

Benediction
2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

Introduction

This morning we come to the conclusion of 2 Thessalonians and will be examining the final prayer, statement of authenticity and benediction at the end of chapter 3. Next week we will start our study of 1 Peter.

It is fairly common for the last few verses of a book to be covered fairly quickly in a sermon series. Some of that may be simply from a desire to finish and get to whatever is next. Some of that may be because the statements at the end of a letter can be a bit formulaic so that they are often treated like a repetitious statement that is given little thought. That is tragic because Paul's concluding remarks including his final benediction are actually very thoughtful. I want to spend some time in bringing that out to you today.

Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:16–18, ¹⁶ *“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”* ¹⁷ *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.* ¹⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”*

The importance of the meaning of these few lines is directly related to what Paul had written in both of his letters to the Thessalonians since the second one is a follow up to the first.

Review

By way of quick review, remember that Paul and his missionary companions, Silas and Timothy, had started a church in the important Macedonian cross roads town of Thessalonica by first going to the Synagogue and presenting the gospel. For three weeks they reasoned from the Scriptures with those that were there that Jesus is the promised Messiah that had come to redeem them from their sins through His own sacrificial death on the cross and physical resurrection from the dead three days later. The result was that some Jews along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and a number of leading women believed and joined Paul and Silas (Acts 17:1-4). However, within a few weeks or months other Jews became jealous and took along some wicked men and caused an uproar in the city that was dangerous enough that the brethren sent the missionaries away to Berea about 40 miles to the southwest. Those same jealous Jews later went to Berea and stirred up trouble there causing Paul to be sent to Athens from where he wrote his first letter to them.

The church at Thessalonica was born in the midst of adversity and yet they very quickly became a model for other churches to follow in their grasp of the gospel resulting in quick spiritual growth and ministry involvement including evangelization of the areas east and west in Macedonia and south into Achaia. Paul commends them for this in 1 Thessalonians 1. The first epistle was written because they had been forced out so soon and they wanted the Thessalonians to be assured of their love, care and desire to return to minister to them (1 Thess. 2). Paul and Silas were greatly encouraged by Timothy's report on how well they were doing (1 Thess 3). In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul encouraged them to *“excel still more”* in how they were walking and pleasing God, but there were also some specific areas in which Paul needed to give warning and encouragement. These were Greeks living in a very sexually immoral culture, so he exhorted them to abstain from that and pursue sanctification and honor (1 Thess 4:1-8). They were doing well at loving each other, but Paul encouraged them *“to excel still more, ¹¹ and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, ¹² so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need”* (1

Thess. 4:9-12). This is the first indication of the problem that he had to address much more forcefully in his second letter.

Paul also addressed some issues concerning eschatology - what was going to happen in the future. Since some believers had already physically died, there was concern that they might miss the rapture. Paul assures them that at the Lord's parousia (appearing) from heaven at the trumpet of God and the shout of the archangel both those "*asleep in Jesus*" and those who are "*alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air and thus we shall always be with the Lord*" (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Paul had previously taught them about these events, but he reminds them in chapter 5 that the day of the Lord would come suddenly and unexpectedly like a "thief in the night" to overtake the wicked. The righteous would have a different outcome for they were of the day and were not destined for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:1-11). Paul encourages them to put on the breastplate of faith & love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

Paul concludes 1 Thessalonians with a series of concise commands that are as applicable in every church today as it was then to the Thessalonian church: ¹⁴ "*We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.* ¹⁵ *See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.* ¹⁶ *Rejoice always;* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing;* ¹⁸ *in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit;* ²⁰ *do not despise prophetic utterances.* ²¹ *But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;* ²² *abstain from every form of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:14–22).

After Paul was in Corinth, he received another report about how the Thessalonians were doing. Though they were doing well with a love that had grown for which Paul commends them, the persecution and affliction had become worse, so he seeks to encourage them in chapter 1. He reminds them that they were suffering because they were part of the kingdom of God. The unrighteous have always persecuted the righteous, but God's justice would prevail and when Jesus is revealed from heaven, He will deal out retribution to both those "*that do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*"

In 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul addresses the issue of them being shaken in mind and disturbed by false teaching about the day of the Lord. He reminded them of what he had already taught them proving they could not be in the day of the Lord for 1) the apostasy had not yet occurred, and in this passage that is tied directly to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gathering of the saints together to Him - the rapture. 2) The man of lawlessness had not been revealed which according to the prophecy in Daniel 9 will happen when he makes a firm covenant with Israel. He continues on to remind them that the Holy Spirit's ministry will change at that time so that He is no longer restraining evil as He is currently which will allow the man of lawless to be revealed, the son of perdition, the one that will set up the abomination of desolation 3 ½ years into the tribulation. He will deceive many, but he will be slain by the Lord and all those that followed him in wickedness will perish.

In contrast to the wicked, the brethren, beloved by the Lord, chosen for sanctification and called by the gospel will gain the glory of our Lord Jesus. These were truths that would enable them to stand firm in their present circumstances and whatever might come in the future. We can do the same in our own lifetimes as we also stand firm upon the word of God.

Finally, Paul had to address some among the Thessalonians that were not following the instructions the missionaries had given previously in word, by letter and by their example. Instead of being busy working to supply their own bread and help those that had legitimate needs, they were doing no work except being busy bodies and had become parasites upon those that were working. Paul tells them forcefully that those that were not willing to work were not to eat. They were not to enable such people in their sin by giving them food. Instead, they were to put them to shame by refusing to associate with them while also admonishing them as brethren.

That is the context for Paul's statement of prayer in verse 16.

The Prayer - 2 Thessalonians 3:16

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!” The beginning word, “now” (δέ / de), transitions this to a new thought in which Paul emphasizes the source of peace is the Lord Himself who grants it continually in all the varied circumstances of life. This prayer reflects the normal response Paul has had throughout both of these letters in which he inserts a statement of praise, prayer or a prayer request. He does not reserve prayer to the beginning and end of his writings. He includes them throughout. That is a good model to follow in our own lives. The following are the prayers and references to prayer Paul makes in these two letters.

1 Thessalonians 1:2 - *“We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers . . .”*

1 Thessalonians 2:13 - *“And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it . . .”*

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 - ¹¹ *“Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; ¹² and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:23-25 - ²³ *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. ²⁵ Brethren, pray for us.”*

2 Thessalonians 1:3 - *“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren . . .”*

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 - ¹¹ *“To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - *“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 - ¹⁶ *“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:1–2 - ¹ *“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; ² and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.”*

And finally the verse we are examining in today’s sermon - 2 Thessalonians 3:16 - *“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all”* (ESV).

Prayer was the natural response of Paul in whatever he was doing because he so clearly recognized that whatever he was doing or asking others to do was ultimately dependent upon God. I pointed that out a couple of weeks ago when we examined his prayer request at the beginning of this chapter. We are to step out in faith in trust of God, but that same trust of God motivates us to pray for others and ask others to pray for us. I admit that responding immediately in prayer is an area in which I can continue to improve. Much too often I am more focused on the immediate conversation with the person instead of taking us both to the throne of God with whatever is being talked about in both praise and petition. A great loss in the language of our own society is the decline in the last couple of generations in making references to God in common conversation - *“thank God,” “praise the Lord,” “Lord willing,” “God be with you,”* etc. If you say those things in a public conversation now people would look at you like you were a religious fanatic, but it was not all that long ago it was normal. I remember reading the forward of the book, *Killer Angels*, by Michael Shaara, in which the author states that he toned down the religious language of the Southern Generals because he thought a modern audience would think it to be excessive.

That language was toned down even more in the movie made from the book, *Gettysburg*, and most people thought the many religious references seemed odd.

We would all do well to be more like Paul and quickly connect whatever we are talking about to God in either praise or petition since God is involved in every aspect of your life.

Paul's emphasis in this quick prayer is on the Lord Himself who is the peace that gives the peace continually in every circumstance. A more wooden translation would be something like this, "*Now He, the Lord of the peace, may He give to you the peace through all in every manner. The Lord with all of you.*"

Proper prayer begins by addressing the proper person, and here it is "*the Lord of the peace.*" Paul usually uses the phrase "*God of the peace*" (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:23). God is also Lord, but in this context, Lord would be referring more specifically to Jesus Christ since Paul had just used that title for Him in verses 6 & 12 and will conclude with it in verse 18. The Father can be referred to as "*the God of the peace*" and Jesus, the Son, as "*the Lord of the peace*" because Jesus is deity.

Another aspect of Jesus' deity is praying to Him. While our prayers are generally to be addressed to the Father since that is how Jesus instructed us to pray in Matthew 6:9 - "*Our Father who art in heaven . . .*" - this is one of the verses that indicates that prayer can also be specifically directed to Christ. Jesus also stated that in John 14:13-14 when He said,¹³ "*Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*"¹⁴ "*If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*"

Addressing Jesus as "*the Lord of the peace*" fits with the title given to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6 as "*Prince of Peace*" and who is described in Micah 5:4-5 as the shepherd who will be peace. But note that He is the Lord of *the peace*, not a peace, and He gives *the peace*, not just a peace. This is peace with God that comes through faith in Christ that then extends outward to the rest of life. The word for "peace" here, (εἰρήνη /eirānā), has a root idea of being in unity and harmony that brings tranquility. That is much, much more than the common idea that peace is the absence of conflict. God is the God of the peace and Jesus is the Lord of the peace primarily because the triune God is in complete unity and harmony within Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is from this peace within the Godhead that He can offer peace to sinful man.

Ephesians 2:17 states that Jesus "*came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near.*" Colossians 1:20 explains that through Jesus God reconciled all things to Himself having made peace thorough the blood of His cross. Or as Romans 5:1 states it, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" That passage goes on to explain that it was while we were sinners, enemies of God, that Jesus paid with His own life the price of man's sin so that we might be reconciled with our Creator (vs. 8-10). That is the basis for forgiveness and transformation of those who believe in Him into His own people who will be presented "*before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach*" (Colossians 1:20-22). The good news of salvation from sin through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is properly called *the gospel of peace* (Ephesians 6:15). Roman 8:1 states *There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. Instead, believers are adopted into God's family as His children (Ephesians 1:5) who can "*draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*" (Hebrews 4:16).

Jesus is *the Lord of the peace* because this peace can only come by and through Him. It is not a peace that the world can know. Romans 3:16-17 states¹⁶ *Destruction and misery are in their paths,*¹⁷ *And the path of peace they have not known.* Isaiah 57:20-21 is very direct stating²⁰ *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.*" What the world cannot have Jesus gives freely to those who are His and it extends outward to everything else in life which is why Paul's petition here is for the Lord to continually grant this peace in every circumstance. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:27 that He would give and

leave them with His peace. In John 16:33 Jesus told them that He had spoken to them so that in Him they would have peace even though they would have tribulation in this world. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), so it is an internal characteristic that God develops in believers so that it should mark the life of every Christian.

At the heart of the peace that comes through the gospel is knowing and trusting God so that every cause for anxiety in life can be brought and cast upon Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Philippians 4:6-7 explains, ⁶ *“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.”* That is a peace that is available at all times and in every circumstance. This does not mean that you will avoid all encounters with difficult and frightening circumstances for those things are a part of the normal trials of life, but it does mean that you have a means to deal with any situation that occurs that will bring you back into harmony with God’s will and purposes so that you can have inner tranquility even in the roughest seas of life.

Let me quickly flesh this out for you in the upside down world in which we are now living. For nearly a year and a half authoritarians of all types - civil leaders, government bureaucrats, business people, medical personnel, even intrusive relatives - have used fear to try to increase their own power and influence over you. Your relatives may have a motivation of love, but the others do not. They thrive on being in control and bossing other people around, and producing fear is very effective at controlling people. The lock downs and masks did not work the first time, but it is happening again around the world because it increases the fear and therefore control over the masses. The experimental interventional medical product popularly being called “vaccines,” are all promoted based on fear - fear of possible death, fear of being sick, fear of loss of job, fear of not being able to travel, fear of being socially ostracized, etc. etc. Even if I did not have the science background I do have to understand what is going on, I would have to be against what is happening because of basic Biblical theology and ethics.

1) Medical products produced using cell lines from an aborted baby and without the permission of the donor are an ethical non-starter. Those who are producing the products are benefitting off of the murder of a child or stealing from another person’s body without their permission. They entice you into joining them in their immorality by offering a personal benefit to you. Ethicists, those who consider themselves skilled in moral philosophy, Christian or otherwise, who do not understand that are part of the problem and are no different than the pagan priests who offered human sacrifices to appease their pagan gods so it would go well for their community. I commend Alyce who is standing firm against her employer’s mandate on this very basis. Moral integrity is more important than losing a job.

Many people have already received the “vaccine” for a variety of reasons, if that includes you and this information is new to you, then repent from your ignorant participation in this immorality and beg God for His mercy that you will not develop any of the side effects. If you did it knowingly, then also repent of your selfishness and lack of trust in God. I know that may be offensive to some, but my responsibility to God is to call you to walk in holiness and faithfulness with Him even if it offends you. I am begging you to walk worthy of your calling in Christ Jesus by putting Christian ethics above pragmatism. (If you disagree with this assessment, see the Addendum at the end of these notes).

2) The premature and coerced use of the experimental “vaccines” are man’s vain attempt to prove he is better than God. That is why those with the antibodies produced by their own body according to God’s design are not being included among the “immune” who have received the “vaccines” in determining “herd immunity” levels. It does not matter that naturally acquired immunity keeps proving to be better than the vaccines - and yes, that includes the hyped “delta” variant - without risk of their known short term side effects and unknown long term ones. We knew this was man’s foolish boasting as soon as the claim was made that the experimental medical product was going to “stop the virus.” We are back to the mindset of the tower of Babel. The “vaccines” have not, and they will not stop the virus as proven by what is currently happening. A report from Los Angeles points out that about 25% of new positive tests

for the virus are among those already “vaccinated.” The return to mandatory masking proves the “vaccines” do not work as advertised.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom for it motivates you to pursue reconciliation with Him, and once you have come to know Him, then His perfect love casts out all fear. Fear of man is never ending and continually expands into new things to fear. I did not fear SARS-CoV-2 before I was infected, I did not fear COVID-19 while I had a bad case of it, and I do not fear any of the variants or any other diseases that can come in life. Why? I trust the Lord with my life in the present and the future to enable me to walk with Him in wisdom to do what glorifies Him whether for better or worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer. While I strive to take reasonable cautions, life is not about being safe, for living itself is risky. Life is about the praise and glorification of my creator and not the preservation of my life, my health, my job, my social standing, my hobbies or recreation. Paul would not have gone on any of his missionary journeys if any of those things were his concern. It is better to be poor or even thrown in jail and have your integrity than be rich and accepted by a wicked society without it. The godly that keep their integrity will have God’s peace. Walking with Christ breaks the bondage of fear, and the longer you walk with Him, the less fear you have of anything for nothing in heaven, on earth, physical or spiritual can separate you from the love of God proven in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39)

We are to follow Paul’s example here and pray that the Lord of peace Himself will grant His peace continually in every circumstance.

Paul’s concluding statement in verse 16 is literally, *“The Lord with all of you.”* That is not only the source of peace that is assured by the Lord’s many promises concerning that, but it also a powerful statement of goodwill and unity since it is for all which includes even those Paul had to correct. As I stated last week, our God is a God of reconciliation and restoration, and that is Paul’s desire as well. He corrected those that were in error so that they could get back on the right track and rejoice in the goodness of the Lord including His peace and the sense of His presence.

Jesus concluded the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 with the promise, *“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* In the present time it is the Holy Spirit that indwells the believer that fulfills this promise while Jesus prepares a place for us in heaven (John 14:6) and intercedes with us with the Father (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Yet, because Jesus is also God, He is also omnipresent, so He is also with us. Hebrews 13:5 recounts His promise, *“I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.”*

Authenticity - 2 Thessalonians 3:17

Verse 17 is a statement of authenticity. In English this is rendered, *“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.”* For many reasons it was common at that time to use an amanuensis - someone who would physically write out what an author dictated to them. In Romans 16:22 the amanuensis identifies himself saying, *“I Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.”* Dictation of letters is still a very common business practice, and then after the letter is prepared and ready to be sent, the author signs the letter to authenticate it. In those times it was usually enough simply to state the identity of the author at either the salutation at the beginning of the letter or the benediction at the end. Since everything was handwritten at that time, a change of style in writing in either the salutation or the benediction would serve as an additional authentication.

Paul calls specific attention to the fact that the benediction of this letter was being written with his own hand. This would most likely be due to making sure they would not be fooled again by false teachers claiming to have a letter from Paul or the other missionaries as noted in 2 Thessalonians 2:2. Paul states here that this was his distinguishing mark in all of his letters, so this was his common practice whether he called attention to it or not. He does this specifically in 1 Corinthians 16:21,

Colossians 4:18, Philemon 19 and Galatians 6:11 where he also notes the large letters with which he was writing. He does not do that in his other letters.

Benediction - 2 Thessalonians 3:18

Paul ends the letter with the benediction, *“the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”* The grammatical structure places an emphasis that Jesus Christ is our Lord, and it is His grace that Paul seeks to be with the Thessalonians. This benediction is the same as what he wrote in his first letter to them except with the addition of “all.” Just as in verse 16, including the word “all” is significant since it calls attention to the fact that this expression of Paul’s desire for them includes even those he had to correct in this letter. It is easier to see the need for the Lord’s grace on those who needed the correction, but that grace is needed by all of us.

Divine grace is an extension of God’s love by which He grants His favor on the undeserving, and no one is deserving for none are righteous (Rom. 3:10). God’s mercy holds back the execution of His wrath on sinners, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 6:23). God’s grace replaces the deserved wrath with undeserved blessing because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Grace is the source of our salvation for it is by God’s grace we are saved (Eph. 2:8). Grace is the means by which we can live the Christian life for it is the Holy Spirit that enlightens, gifts and empowers us to walk with and serve Christ. It is grace that gives us hope in the return of our Lord to fulfill His promises to take us to be with Him forever in the place He has prepared for us in heaven with the Father.

All of us need the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with us in daily life. May our Lord grant that to you. Go in His grace to live for His glory and proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to others that they may also know Him and the peace that only He can give. Peace for living in the present and peace for eternity.

ADDENDUM

I received more comments than usual due to this part of the sermon - and they were at both extremes with high praise and sharp criticism that this was just my "personal conviction." This section was an illustration, but it was a poor one since it ended up overwhelming the sermon for at least some, so that the point of both was missed. The result was emotional turmoil instead of peace.

To those that disagree, you are in company with many pastors that do disagree with me. Some of them actively promote the vaccines. However, you need to understand that the moral argument against the "vaccines" is the basis for a religious exemption. Without it, there is no basis for a religious objection.

The two common lines of reasoning to overcome the moral argument are: 1) It does not matter if the cell lines came from an elective abortion. This reasoning is followed by those that do not believe that abortion is sin and those that believe that though the abortion was sin, God has brought good out of it through the cell lines, so the abortion is immaterial. 2) The cell lines have been around for so long with countless generations from the original cell and the sin that made it available that there would no longer be any sin connected to it. A related argument is that the cell lines are only clones of the original cell and since they were never an actual part of the baby that was murdered, then there is no longer any sin connected to their usage.

Regarding 1) - those that discount the evil of abortion. I have addressed this issue many times over the years. The simple truth is that abortion is murder and therefore has very serious ramifications. Please go to <https://gracebibleny.org/the-value-of-human-life-selected-scriptures>

To those that discount the origin of the cell lines reasoning that God has enabled good to come from evil. Their reasoning may be founded in Romans 8:28, but that applies to those that love God and are called according to His purpose. It is also true that God often brings good out of evil since He is a merciful God (See Genesis 50:20; Jeremiah 29:11). The medical experiments by the Nazis during the holocaust would be a more modern example since a greater understanding of the human body was gained by them which has led to many better medical treatments. However, at issue with those using these cell lines is the ongoing gain of benefit from the evil. This is not just a use of knowledge gained by what was evil, but the ongoing benefit from the very evil that was done. The Nazis that treated humans as lab rats were punished, not rewarded. The companies that grow the cell lines and those that use them seek to gain benefit directly from an ongoing evil.

Regarding 2) - those that use one of the various lines of reasoning that the cell lines are no longer tainted by the original sin. How many generations are needed to remove the taint of sin from the original murder? On what basis is that taint of sin of the original murder removed? Those are serious questions and need a serious answer that you give to God, because He is the judge, not any human.

An underlying question is the motivation for those using these cell lines and for those defending their use. If cell lines could be produced from a murdered baby and from cells taken from an adult without permission, why could they not be produced from either a live baby, a baby that died unintentionally or from cells from an adult who grants permission? There would be no taint of murder or theft from any of these. I will leave it to you to figure out their motivations, but you can be sure it is not because they are altruistic.

Those who defend the use of these cell lines or want it to be a non-issue need to examine the motivations of their own hearts. That must be left between you and God, but it is a serious issue because He examines the heart (1 Thess. 2:4), and our hearts are often deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9).

As much as we might like life to be black and white, it is messy and gray with moral dilemmas that can be very difficult to figure out. We live in a fallen world and immorality is rampant in which the taint of sin seems to be attached in some manner to many of the products we buy and services we use. That can make it extremely difficult to strive to walk in holiness without being compromised by some association with sin whether it is done in ignorance, by being left without any good options, or having it forced upon you against your will. The choices available to you may even be the lesser of two evils.

However, the prospect of failure in figuring out what is the best decision to make or even the certainty of failure in some way is never justification for not striving against sin and for holiness (Hebrews 12:4; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Peter 1:16). Though we are to strive for perfection in holiness in this life, we also know that will not be achieved until we are in heaven. A old question that remains a very good one in trying to make the best decision is, *What would Jesus Do?* As Christians, our goal is to be like Him, so to do what you think He would do is helpful toward that goal.

For three decades I have encouraged those who hear or read my sermons or teaching to dig into the Scripture for themselves and wrestle through their decisions in light of God's word. I have stated my Biblically based conviction and why. You have to figure out your conviction and why. Please do not be non-chalant or justify your actions by what others do. Work through all the moral issues and their implications by study of the Bible and prayer. He calls us to walk with Him in holiness, and the more you know Him the easier that will be. At the same time, we take comfort that even when we fail our Lord is also loving and forgiving granting us His peace as we walk with Him.

Peace with God comes from Him because He reconciles us to Himself through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who redeems us from our sins and grants us forgiveness. In the daily life mess of life we are to confess our sins and receive His cleansing and forgiveness as He continues to conform us into His image. That is the source of peace.

Sermon Notes - August 1, 2021
BENEDICTION OF PEACE & GRACE - 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

Introduction

Review

Paul, Silas & Timothy planted the church in Thessalonica after speaking in the synagogue for _____
Jealous Jews soon caused an uproar causing the brethren to send the missionaries to _____ for safety
The Thessalonian church was born in the midst of _____, yet they matured quickly & quickly expanded
Paul _____ them in 1 Thess. 1 & assures them of the missionaries' love, care & desire to return in ch. 2
Paul & Silas are encouraged by _____ report in 1 Thess. 3
They were doing well & Paul exhorts them to “_____ still more” in sanctification & working (4:1-12)
Paul assures them that both the living & dead would be _____ at the Lord's parousia (4:13-18)
He _____ them about the day of the Lord in ch. 5:1-11 - a warning to unbelievers & a comfort to believers
He concludes 1 Thess. with a series of concise _____ about living the Christian life (5:14-22)
Paul begins 2 Thess. commending them for their growth though persecuted & assures them of God's _____
Paul _____ false doctrine & reminds them of what he had previously taught them about the day of the Lord
Truth enables the beloved, chosen & called to _____ in present and future circumstances (2:13-17)
Paul requested their prayers, then gave forceful correction concerning those not _____ to work (3:1-15)

The Prayer - 2 Thessalonians 3:17

This prayer reflects the normal _____ Paul had in his life & letters:

1 Thess. 1:2; 2:13; 3:11-13; 5:23-25; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1:11-12; 2:13; 2:16-17; 3:1-2; 3:16

Paul recognized that whatever he did was ultimately _____ on God - so he prayed & requested prayer
We would do well to imitate Paul and quickly _____ what we talk about to God in praise or petition
The emphasis is on the Lord Himself who is the _____ that gives the peace continually in every circumstance
The Lord of the peace is a reference to _____ (vs. 6,12, 18) and equates with His deity (Rom. 15:33; 16:20)
Jesus taught us to direct our prayers to the _____ (Matt. 6:9), but we can also address Him (John 14:13-14)
_____, *the Lord of the peace* is the *Prince of Peace* (Isa. 9:6) & the shepherd who will be peace -Micah 5:4-5
Peace, (εἰρήνη /eirānā), has a root idea of being in unity and harmony that brings _____
Jesus “*preached peace*” (Eph. 2:17) and made peace through the _____ of His cross (Col. 1:20)
Romans 5:1 - “*having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*”
The *gospel of peace* (Eph. 6:15) is salvation from _____ through Christ removing the condemnation (Rom. 8:1)

The peace the Lord gives cannot be known by the unrepentant _____ (Rom. 3:16-17; Isaiah 57:20-21)

The Lord's peace is given to His disciples in ___ situations (John 14:27; 16:33) as a fruit of His Spirit (Gal 5)

The heart of this peace is knowing and _____ God on whom we cast all our cares (1 Peter 5:7; Phil. 4:6-7)

The world / authoritarians control by causing _____

All U.S. COVID "vaccines" are ethically _____ due to using cell lines from murder or without permission

Premature & coerced use of experimental "vaccines" are man's _____ attempt to prove he is better than God

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge & wisdom, but in knowing God, His love casts out _____

Fear is removed when I _____ the Lord for my present and future to give wisdom & enable me to glorify Him

Life is about the praise & glorification of our Creator - not _____ of your present life & desires

Jesus is the _____ of this peace, and Paul's includes those he had to correct with the word "all"

Jesus' promise is that He will be _____ - Matthew 28:8-20, Hebrews 13:5

Authenticity - 2 Thessalonians 3:17

It was common for Paul to dictate a letter to an amanuensis to physically _____ it (Romans 16:22)

Paul calls specific attention to writing the benediction with his _____ as a sign of its authenticity

Benediction - 2 Thessalonians 3:18

The emphasis is on Jesus Christ being our _____ and that it is His grace that is being wished for them

Divine grace is an extension of God's love by which grants His favor on the _____

God's _____ is the source of salvation, the means by which we live & serve the Lord, and the basis of hope

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all

KIDS KORNER – Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – count how many times "peace" work is mentioned. Talk to your parents about how to be at peace with God and have His peace in your life.

THINK ABOUT IT – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. Review the major subjects Paul brings up on 1 & 2 Thessalonians. How does that context help in understanding Paul's prayer in 2 Thess. 3:16? Paul was quick to pray, give thanks to God and request prayer. Look up the verses in which he does any of those in 1 & 2 Thessalonians. How can you imitate that practice in your own life? Who specifically is *the Lord of the peace* in 2 Thess. 3:16? Explain. Is it proper to address Jesus in prayer? Explain. What titles or attributes of peace are associated with the Messiah? What is peace (εἰρήνη /eirānā)? What is Jesus' association with peace? What is the connection between peace and the gospel? Why can't the world have this peace? What is the basis for the peace that comes through the gospel? How does that peace affect everyday life? Troubling situations? Persecution? How have / are the "vaccines" for COVID violated basic ethics? Why is the claim that man will "stop the virus" utterly foolish? What is the relationship between the fear of the Lord and the Lord's love casting out all fear? What is Jesus' promise to be with His disciples? Why was it important for Paul to authenticate his letter? What is divine grace? Its source? Its benefits?