

“The Lord of Peace”
2 Thessalonians 3:16-18
(Preached at Trinity, October 18, 2020)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. With **Verse 16** Paul begins the conclusion to his letter. He ends with words of encouragement for the church.
 - A. They were surrounded by foes and adversaries who hated them, but Paul reminds them they were never alone. God's redemptive purpose is never in doubt.
2 Thessalonians 3:3 NAU - "the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*."
 - B. In **Verse 16** Paul reminds them of the peace and presence of Christ in every circumstance.
2. Paul began each of his thirteen epistles with the opening salutation of grace and peace, including this one.
2 Thessalonians 1:2 NAU - "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
This was consistent with first century letters. Paul also ended all of his letters with a benediction of grace—including this one. As I've pointed out, Paul has been called the Apostle of grace. Grace permeated his letters.
But Paul did not end all of his letters with a benediction of peace. Closing this letter with such a benediction was unique and most appropriate to this letter.
 - In the midst of their turmoil and the hateful attitudes of their neighbors and the constant persecution they were facing, it would have been encouraging for Paul to remind them of the ever-present Lord of Peace.
It was a reminder of the words of our Lord:
John 16:33 NAU - "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."
 - With the internal problems of this local church regarding those who were disrupting the peace of the church with their idleness and undisciplined lives, they needed to be reminded that the ultimate solution could only come through the Lord of Peace.
 - The ultimate cause of every human problem upon the earth is sin and the resulting alienation from God. Paul encourages these elect saints. We must never forget this. We must never forget the impact of sin upon the earth.
"Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!"

3. Paul puts this in the form of a benediction: “May the Lord of Peace grant you peace.” This morning I want us to pause for a few minutes to consider this peace. It is a grace often misunderstood and often taken for granted.

We need to understand Paul is ultimately speaking of a particular peace. The word for “peace” is accompanied by the definite article – “The Peace”

The forfeiture of this peace? The restoration of this peace? What is the significance of this peace?

I. The fall of humanity into sin resulted in the forfeiture of this Peace

A. The universe was created in peace and order. Human beings were created in harmony and fellowship with God and with the world. Adam lived in perfect peace. Creation was at peace.

1. Again, Paul is speaking of a particular peace. With the fall of Adam this peace was lost.
2. Before he sinned Adam had a true and proper reverence for God – he worshipped God in love and obedience.
3. Adam had the confidence that God was working for his good – that he was in a true and proper communion with God. He had the favor of God.
 - a. God was the source of all his comfort and confidence
 - b. Adam was free from sin. He lived in a state of innocence. Adam knew the peace that comes from knowing God is on your side, that He is working on your behalf.
4. All of creation was in harmony, everything functioning according to God’s perfect design. Adam had dominion over creation and everything cooperated with his leadership.
5. When Adam sinned all peace ended. Adam entered into a state of war with God. He saw God as his enemy.
 - a. Instead of his conscience leading him to God, it terrified him and led him to flee from God.
 - b. Adam feared God, mistrusted God, he no longer understood God.
 - c. He hated and despised God’s rule
Psalm 2:1-3 NAU - "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"
6. More important, God saw Adam as His enemy.
Isaiah 59:2 NAU - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear."
 Paul declares in Romans 1 –
Romans 1:18 NAU - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"

7. The lost man pretends that God is on his side. Everyone thinks they are in God's good favor – especially religious people.
Everyone announces, "God loves you." "God loves me." We all pretend God is well-pleased with us. The bitter pill of the Gospel is that God is NOT pleased with you. That's the great stumbling block.
- B. Few realize the full effect of the fall of man
1. Sin resulted in man forfeiting every blessing from God.
Every act of kindness from God, every blessing, every enjoyment of life is by the mercy of God. We are due one thing – death. We have earned it.
 2. Everything around us is plagued with hostility – it mirrors our alienation from God.
 - a. There are wars between nations – in my lifetime I have never seen a time when there has not been conflict somewhere in this world.
 - b. There is racial conflict. Humanity has never known harmony. We're seeing unprecedented social unrest – there is no peace.
 - c. There are conflicts in families – the divorce rate is still terribly high.
 - d. There are conflicts between employees and employers
 - e. We look at the two main political parties in our nation and see they are most characterized by strife, partisanship and political wrangling.
 - f. People cry out for peace, but peace cannot be found. Hatred abounds.
 3. Sin has caused an infinite separation between God and man. There is an infinite distance between the lost man and God and there is no way to bridge the gap apart from Christ. Peace has been destroyed.
Isaiah 57:20-21 NAU - "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud. ²¹
"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."
 4. This separation will reach its fullest zenith on the Day of Judgment
Matthew 25:41 NAU - "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;"

II. The restoration of this Peace

- A. There is only one way to bring a restoration of this peace – the Gospel of Christ. Only through the Gospel can there be reconciliation. Only through the Gospel can there be peace. This peace flows from the entire Godhead
1. It is the peace of God that flows forth from the Father, the God of peace.
Philippians 4:9 NAU - "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."
The Father elected a people and sent forth His Son, the Prince of Peace as Redeemer to bring about reconciliation.
 2. It is also a peace that comes forth from the Holy Spirit –
The Spirit of Peace that gives peace.
"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . ."

- B. But Paul's focus in this final benediction is upon the "Lord of Peace," through whom we have obtained peace. Jesus Christ is the Lord of Peace.
2 Thessalonians 3:16 NAU - "Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace"
1. Jesus used the same words of encouragement before His departure:
John 14:27 NAU – "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."
 Here in **Verse 16** Paul repeats this truth: "may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace." –
 The word for "grant" simply means "give" which is how almost every modern translation renders it.
 2. Jesus procured this peace through His death upon the cross. Justice satisfied, sins forgiven, reconciliation obtained.
Romans 5:8-11 NAU - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."
 3. Peace with God is inseparably tied to our justification.
Romans 5:1 NAU - "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"

III. The Significance of this Peace

- A. This peace is the peace of reconciliation – of alienation being removed, of sin being forgiven. We are united as one with Christ.
1. With this peace we have the blessing of assurance – no longer are we at war with God. He is pleased with us.
 2. We are granted to come into His presence – to enter into His dwelling place. It is the blessing of worship and prayer and of fellowship.
Psalms 100:4 NAU - "Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name."
 3. Paul says, "may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace" He does this with His abiding presence – "The Lord be with you all."
 4. This peace was important for the Thessalonians who were certain the coming of Christ was upon them. It is important for us as well. We are not about to face Christ as His enemies but as His beloved bride. The fear of death has been destroyed.

- B. We are also granted situational peace - comfort in every situation
2 Thessalonians 3:16 NAU - "Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance."
1. Through every trial, every conflict, every circumstance of life
 This has far reaching implications
 "grant you peace in every circumstance"
 The word for circumstance can also be translated "way, or manner, or fashion." In other words, there is no limit on the ways Christ chooses to bring us peace.
 2. This has a major impact upon our confidence and comfort in prayer.
 We are granted indescribable peace through the grace of prayer
Philippians 4:6-7 NAU - "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- C. Finally, we find the peace found in loving our neighbor
1. There is much talk today about racial reconciliation. This is ultimately made possible through the Gospel. It has been said, we can't end racism. Jesus has already done this. We simply need to walk in it.
 2. The lost man is on a never-ending treadmill trying to get ahead of everyone else. He feels superior to everyone else. He wants the place of preeminence recognition.
 3. Love brings liberation, it brings contentment, it brings peace. We can disagree over many things as brothers and sisters in Christ. But in Christ we can love one another in peace.
 It is important to remember the context here. It follows Paul's charge to disassociate with the unruly brother. In the midst of conflict Jesus Christ brings peace.
 4. That Paul can say "Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace" is a great wonder and should humble us.
 We should stand amazed at the incarnation—the blessed Immanuel.
 Paul's words of Christ's presence should amaze us.
2 Thessalonians 3:16 NAU - "The Lord be with you all!"

Conclusion:

1. What a fitting way to end this letter. To end with a prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will be with them and grant them peace. It reminds us of the great Aaronic Blessing:
Numbers 6:24-26 NAU - "The LORD bless you, and keep you; ²⁵ The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; ²⁶ The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace."
2. With this Paul offers his final benediction:
 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."