

WHEN THE LORD BUILDS HIS CHURCH



THIS IS WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE ...

- BELIEVING GOD AND DOING THE WORK HE CALLS US TO DO.
- LOVING GOD AND LABORING FOR HIS WILL TO BE DONE.
- STEADFAST AND ABOUNDING IN HOPE IN OUR LORD JESUS.

THE GOSPEL IS THE GOSPEL IN THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILDS

1. Paul greets the church of the Thessalonians, 1:1a.

- (1 Thessalonians 1:1 ESV) Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

We need to understand the implications as to why Paul identified the recipients of this letter as the church of the Thessalonians.

A. The word used for church her is a secular term for a called out assembly of people.

The Greek word – ἐκκλησία [ekklesia] – is a non-religious or social term meaning an assembly of the people convened at a public place; a gathering of citizens who are called out by a messenger of a governing body.

B. The word is also used as a religious term for a called out assembly of religious people.

It is used here in the letter to the Thessalonians to identify a select assembly called out by God. This thought is reinforced by the statement in verse four that they were loved by God and that he had chosen them.

C. A church is a social structure.

A social structure is the organized pattern of relationships, institutions (like family, government, economy) that form the framework of a society, shaping how individuals interact and behave. It provides the underlying blueprint for social life.

D. A social structure is made up of various levels of building blocks.

The building blocks are the rules, both written and unwritten, and the concepts or beliefs that both define the nature of the building and become the foundation that supports the structure.

E. The vital question is ... Who is the builder? The builder is the one who determines the composition of the building blocks—what they are made of.

This is need-to-know information because the person who determines the makeup of the building blocks is the "de facto" builder. De facto describes practices that exist in reality, regardless of whether they are officially recognized.

F. The who set the rules are in fact the builders of the house, i.e. the church.

G. **Our necessary question** — Who is the builder of our house? Do we even know ... or want to know?

- (Psalm 127:1 ESV) Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless

the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

The implication: If the Lord did not build the house, then the Lord does not watch over the house.

2. Paul blesses the church of the Thessalonians with the grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 1:1b.

- (1 Thessalonians 1:1 ESV) Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

A. It is extremely important that we not only understand but that we also firmly acknowledge that Paul blessed this church based upon the builders—God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. We must grasp the depth of the blessing of grace and truth through which the builders bless the building to honor God and live in that blessing.

C. It is by God's grace alone that we are the Church, the building, the structure, the holy temple in the Lord and the dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

- (Ephesians 2:19–22 ESV) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

EXCURSUS #1: PLUMBING THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S GRACE IN RELATION TO HIS CHURCH.

I. God blesses **his** Church with his glory and grace.

Grace is the unmerited, totally undeserved, unearnable favor of God that is based on his character, his attributes, his power, his authority and the riches of his grace and glory. [*Unearnable: Something that cannot be earned or obtained through effort; not received in exchange for labor or services.*]

A. We are saved by grace.

- (Ephesians 2:8 ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

B. We are saved according to the riches of his grace.

- (Ephesians 1:7 ESV) In him we have

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

- (Ephesians 2:7 ESV) So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- (Ephesians 3:8 ESV) To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

C. The riches of God's grace are inseparable from the riches of his glory.

- (Romans 9:23 ESV) In order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.
- (Ephesians 3:16 ESV) That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.
- (Philippians 4:19 ESV) And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

D. We stand in grace.

- (Romans 5:2 ESV) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

II. Only two categories: Remain condemned in Adam or be made righteous and stand in grace in Christ.

- (Romans 5:18 ESV) Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

III. Grace superabounds and rules and produces the fruit of righteousness in the lives of those who stand in grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- (Romans 5:20–21 ESV) Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

IV. **Our necessary question** – Is grace superabounding in my life in ruling over me and producing in me the righteousness of God?

EXCURSUS #2: PLUMBING THE DEPTHS OF OUR PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

- (1 Thessalonians 1:1b ESV) Grace to you and peace.

I. The Greek word here for peace was —εἰρήνη (eirēnē) – and was commonly used for peace.

It means peace, harmony, tranquility; harmonious relations and freedom from disputes. But the meaning here goes much deeper than the absence of conflict. The effect of this peace blessing provides a spiritual awareness and conviction of soul that things are as they should be. We have been reconciled to God through Christ and now have an even more intimate relationship with God than Adam and Eve at creation.

II. We have peace with God through being justified by faith in Christ.

- (Romans 5:1 ESV) Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Peace with God is true peace.

B. There is no other peace.

As there is no other God, and none like him, there is no other peace and none like the peace he gives.

- (John 14:27 ESV) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
- (Isaiah 45:22 ESV) Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.
- (Isaiah 46:9 ESV) Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

III. Peace with God—in position and relationship—produces in that person a powerful awareness that everything is as it should be.

- A. We have a new position in Christ before our holy God.
- B. This peace is objective in that we are righteous and are declared righteous before our holy God.
- C. But this peace is also subjective and affective in producing powerful change and compelling conviction that all is well ... in a way that goes far beyond our human comprehension.

Affective means something that influences or causes feelings or emotions; the deep connection where our thinking (cognition) and feeling (emotions) constantly influence each other; soul stirring.

The peace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ is so far beyond us in the truth of its reality that it is able to guard our hearts and minds and free us from the temporal, earthbound anxieties and troubles of this world. The transcendent reality of peace with God obliterates all false notions and pretenders who offer peace and safety.

- (Philippians 4:7 ESV) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- (Ephesians 3:19–20 ESV) And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

D. Summary: Peace with God is transformative. We have been declared righteous and are clothed with righteousness as we stand before our holy God in the highest of the high courts of heaven.

END EXCURSUS

CONCLUSION: Paul overflows with thanksgiving to God because of the very evident transforming work of the gospel in their lives, 1:2-5.

- (1 Thessalonians 1:2–5 ESV) We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

I. Paul overflows with thanksgiving in his prayers to God as he sees the forever evidence of faith, love and hope in their lives as those chosen by God.

- (1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT) Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

A. Work of faith: They believed God and were doing his work according to his will.

B. Labor of love: They loved God and worked hard to please God and to accomplish his will.

C. Steadfastness of hope: Standing in grace they rejoiced in the glory of God and in their sufferings and became people who abounded in hope.

- (Romans 5:2–4 ESV) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.
- (Romans 15:13 ESV) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

II. And Paul overflows with praise because of the work of God in their lives that resulted from the gospel being brought to them in a way that honored God.

- A. The gospel did not come to them only in word.
- B. The gospel came to them in power and in the Holy Spirit.
- C. The gospel came to them with full conviction.
- D. They honored God in receiving the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

• (1 Thessalonians 1:6 ESV) And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

E. They honored God by accepting the word, not as the word of humans, but the word of God.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV) And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

III. Let's ask ourselves – Is the forever work of the gospel going on in my life?

- (1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT) Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.