

## **"The Reality of the Lord's Presence"**

### ***2 Thessalonians 3:16-18***

**Theme:** The permanent presence of Christ among believers is assured through grace.

Introduction:

#### **I. THE INDICATION OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE - 3:16**

##### **A. The Presence of Peace**

1. In the two epistles of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, Paul had dealt with a variety of issues that had plagued the church there because of false teaching.
2. He did everything He could, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to provide clarity and perspicuity - even to the point of calling for the rejection of those who refuse to heed the instructions provided by God's Spirit through him - vv. 13-15.
3. He now brings them to what He desires to be the result of the embrace of the truths that He has clarified throughout his letter - *"Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace ..."*
4. The use of the jussive voice - *"Now may ..."* indicates that this is the goal or aspiration Paul expressed in the form of a prayer for God to enable them to know *"peace."*
5. *"Peace"* [εἰρήνης] is a term that speaks to the sense of "calmness" or "rest" that comes from knowing that the Sovereign God who created us and to whom we have been reconciled is attending to our circumstances in such a way as to produce His glory in all things.
6. The Thessalonians had known distress, anxiety, and general angst resulting from false teaching about the Return of Christ Jesus - confusing the Rapture of the Church with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, and "The Day of the Lord" with their current circumstances - cp. ***2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2:16-17; 3:3.***
7. Of course, this *"peace"* is unavailable except through the Lord Jesus Christ which is why Paul prays for the *"Lord of peace Himself"* to *"grant you peace"* - an emphatic construction that places the word *"Himself"* first in the sentence.
8. To be in a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith is to have peace - as He is called the "Prince of Peace," and who is "Himself our peace" - cp. ***Isaiah 9:6; Ephesians 2:14.***

9. Of course, this *“peace”* is provided by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit who advocates for Christ in all things - being part of the “fruit of the Spirit” - cp. **Galatians 5:22**.

## **B. The Prevalence of Peace - *“in every circumstance”***

1. Notice the comprehensiveness or prevalence of this peace Paul prays for - *“continually grant you peace in every circumstance.”*
2. *“Continually”* [] - describes an unbroken or uninterrupted peace.
3. *“... in every circumstance”* describes a transcendent peace that is unaltered by anything we experience, regardless of how traumatic, disappointing, or painful.
4. Paul emphasizes that this *“peace”* is only possible when Jesus Christ is present - *“the Lord be with you all!”*
5. When there is a sense of Christ’s presence with us, the *“peace”* He provides prevails - we sense that we are okay and that His power, wisdom, knowledge, and presence will overcome and bring Himself glory - cp. **John 14:27**.
6. Such realization results from faith in God’s beneficence and benevolence toward us that enables us to turn to Him in faith and trust - cp. **Isaiah 26:3; Philipians 4:6-7**.
7. Such *“peace”* is unavailable to the unbeliever or sinner in that God’s Word declares they have no peace - cp. **Isaiah 48:22**.
8. Any sense of *“peace”* present in an unbeliever is the result of their ignorance of their actual condition before the Lord - the danger they are in is real and they simply fail to know it.

## **II. THE INSIGHT INTO THE LORD’S PRESENCE - 3:17**

### **A. The Affinity to Truth**

1. We know that one of the foremost destroyers of peace is false doctrine - even as demonstrated by the struggle and distress that the false teachers had caused among the Thessalonians.
2. Paul had already referenced the ravaging impact of people who had impersonated him through false teaching - cp. **2 Thessalonians 2:2**.
3. God is a God of truth and therefore truth matters to Him - cp. **2 Corinthians 4:2**.

4. The consummate expression of truth is the Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself the Truth - cp. ***John 1:14; John 14:6.***
5. The misrepresentation of Christ Jesus through false teaching or forged epistles as though from an Apostle is a major concern for Paul.

### **B. The Attestation of Truth**

1. Therefore, Paul provides a notice to the Thessalonians that no document can claim to have his authority which does not have on it his own "autograph" - ***"I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write."***
2. He is saying that they are to use his signature - his "distinguishing mark" [σημεῖον] - an identifying mark whereby something can be identified.
3. When he says ***"... this is the way I write"*** - he is charging the Thessalonians to reject anything that does not have his signature, and they were to check subsequent epistles with a handwriting analysis to insure it matches the ***"way"*** Paul did ***"write."***
4. He desired that their assurances of the truth and their awareness of the Lord's presence remaining with them be preserved by means of the authenticity of revelation that properly teaches them of it.

## **III. THE INCLUSIVITY OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE - 3:18**

### **A. The Incongruity with Grace**

1. Paul closes his epistle with the aspiration that the favor of Christ Jesus would prevail throughout the entirety of the church.
2. He writes: ***"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."***
3. ***"Grace"*** [χάρις] - refers to that state of being in which we receive the favor of God without any merit or deserving.
4. The essence of ***"grace"*** is that no one deserves it - it is only available to us through ***"our Lord Jesus Christ."***
5. As long as one is looking to Christ, they are assured that this ***"grace"*** will ***"... be with you."***

### **B. The Inclusivity of Grace**

1. Yet, because of how Paul had been required to rebuke some within the Thessalonian church, he makes his aspiration absolute by saying ***"with you all."***

2. "The missionaries have found it necessary to use strong words of censure against the disorderly, but they are anxious to make it clear that all alike have an affectionate place in their prayers and wishes for God's blessings."<sup>1</sup>
3. Of course, our conviction of the perseverance of the saints assures us that once we have known the "*grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*" it will remain "*with you.*"

**The permanent presence of Christ among believers is assured through grace.**

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<sup>1</sup> Hiebert, p. 356.