word for the way man is saved, unmerited favor, something that is not deserved. Eph. 2:8-9
2. This pronouncement of grace to the Thessalonians was not for salvation, they were already saved, this grace was for their daily living.
- a. The Bible teaches that we are saved.
 - b. The Bible teaches that we are being saved.
 - c. The Bible teaches that we shall be saved.
 - d. The process of salvation from God's perspective is an accomplished fact, while from our perspective, it is a process.
3. The Thessalonians by the grace of God were able to accomplish the following things.
- a. They became examples to all. 1:7
 - b. They turned to God from idols. 1:9
 - c. They receive the word not as means but Gods. 2:13
 - d. They became imitators of the churches of God in suffering. 2:14
 - e. They were taught by God to love one another. 4:9
4. The grace of God is described in many ways in the Scriptures.
- a. Great. Acts 4:33

- b. All-abundant. Rom. 5:15-20
- c. All-sufficient. 2Cor. 12:9
- d. Rich. Eph. 2:4-5
- e. Glorious. Eph. 1.6
- f. Undeserved. 1Tim. 1:12-16
Undeserved. 1Tim. 1:12-16
- g. Manifold. 1Pet. 4:10
- h. We stand in grace. Rom. 5:2
- i. We are not to frustrate the grace of God. Gal. 2:20
- j. We are to speak with grace. Eph. 4:29
- k. We are to grow in grace. 2Pet. 3:18
- l. We are not to abuse the grace of God.
Jude 4
* The Thessalonians were to draw from the divine grace of God!

B. Paul pronounces the peace of God upon them.

1. The word peace “eirene” means to join together, the name Irene comes from it.
 - a. This is not the peace with God at salvation, for they are already saved.
 - b. But for daily living for the difficult and seeming unfair situations of life to guard our hearts mind as a sentinel. Phil. 4:7
2. To the Greek it meant inner peace, tranquillity.

- a. This was the equivalent Hebrew greeting “Shalom”, implying the prosperity of the whole man.
- b. Father and Son intricately joined again.
* The Thessalonians were to experience the peace of God!

Illustration

If heaven were by merit, it would never be heaven to me, for if I were in it I should say, "I am sure I am here by mistake; I am sure this is not my place; I have no claim to it." But if it be of grace and not of works, then we may walk into heaven with boldness. **Spurgeon #546**

* Newton said that there would be three wonders in heaven, first not to find people there that he did expect to be there, second to not see people there, who he did expect to be there and the third and last wonder, would be to find himself there!

Application

1. By God’s grace we all are able to partake of a divine nature, being sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness. 2Pet 1:3-4
 - a. Treasure in earthen vessel....glory and power be of God not of us. 2Cor 4:7
 - b. We are to be diligent lest we fall short of the grace of God. Heb 12:15
2. By God’s grace we are able to bring our thoughts into captivity that come against the knowledge of God. 2Cor. 10:4-5

- a. The Lord proclaimed to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness”. 2Cor. 12:9
 - a. The principle is “For me to live is Christ die is gain”. Phil. 1:21
 - b. The perspective is “I am crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Gal. 2:20
3. By God’s peace that we experience in our lives His grace is magnified.
- a. Through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Phil. 4:7-8
 - b. Through trusting God in faith, the evidence of things hope for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11:1
 - c. Through understanding that He is and He is the rewarded of those who diligently seek Him. Heb. 11:6
4. By God’s peace in our lives, we are experiencing the most intimate fellowship with our Lord.
- a. The invitation is, “Come to me....” Matt 11:28-30
 - b. The provision is the peace of Jesus, in Him. Jn. 14:27,16:33

This was the identity of the regards!

- I The identity of the writer: Paul and the men who had been touched, transformed and used by God!
- II. The identity of the readers: An assembly called out by God, to hear the voice of God and live in fellowship with Him!
- III. The identity of the regards: Divine grace and peace for their life!

Conclusion