



The Ultimate Packaged Deal

2 Thessalonians 1:1-2 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friends, I think we've all had enough of packaged deals and bundled goods and services that sometimes it just makes us want to scream, but before you swear off all such special offers once and for all, there's one you dare not overlook or throw away with all the rest. As the Apostle Paul opens his Second Letter to the Thessalonians, he reminds them to treasure the unbeatable packaged deal that they (and all believers) already possess.

Paul personally composed this letter with the concurrence of his ministry companions--Silas and Timothy--who had also been instrumental in encouraging and communicating with the congregation at Thessalonica. Specifically, Paul addresses them as "the gathering [of those] who are in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". In other words, a believer is anyone who is connected to God through faith and has him for their Father and Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master—the ruler of their hearts and lives. Throughout the New Testament Jesus maintains that the Father and Son always come together. He told the crowds, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). Nor can anyone come to the Son, unless the Father draws them first (John 6:44). Because of the interpenetration of their persons within the godhead, anyone who does not hold the Son in equal esteem, power, glory, and divinity as the Father, forfeits both Father and Son (John 5:23). It follows then that true faith in God is not and can never be generic—merely the admission that there is a god out there somewhere. Real faith is exclusive. It is trust in, knowledge of, and a living relationship with the God of Scripture, who has revealed himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

But these two, the Father and the Son, not only come in an inseparable package, they *give* a package: grace and peace. Grace is that endless favor of God that never runs out, never reaches bottom, manifested and secured for us by Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. It's grace that motivated God to plan our salvation before the world began. Grace by which he called us to be his children through his Word and Sacrament. It's because of grace he promises to keep us to the end, and grace that moved Jesus to pay for the sins of all people (even those who hate and reject him) because he loves them still.

But side by side with grace comes peace. Because God loves and forgives me, I am at peace with him. There is no more hostility between me and the holy God, even though I'm anything but perfect. I'm a rotten sinner who ruins everything that I do and think and say, but in Jesus those sins are taken away. I can fall asleep at night free of guilt with a clear and happy conscience. I am free to embrace my glorious Creator without fear and look forward to being with him forever.

So then before Paul ever gets into what we should hold on to, he reminds us of what we already have, that the Lord already holds onto us and wraps us in his grace and peace. What a blessing! What a priceless packaged deal! With no term limits, no renewal date, no qualifying preconditions, no fine print, and no cost to us! Nothing could be better than the ultimate double bundle of Father-Son and grace and peace!

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven and my Lord Jesus Christ, what an incomparable gift it is that I should be yours and you should be mine! May your free grace and peace be the source of my confidence, my joy, and my message from you to the world. Amen.