

The Book of 1Thessalonians

[Sun. Nov. 9, 2014] 1Thessalonians Series, 1Thes. 1.1b - Craig A. Thurman

Remember these points as we study this letter:

The salutation is from bros. Paul, Silas, & Timothy. (1.1)

The writer is Paul, a brother. (4.9; 5.1)

It is addressed to the church located in Thessalonica. ((1.1)

It was written from either Athens or Corinth, about A.D.51, during the second missionary journey. (Acts 15.41-18.22)

The purpose of the letter is stated in 3.12,13. That at Christ's coming they would be judged for having holy hearts.

While this letter was written to the church that was located in the city of Thessalonica, there is no mention of bishops and deacons. At least the lack of this acknowledgement forces upon this corporation of members their personal accountability to fellowship with one another in the gospel of Jesus Christ. (5.12-23) When we compare this letter to those written to the church at Ephesus, churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, those that James addressed in his letter, all of those churches were addressed as having pastors or elders. (Acts 20.28; Eph.4.11; Ja. 5.14; 1Pe.5.1) Colossae might have had a pastor. (Col. 4.17) But in Thessalonica there is no such distinction made within her membership, unless it is implied in 5.12, 13.

Finally, recall how quickly that this church was organized into a legitimate body of Christ. In as little as 15 days, and no more than 21 days these baptized believers knew their need to form into a N.T. church. The fact that they had not much in the way of doctrine has nothing to do with church constitution. First, baptized believers should, for their joy and relationship with one another in Christ, desire that close fellowship, and are led of the Lord to do so. Therefore **the biblical order is maintained when first they are organized into a church, and then instructed in the things of Christ.** (Mt.28.20; Jn.14.26; 2Thes.2.15) While preachers and missionaries are often associated with a church being organized, if the baptized disciples know to do the same for themselves, why can't they? Is there a biblical reason that these cannot become self-originated?

What do I mean by that term *self-originated*. The term is coined in light of those who teach that only churches start churches. That only missionaries

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and/or preachers can start a church. Self-originated should not be thought to mean that there is no *connection* at all to other churches. For if that were the case then there could be no proper baptism. Churches baptize (whether it is pastors, deacons, or someone of the membership, that doesn't matter) those who make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. That is the connection. That is the only connection that between one church and the start of another church. Two to three baptized disciples who will come together in the name of Christ to carry out the commandments of Christ may become a legitimate N.T. church. No need for another church's approval. No service to pass on some sort of mystical, authority baton. That is what is meant by self-origination.

We cannot overlook the fact that churches were established through the nation of Israel, Syria, and Cilicia before any missionary journey began in Acts chapter 13. The scattering of the saints of the church in Jerusalem, during the persecution of Saul, and their re-assembling in other places is all that we have to support the constitution of those first churches, and the common denominator in every case is not mother/daughter/sisterly church connections, unless all that we mean by that is **baptism**. If they were acknowledged as legitimate churches then, can we not acknowledge the same today? Listen, the least of our concerns is whether or not other churches will acknowledge us as true churches.

With that in mind, then, what was the purpose of the missionary expeditions of Paul? It was the Lord's will to push forward the name of Christ into the nations.

Ro 15:20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Paul was unique in this work. No other apostle or brother is noted for having performed this task outside of his leadership. Yet today we have quite an elaborate scheme for missionary endeavors. Why weren't the endeavors of the other apostles recorded as well? Whatever traditional thought we might have borrowed on this subject, what we do know is, that Paul was especially focused on the nations receiving the gospel of Christ.

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Ga 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

This work requires sound, Christian men and women that can endure the hardships of the ministry. Evidently, Paul was going where there were no Christians scattered. He went beyond those regions. Had disciples been scattered to these places we would have seen churches sprout up just as they did in the neighboring areas about Israel. In fact, the best example for this is the church at Rome. Paul certainly had not made any visit to Rome and yet a church was established there.

Ro.1.11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. {among: or, in }

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

...

Ro.15. 22 ¶ For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. {much: or, many ways, or oftentimes }

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you ...

Very likely this church began as the result of other Christians who traveled and witnessed Christ to them. (cf. Acts 18.2, 3 Aquila and Priscilla; Ro. 16.1; & postscript, Phebe may have traveled back and forth.)

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Acts 8.1; 9.31; 15.41; 1Pe.1.1: How difficult it is to be delivered from our predispositions. We need the Lord to change our minds, and it truly takes an act of God to teach us all truth. And this is no exception. **We must account for the mysterious origination of churches in these areas, even before any missionary endeavor began.** Scripture speaks to this matter, and it is not an argument from silence. It is an argument based on the facts revealed. Disciples were scattered suddenly because of persecution. These readily comprehended the simplicity of church constitution. Much like constituting a synagogue. What did it take for the Jews of Israel to constitute a synagogue? One web site had this to say:

Starting a Jewish Synagogue: In some branches of Judaism, it's possible to launch a synagogue **without the presence an ordained rabbi.** But for practical purposes, it's advisable that either you or a launch partner possesses rabbinical training and ordination.

However, the presence of **a qualified rabbi won't automatically ensure the success** of your new synagogue. Your synagogue's success will hinge on your ability to persuade influence a wide range of stakeholders including denominational leaders, attenders and donors.

There were hundreds of them in Jerusalem in our Lord's day. (cf. Acts 6.9; 9.2, 480 synagogues) So the issue of constituting was not as foreign to the mind of the first Jewish saints as we might think. They could start a church wherever they went when just two to three properly baptized disciples came together for that purpose; in houses or public meetings areas.

But let's look at the facts of the church at Rome. Paul had not been there to establish this church. Certain saints traveled back and forth. We have no idea who was a part of its origination. Those are the facts of the case. But they are a church. How do we know? Because the Scriptures tell us they were. What more do we need to know? It has been my goal to show us, in the study of the book of Acts, what the Scriptures show concerning church origination. It simply is not as difficult and restrictive as some have supposed it is. Now to our lesson today.

The Benediction:

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Brethren, in order for us to enter into the study of the book of First Thessalonians, and eight other books that begin just like this one, we are confronted with an essential truth. Included in the salutation of each of these nine books is the doctrine of *grace* and *peace of God*. (Romans 1.7; 1Co.1.3; 2Co.1.2; Eph.1.2; Col.1.2; 1Thes.1.1; 2Thes. 1.2; Phile. vs.3.) We will briefly consider these two truths in that order.

Brother King, I believe, has quoted someone as saying, 'Brother we either get grace or grace is going to get us.' What the person means is *grace* is a difficult point for some, and is a very divisive topic. Churches split, brethren separate, names cast out as evil, and on and on we could go. At the beginning let me define the word *grace*.

The Greek word for *grace* is *χάρις*, charis. From this word we have our English *charity*, which is love. *Grace* is simply the loving favor from God. We usually qualify it with the adjective *unmerited* because of the fact that sinners are worthy of nothing from God and are rejected, but for *grace*.

Ephesians 4.32 is the verb *χαρίζομαι*, for the noun *χάρις*. To use *grace* as a verb we could say '*graced*.'

*Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving** one another, even as God for Christ's sake **hath forgiven** you.*

Romans 3.23, 24 gives us the noun form of *grace* from which we will enter our lesson.

*Ro 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short (deficient, destitute, Latin, deprived) of the glory of God;
24 Being justified freely (as a gift) by his grace through the redemption (the time of taking or claiming the purchase) that is in Christ Jesus ...*

That is *grace* defined in a nutshell. Now, let us go into some of the particulars concerning the loving favor of God. When was *grace* given and to whom. If we've never heard this before, it doesn't mean that we're dummies. It doesn't mean

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that we're not spiritual, or that we don't know the Lord. As a matter of fact, understanding and believing this won't necessarily make us spiritual giants; it probably won't make our lives any easier, and as a matter of fact it just might make the spiritual battle more intense. But I can tell you this: it is always best for the children to believe the truth of the Word of God. Judge for yourselves whether the things that I say today are true or not. We are commanded to *grow in grace*.

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

But how can we if we do not know what it means, when it began, and to whom it belongs? We should grow in the knowledge of the Savior, our first growth should be in grace. Some Christians want the heart, but leave out the head; others want the head and leave out the heart. We are to properly grow in both. Grace is to live the *way Christ lived*; knowledge is to *know* what Christ have delivered to us in His Word.

1b ... Grace be unto you, and peace, from ἀπὸ God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This benediction is a common to most of Paul's letters.

Benediction: *Grace be unto you, and peace, from ἀπὸ God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* In the Greek received text, 9 of the 13 books, and all by the apostle Paul, have the identical benediction in them:

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ
Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Lit. Grace to you and peace from
God, Father of us, and Lord Jesus Christ. Galatian's
benediction places the genitive plural ἡμῶν *of us* with
Κυρίου *Lord*, reading ... *and Lord of us, Jesus Christ.*

Ro. 1.7; 1Co. 1.3, 2Co. 1.2, Eph. 1.2, Phl. 1.2, Col. 1.2, **1Th. 1.1**,
2Th. 1.2, and Phile. 3. (Copied from Phl.1.2 study)

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Hebrews offers a very lengthened form of this salutation in its final word at He.13.20-25. The pastoral letters, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus add the word *mercy*. Mercy appear to speak especially to the acts of kindness of the Lord. In the KJV, when *kindness* is used it relates to his goodness; an attribute (Ex.33.19); thus, from his goodness flows to us his manifold mercies.

*Ex 33:19 And he said, I will make all **my goodness** pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will **shew mercy** on whom I will shew mercy.*

*Ps 23:6 Surely **goodness** and **mercy** shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

*Ps 107:8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his **goodness**, and for his **wonderful works** to the children of men!*

*Isa 63:7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the **great goodness** toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them **according to his mercies**, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.*

Before we go to the time of the first manifestation of God's grace we need to consider what the act was that God did to show loving favor. God's **determination** to choose some to salvation, which is commonly called the doctrine of election, was the result of His *grace*. In Ro.11.5 it is called specifically, *election of grace*. *Grace* '... is the ultimate cause of God's elective purpose.' (Berkoff, p.427) Now, those that are chosen by the Lord are solely because He chose to bestow upon them His loving favor. We pinpointed the act that is called grace, and that is election. We're not finished with this but more shall be explained as we progress through our lesson.

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Next, when was the time of this loving favor of election take place, and what was the purpose for doing this? Does the Word of God give us the answer? What do the Scriptures teach us about the time when He first bestowed His grace upon anyone? The Scriptures teach that grace began before time, in eternity.

(Read Eph.1.3-6)

The time when God bestowed loving favor upon some was *Before the foundation of the world*. There are a couple of things that stand out here that we do not want to pass by.

1. There is nothing in those who are elected to warrant their being elected in Jesus Christ. There is no holiness or any other merit which moved God to bestow grace His grace on those he chose. (4.b *that we **should be** holy and without blame*)
2. That it is particular. (*us, not all*)
3. And, election praises *the glory of His grace*. (6a.)

Being that God's grace of election stands before the foundation of the world, it is before time. Since it is before time it is an eternal purpose with God. It is all known to Him, the end from the beginning. Those chosen are all known to Him from eternity.

Ac 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

*Is.46.9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure ...*

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*Eph.1.8 ...he hath abounded **toward us** (the us, are the elect) in all wisdom and prudence;*

*9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which **he hath purposed in himself** (That means God was not motivated to do all that He has done, is doing, or will do, because of anything outside of Himself. That's God!):*

10 That in the dispensation

*εἰς οἰκονομίαν (1Co.9.17;Eph.3.2; Col.1.25; 1Ti.1.4) τοῦ
φληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν ... Unto*

οἰκονομίαν (1Co.9.17;Eph.3.2; Col.1.25; 1Ti.1.4); The management of human history as if it were a house in which all of its affairs are inventoried and reported to the master. In this case God the Father has ordered all human history subjugated to His Son. (Jn.5.22; Acts 10.42; 17.31; TDNT, vol.5, p.149, 'Thus God is a householder, for the whole world is His...') At the end of which the Son Himself delivers this up to the Father for its final disposal. (1Co.15.24, 28; He.1.12; 2Pe.3.10, 11;) At this the wicked have their eternal appointment in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Re.20.14 21.8), and the saints are brought into their eternal abode on the new heaven and new earth. (Re.21.1-5, 10-22.5)

*of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:
11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ... (What does that mean? It means that God does whatever He will because He is pleased to do so.)*

*2Ti 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, **not according to our works**, but according to his own purpose and grace, which **was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ...***

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*Joh 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that **of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing**, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

Jn.10.1 ¶ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter (God the Father) openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

*Ro 8:29 For whom he did **foreknow**, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Because of the purpose and grace of God, without regard to anything about those elected, no holiness, blame, no nothing ... they shall be saved ... by the death of Jesus Christ. Grace began in eternity. It is that holy disposition of God which moves Him to bestow His eternal love upon some simply because it pleased Him to do so. Before there was a heaven, an earth, a sea, any creature in heaven or in earth; before the sun, the moon, and the stars were spoken into existence, *God* showed grace to some. Is that the Record of the Word of God.

As the first expression of the grace of God to the elect was in eternity, let consider the time of the elect's first experience of grace. This begins when they God send forth the call of the gospel to them, that Jesus Christ died for sinners. The grace of God in eternity now manifests in time when they believe in Christ. (Acts 18.27 they had *believed through grace*; 1Jn.3.1a, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us ...*; amazingly in John's epistles the mention of grace is just once: 2Jn.3; only 3 times in all of the gospel of John; and only twice in 1Thes.) As sovereign an act as it was for God to elect some in Christ from eternity He called them forth from their dead state in sin and imparted to those he elected to be saved, and called them through the hearing of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ...)

Jn.10.14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

*16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall **hear my voice**; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

*Ro 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them **who are the called according to his purpose**.*

*Ro 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them **he also called: and whom he called**, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Ro.9.22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

*24 Even us, **whom he hath called**, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

That first taste of grace by the one who has come to faith in Christ has to be the single greatest joy a sinner can experience in this life. Realizing that Christ died for him to take away just punishment for sin against God is life-changing. But, as it was with me and some of you, the real difficulty is getting our minds around the truth. Like a baby is just aware of its surrounding, and knows nothing about what it took for the little one to get here, we didn't know anything about what the Lord was doing. All we knew was that Jesus died for me, my sins are all gone, I am freed from condemnation. But from there we begin to grow, and should be encouraged to know for ourselves all that God has for us. What most of us

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discovered is, that we didn't know anything, and that sometimes what we thought we knew we have had to unlearn. All that we ever knew was of the world. Our whole life was antithetical to grace. We live to work. We thrive to be accepted by others. That's right. Why all the diet programs? Why all the make-up girls? Boy, why focus on muscle. Why the fancy car and the biggest tools and toys? Almost every bit of it has to do with what others think of us. It is the way of the world. It is the very fabric of our flesh. **But** when once we have been apprehended by Christ that world is suddenly turned upside down in so many ways. The way up is down, to serve is to rule, to lose is to gain, to die is to live. Since Christ, we will spend what remains of our lives, by the grace of God, learning to walk in faith with Christ. Before Christ

Eph 2:5 ... we were dead in sins

*Ro.5.8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us.*

*10 ... **when we were enemies**, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

The only way to explain these things is that God chose some to Himself, and not all, to be saved. If all enemies were reconciled then all would come to the knowledge of the truth concerning Jesus Christ's death for sinners.

1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ ...

Every man, woman, boy and girl who receives this bestowal of grace upon them should, of all people, appreciate the truth of grace: that we are all unworthy and unprofitable servant but for grace.

Ge 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant ...

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To be unworthy of the least of His mercies means we were **deserving** of God's justice against us for sin. Our best before God without Christ is filthiness in His sight.

*Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our **righteousnesses** [the best of the best of men outside of Christ] are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

Grace, properly understood, causes His children to place inestimable value upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. In that heavenly scene which is revealed to John the apostle, the priestly kings all cast their crowns at His feet.

*Re 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure they are and were created.***

...

Re 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ...

Those who have received the truth of the teachings of the Word of God concerning *grace* all ask the same question: Why me? There was nothing in us that warranted the grace of God. All that we can say is ' *Re 5:12 ... Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Oh what love! That's growing in grace. This is spiritual. Our flesh repels the thought. It is so contrary to our natural minds. But the Lord would have us settle into the truths that He has revealed. It is good for us to change our minds and agree with God.

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There are the expected questions when it comes to this doctrine. But let me put this Scripture before us at this moment by asking this question: can there be anything wrong with God doing what He will with what is His own?

*Mt.20.13 But he answered one of them, and said, **Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?***

14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

*15 **Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?***

Grace is the sovereign act of God. Notice in these verses how particular God's grace is:

*Ro 5:8 But God commendeth his love **toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died **for us**.*

*Tit 2:14 Who [Jesus Christ] **gave himself for us**, that he might redeem **us** from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

*Heb 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption **for us**.*

1Jo 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us ...

Brethren, let's be frank about this teaching of God's election of grace. There are some very unchristianly grace brethren as well as unchristianly free-will brethren. Doctrine does not impart eternal life, but it should strengthen our faith and help us live right. Every soul professing Christ as their sin-bearer should be loving, gentle, kind, forgiving, forbearing, patient, joyful, thankful, gentle etc., etc., etc. There are grace-filled brethren on either side of the aisle. This doctrine is not a good test for determining whether one is a child of God. The issue is that if this is the truth of the

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Word of God, and I am persuaded it is we are to believe it, live it, and teach it. Most of us here today came to Christ under a free-will, elect-because-God-looked-down-into-time-and-chose-us, gospel. That is a fact that we should remember. **But**, while we used to be there we are no longer! Why? **Because of the grace of God; growing in grace.** Do we want to know the truth and walk in it? This is an important first step. This is settling, edifying, God-glorifying, man-renouncing Bible truth. Judge this by the Word of God for yourselves.

And finally, before we leave grace, as we recall the conflict that the Thessalonians saints endured immediately after they had come to faith in Christ (1Thes.2.14), not only had they *believed through grace*, (Acts 18.27) but their sufferings, to which all the saints are appointed, proved the grace of God was genuine in them.

Php 1:29 For unto you it is given

ἐξαρίσθη, root χαρίζομαι, is **the verb form of the noun χάρις, grace.** (cf. NIDNTT, vol. 2, p. 116 [3], p. 122 [f].)

*in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also **to suffer** for his sake;*

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

*Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he **by the grace of God should taste death for every man.***

Grace was at work in them in the midst of the conflict. *Grace **be unto you** ...* The whole life of the child of God is by the grace of God. That Christian who loves the Lord, who learns to glorify Him in all things is the one who knows that His grace is sufficient. To this one *grace* is not a theory, it is his life.

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1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Ac 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

... and peace ...

Immediately following *grace* we see *peace*. *Peace* always follows on the heels of *grace*. Seventeen times in the N.T. this order is found. (Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3; 2Co 1:2; Ga 1:3; Eph 1:2; Php 1:2; Col 1:2; 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:2; 1Ti 1:2; 2Ti 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phm 1:3; 1Pe 1:2; 2Pe 1:2; 2Jo 1:3; Re 1:4) Seventeen is the number for victory. Part of the experience of the joy that we have when we first came to Christ was because of the peace that was brought to us in knowing Christ died for our sins and gave us a standing before God. We are accepted in Christ.

Eph.1.6 ... wherein (meaning, in which grace) he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Only true grace leads to true peace. This *peace* must reference, first of all, the fact that God's justice against sin has been satisfied by the death of Jesus Christ His Son for us.

Eph 2:3 Among whom [the children of disobedience] also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Ac 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, [and now is come to you Gentiles in Caesarea] preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

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Sin's infinite divide between us and God was bridged the day Jesus died for us on the cross. The wrath of God was executed upon His Son, and by His stripes we received healing. (Is.53.5) We have peace with God because Jesus, His Son gave His life in the death on the cross for us.

We are justified and reconciled to God. We are righted and at one to God.

Ro 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

When did this take place? When we believed? No. When Christ died for us. You see this is further proof of the validity of the teaching concerning election of grace. (Mt.1.21) If you have faith in Christ then it was you that He died for that day on the cross. It is just as correct to say that those who shall never come to faith in Christ He did not die for. For had He, they would believe that He was the Christ of God. All of the elect of God were reconciled to God by His Son when He died on the cross for us that day. Because of that, it is guaranteed that they all *shall be saved*. Jesus' death on the cross brought the peace of God to all of the elect.

Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight ...

Saints of God, there is not the slightest retributive act of justice left undone. Jesus paid it all! We have peace with God. Have you the understanding today that Jesus Christ died for your sins to bring you to God? Then you have peace with God!

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Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

These Thessalonian saints were greeted with this assurance in the very first sentence of the letter. They know God, and are known of Him. Read this,

Ga 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

The stress isn't our knowing Him, but His knowing us first. Because He knew us from eternity, having chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world we shall know Him.

1Jo 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Notice finally, from whom grace and peace has come. It is said to be *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. Both the Father and the Son have demonstrated their love for the elect of God.

Of the Father it is written:

1Jo 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Of Jesus our Lord, His Son it is written:

Joh 10:10 ... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

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Joh 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.