

8.09.20 ~ 1Thessalonians 5:25-28, Paul's Closing Requests and Benediction.

**Read 1Thessalonians 5:25-28...** Paul is bringing to a close his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica. Paul shared his life with them and expressed his love for them, while exhorting and encouraging them to trust God and love one another, as they seek to grow in their relationship with God through Christ, being transformed by the Word of God, as the Spirit of God enables them to do so.

Paul has instructed them about future things, when they will be caught up to be with Christ forever; and also about how they should be living right now, on this side of heaven, which is our true home for eternity.

One of the clearest instructions on how we should now live is given in **1Thessalonians 5:16-18**, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

**Read 1Thessalonians 5:25...** Paul's first request was to ask the family of believers (the brethren) to pray for him, Silas, Timothy, and the elders in the church at Thessalonica.

Paul believes in and understands the power of fervent prayer, and the intimate fellowship experienced by those who pray with and for one another.

I feel especially blessed when I hear some of our folks pray for our leadership here at FBC, and many time for me and Nancy specifically. We genuinely appreciate the protection we receive as a result of the prayers of this family of believers.

**Read 1Thessalonians 5:26...** Paul's second request is for the believers to greet one another in a manner that shows intimate relationship and respect for each other; after all, as believers, we are family, brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is interesting that Paul uses the expression "a holy kiss" in three other places in the New Testament (Romans 16:16; 1Corinthians 16:20; 2Corinthians 13:12), and Peter uses it once (1Peter 5:14).

During the time of Paul, this would have meant a familial hug and kiss greeting with someone you really cared about, and in fact, someone you are related to in Christ. A "holy kiss" was a symbol of genuine love, an expression of affection, oneness, unity, and of a kindred spirit.

It was common practice, in the first century AD, for person to greet a superior with a kiss on the hand, elbow, knee, or foot, but friends would kiss one another on the cheek. The most infamous unholy kiss was that of Judas Iscariot, when he came to openly betray the Lord under the guise of friendship (see Matthew 26:45-50).

**Read 1Thessalonians 5:27...** Paul's third request and deep desire is that God's sovereign Word, given through him, would be read, heard and understood by all the believers in Thessalonica.

This letter would have been given to the elders of the church, to whom Paul says "I adjure you by the Lord," adjure means, to bind with an oath, i.e., to solemnly urge them to make sure all the brethren both hear and submit to God's Word.

This letter was to be read aloud during worship, for it is God-breathed Scripture. There would only have been the one copy, so the idea of passing it around wasn't even considered; not to mention that, many within the congregation were illiterate and therefore unable to read. And so it was very important that this be read when the believers came together for corporate worship.

**2Timothy 3:16-17**, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

See **1Corinthians 2:1-16**

**Read 1Thessalonians 5:28...** Paul's benediction is a prayer on their behalf, that they would experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is worth mentioning here that Paul began and ended every one of his letters recorded in the New Testament, by repeatedly referencing the grace of God:

**Romans 1:7**, "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **Romans 16:20**, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

**1Corinthians 1:3**, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **1Corinthians 16:23**, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you."

**Galatians 1:3**, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **Galatians 6:18**, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen."

**Ephesians 1:2**, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **Ephesians 6:24**, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible *love*."

**Philippians 1:2**, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **Philippians 4:23**, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

**Colossians 1:2**, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father." **Colossians 4:18**, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you."

**1Thessalonians 1:1**, "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." **1Thessalonians 5:28**, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

**2Thessalonians 1:2**, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **2Thessalonians 3:18**, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

**1Timothy 1:2**, "To Timothy, *my* true child in *the* faith: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." **1Timothy 6:20-21**, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge'— which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you."

**2Timothy 1:2**, "To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." **2Timothy 4:22**, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

**Titus 1:4**, "To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." **Titus 3:15**, "All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in *the* faith. Grace be with you all."

**Philemon 3**, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." **Philemon 25**, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

God's Grace distinguishes Christianity from all other religions, it permeates Biblical theology: **GRACE= God's Riches At Christ's Expense.**

**John 1:1-3**, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

**John 1:14**, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

**John 1:17**, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

**Romans 3:21-24**, "But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

The Lord's Supper [Communion] celebrates the highest level of Grace bestowed upon true believers and followers of Christ at His own expense: God's predestined, eternal, spiritual deliverance from the captivity and slavery of sin under the Law, to the liberating covenant with God through Christ, under Grace.

The old covenant (before Christ) was that of the Law, involving continual sacrifices and offerings for sin; but the new covenant (through Christ) is that of Grace, involving only one sacrifice for sin. Christ's shed blood on the cross has paid in full our sin debt to God; therefore everyone who repents of their sin and believes in Jesus Christ for salvation is without condemnation having been freed from the penalty of an eternity in hell.

**Ephesians 1:7**, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

**Ephesians 2:8**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God."

**Hebrews 9:27-28**, " And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to* sin, to those who eagerly await Him."

**Hebrews 10:10**, "By [God's] will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." **14-18**, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them,' He then says, 'And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin."

Read through **1Thessalonians 5:25-28** again... "Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

Notice that Paul's closing remarks and benediction, here in 1Thessalonians, which was most likely written around AD 51-52, includes the priorities of prayer, Christian love and fellowship, the Apostles teaching [Word of God], and Grace.

Turn to **Acts 2:40-47**... This is Luke's narrative describing what the newly birthed church (under the leadership of Peter) was doing, not very long after Jesus had ascended back into heaven; in fact this is a record of what was going on within the church about 7-8 weeks after Passover, AD 32.

The key verse is **Acts 2:42**, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Notice that Paul mentions the same priorities for the church in his letter, as those which had been expressed 20 years earlier in Jerusalem: the Apostles teaching [Word of God], Christian Love and Fellowship, the breaking of bread (Lord's Supper- remembering Christ's sacrificial death for our sins, God's greatest expression of Grace), and Prayer.

It really is all about Jesus Christ, God's Son, Lord and Savior: Resurrected and Coming Again. Through Him we have been granted: forgiveness for sins and eternal life; the right and the privilege of entering the throne room of God in prayer, at any time, any where; we have been born into an eternal family, as children of God, with millions of brothers and sisters; we have everything we need for life on this earth, and for life in heaven.

God's Grace is a wonderful thing. **GRACE = God's Riches At Christ's Expense.**

We each ought to be continually giving thanks to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, for all the blessings we have already received, and for those we have yet to experience - things so wonderful, as Paul tells us (**1Corinthians 2:9**), "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And *which* have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with each one of you, until we meet again.

*Pastor Mike ° ° °>'(((><*