

Today ~ we begin an in depth study ~ of Paul's first epistle ~ to the church ~ at Thessalonica.

Like Philipians, ~ 1 T ~ is an intensely personal letter.

➤ So we're dropping in on Paul's very personal correspondence.

➤ But what Paul wrote to them is the word of God.

▷ Therefore, ~ though he was writing to the believers in Thessalonica specifically, ~ the letter is for all believers of all generations in general.

➤ And so what we have to do ~ is draw out ~ the general principles, lessons, and applications.

▷ Much is descriptive. ⇒ Models to follow.

To begin with in our study, ~ this a.m. we want to accomplish 2 goals.

1st, ~ background to & summary of the major sections, ~ & 2nd, ~ the greeting, ~ v. 1.

Background & summary of the major sections.

Thessalonica ~ was one of the towns in Macedonia.

➤ Macedonia was the northern region of Greece. ⇒ Achaia, ~ southern region.

➤ Macedonia ~ a Roman province, ~ Thessalonica, ~ the capital. 1/11

Paul, ~ Silas, ~ & Timothy ~ visited Thessalonica ~ during Paul's 2nd missionary journey.

➤ They spent a brief time there.

➤ During this time, ~ they gained a number of converts.

▷ So these were new believers Paul was writing to.

➤ But the missionary team was forced to flee ~ because of Jewish opposition.

Paul & team left a church that was at most ~ a few months old in the faith.

➤ It was already experiencing persecution.

➤ These new believers had not received all the teaching they needed.

➤ Nor did they have mature leadership to oversee the church.

As the missionary team traveled on ~ to Berea, Athens, and finally Corinth, ~ they were deeply concerned about the welfare of these new believers.

➤ Their repeated attempts to return to the city were blocked by severe circumstances that Paul attributed to Satan (2:17-18).

While in Athens, ~ Paul & the others could no longer bear their anxiety over the church.

➤ Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica for 2 reasons.

▷ And i.e., ~ to strengthen the believers ~ and ~ to be sure that they had not abandoned their faith (3:1-2, 5). 2/11

➤ While Paul was in Corinth, ~ Timothy returned from Thessalonica with good news.

▷ These new believers ~ continued in faith and love ~ and were standing firm despite the opposition they faced (3:6-8).

➤ Paul probably wrote 1 Thess. from Corinth after being encouraged by Timothy's report. ~~ About AD 50.

This letter explodes with the joy Paul experienced upon hearing this report.

➤ It expresses his thankfulness to God ~ for their faithfulness, love, & hope.

➤ It also expresses his prayer that ~ he might return to see them again and establish them more fully in the faith (3:9-11).

As noted, ~ 1 Thess. is a letter of thanksgiving to God for the faith, love, and hope of the young Thessalonian church (1:2-3; 2:13; 3:9).

➤ Paul, however, also presents some of his concerns.

➤ E.g., ~ doctrinal & ethical concerns. ⇒ & see those through the letter.

Background.

Now, in order to aid us ~ in setting the overall context ~ and in not getting lost in the details ~ now we'll do a summary ~ of each major section.

After the greeting in ~ 1:1, ~ there are ~ 4 ~ major sections ~ to 1 Thess.

1st, ~ 1:2-10, ~ a prayer-report. 3/11

➤ This prayer-report makes clear ~ Paul's own love and concern for his friends.

▷ & the prayer-report also serves ~ to encourage these new believers in their Christian lives.

2nd, ~ 2:1 ⇨ 3:13.

➤ Explores the gospel ministry and the Thessalonian response.

➤ I.e., ~ Paul will remind them further ~ of his team's gospel ministry in Thessalonica (2:1-12).

▷ And also ~ of how ~ the Thessalonians received the gospel (2:13-16).

➤ In 2:17-20, ~ Paul mentions his longing ~ to return to the Thessalonians.

▷ This longing ~ was partially out of concern ~ for how these young believers were faring ~ amid the opposition they faced.

▷ Yet it was not possible ~ for him to make the journey.

➤ Instead, ~ Paul sent Timothy, ~ received an encouraging report, ~ and wrote this letter in response (3:1-10).

➤ Paul concludes the 2nd major section of this epistle ~ with a benediction (3:11-13).

3rd, ~ 4:1 ⇨ 5:22. ~ Various Exhortations & Instructions.

➤ In this section, ~ we find ~ specific exhortations and instructions ~ that connect to the church's ~ ethical and doctrinal challenges. 4/11

➤ They first address ~ 1 particular aspect of sanctification: ~ sexual fidelity (4:1-8).

▷ The Roman world, ~ much like ours, ~ was awash ~ with sexual immorality.

⇒ And Paul sought to instill a Christian sexual ethic.

▷ IOW, ~ believers ~ are not to conform ~ to the immoral sexual attitudes of the surrounding culture.

⇒ Rom. 12:2a, ~ Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

→ I.e., ~ Don't copy ~ the behavior and customs of this world.

➤ Continuing look @ 3rd major section, ~ Paul proceeds ~ to exhort them further ~ in love for one another (4:9-10).

➤ And he also proceeds in this 3rd major sect ~ to encourage a proper public witness through Christian work (4:11-12).

➤ The central part of the 3rd section ~ focuses on the return of Christ (4:13 - 5:11).

▷ Paul addresses ~ 2 key questions.

⇒ 1st, ~ What will happen ~ to the Christian dead?

⇒ And 2nd, ~ When ~ will Christ return?

➤ The final paragraph ~ of the 3rd section ~ 5:12-22 ~ brings together ~ a series of exhortations ~ about proper church conduct. 5/11

4th, ~ 5: ~ 23-28. ~ Paul draws letter to a close.

► In these final verses, ~ Paul directs the church ~ to pray for his ministry, ~ to greet one another with a sign of friendship, ~ ↓

▷ and ~ to read his letter aloud ~ to the whole church.

► As he does in all his epistles, ~ Paul ends with ~ an prayer for God's grace.

▷ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

That's our overview of the individual major sections.

Now let's explore the greeting, ~ 1:1.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1a, ~ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

► While Paul uses "I" ~ several times throughout the letter, ~ he lists his co-workers ~ Silvanus and Timothy.

▷ It is probably not the case ~ that they served as co-writers in a formal sense.

⇒ But rather ~ most likely ~ Paul wanted to express ~ that he functioned as part ~ of a larger team.

▷ Paul often demonstrated ~ a hearty spirit of ~ community and cooperation. 6/11

▷ 2 Cor 1:19 ~ reminds us that, ~ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy ~ proclaimed the gospel as a team. ⇒ Paul ~ was not ~ a lone ranger.

▶ The lesson here ~ is that ~ there are to be ~ no lone rangers ~ in church ministry.

▷ Jesus set ~ the pattern ~ of teamwork in ministry.

⇒ Mk. 6:7, ~ "And he called the twelve ~ [i.e., ~ the apostles] ~ and began to send them out ~ two by two, ~ and gave them authority over the unclean spirits."

⇒ Lk. 10:1, ~ "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others ~ and sent them on ahead of him, ~ two by two, ~ into every town and place where he himself was about to go."

▷ Maybe a couple of instances, ~ Philip in Acts 8.

▷ But the overwhelming pattern ~ is teamwork ~ in ministry.

⇒ Acts 13:2-3, ~ "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, ~ the Holy Spirit said, ~~ "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ~~ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

→ Think through benefits of teamwork

Now for Paul's coworkers.

▶ (1a) Silvanus ~ is the Roman form of Silas, ~ which was his Grk name.

▷ Paul used Silas' Roman name consistently in his writings, ~ as did Peter (1 Peter 5:12).

▷ Luke called him Silas (e.g., ~ Acts 15:22). 7/11

▷ Silas ~ was Paul's primary associate ~ on the second missionary journey ([Acts 15:40](#)).

▶ Timothy, ~ of course, ~ was a young man Paul led to faith in Christ.

▷ In the opening of 1 Tim., ~ Paul referred to him as ~ [my true child in the faith](#).

▷ Timothy's conversion ~ probably occurred ~ during Paul's visit to Asia Minor ~ on his 1st missionary journey ([Acts 13-14](#)).

1b, ~ To the church of the Thessalonians.

▶ To the modern hearer, ~ the word ~ church ~ evokes images ~ of ornate buildings or complex denominational structures.

▷ These images ~ all too easily cause one ~ to miss ~ the significance of the NT usage ~ of this term.

▶ Simply put, ~ the church ~ is the community ~ of those ~ who believe in and follow Jesus Christ.

▶ Expand.

▷ In the NT, ~ the Church is always ~ a company of worshipping people ~ who have ~ given their hearts ~ and pledged their lives ~ to Jesus.

▷ In the NT, ~ the word church ~ never means a building.

▷ E.g., ~ in Eph., ~ Paul tells husbands ~ to love our wives ~ [as Christ loved the church ~ and gave himself up for her](#).

▷ Ok to refer to this building as a church. **8/11**

1c, ~ Add that believers are ~ in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

► I understand that the Grk prep. for wd in ~ indicates means.

▷ I.e., ~ it designates ~ the church at Thessalonica ~ as brought into being ~ by the Father and Jesus.

▷ Read: ~ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, ~ to the church of the Thessalonians, ~ brought into being ~ by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

▷ Of course, ~ this is true of the universal church as a whole, ~ not just 1 particular local fellowship.

► What Paul says in vs 1c ~ is great encouragement, ~ especially ~ as we see the surrounding culture ~ become more and more hostile.

▷ The church ~ is a work of God. ⇨ And not ~ a work of humans.

⇒ And that's why ~ the church can never be destroyed, ~ because its existence ~ does not depend on us ~ but on God.

▷ I will build my church, ~ and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

⇒ Jesus promises us that ~ the church will not be destroyed ~ by the evil powers arrayed against it.

⇒ Our enemies' efforts ~ to destroy the church ~ no doubt receive the same reaction from God, ~ regarding the rebellious ~ who want ~ to throw him off of His throne.

→ God laughs ~ at the futile efforts of Satan and sinful humans ~ to overthrow Him, ~ to stop the gospel from spreading, ~ and to destroy the church. 9/11

➤ Additionally, ~ what Paul says in vs 1c ~ is a reminder ~ of a great truth.

▷ And i.e., ~ that God the Father ~ has ~ rescued us ~ from the dominion of darkness ~ and ~ brought us into ~ the kingdom of the Son he loves, ~ in whom ~ we have redemption, ~ the forgiveness of sins (NIV).

▷ Believers have been rescued ~ from the dominion of darkness, ~ with sin pictured as ~ a dark realm ~ under the rule of Satan.

▷ Darkness ~ has taken control ~ of the world of unbelievers.

▷ And its tyrannical rule ~ has destroyed & will continue to destroy ~ countless lives.

▷ There is no hope ~ apart from Christ.

⇒ He died on the cross ~ in order to ~ deliver those in darkness, ~ redeem them from their sins, ~ and ~ transfer them into the kingdom of light.

Then in vs 1d, ~ Paul adds his customary greeting. ⇒ All 13 of epistles.

Grace to you and peace.

➤ This greeting calls to mind ~ both the basis and the consequence ~ of God's saving activity, ~ which finds its focus in Jesus Christ.

➤ Eph. 2:8-9, ~ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

➤ Result.

▷ Rom. 5:1, ~ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10/11

▷Peace = emphatic.

⇒Lit., ~ Peace we have with God.

⇒Emphasized ~ because to be at peace with God is huge.

▷Furthermore, ~ vb form for ~ we have ~ highlights ~ the continuing state of peace ~ that now exists between those who accept God's offer of grace and God.

We should point out here ~ that the order in the NT ~ is always ~ grace and peace.

►It is never ~ the reverse.

▷No one can experience ~ peace with God ~ without first receiving ~ the saving grace of God.

Ok, ~ today we basically ~ set the stage ~ for the rest of the study.

Reading. 11/11