
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 5:27-28

By: Brian A. Yeager

We have now reached the conclusion of the first letter to the saints in Thessalonica. The last two sentences in this epistle are the following: *“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen”* (I Thessalonians 5:27-28).

This epistle was sent from Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus to the church of the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 1:1). We noted in an earlier article that the terms “we” (I Thessalonians 1:2, I Thessalonians 1:5, I Thessalonians 1:8-9, I Thessalonians 2:2, I Thessalonians 2:4-5, etc.) as well as “us” (I Thessalonians 1:6, I Thessalonians 2:8, I Thessalonians 2:13, I Thessalonians 2:15-16, etc.) were used. However, there are the times wherein “I” is used (I Thessalonians 3:5, I Thessalonians 4:9, I Thessalonians 4:13, etc.). When this occurred, Paul was referring to himself (I Thessalonians 2:18). Remembering this is important at this point in this epistle.

Silvanus and Timotheus did not hold the office of an Apostle. First century Christians followed “the apostles' doctrine” (Acts 2:42). What the Apostle Paul spoke or wrote were the words of Christ (I Corinthians 14:37 and Galatians 1:6-12) unless otherwise noted by Paul (i.e. I Corinthians 7:6-11). An evangelist just took what they were taught by men such as Paul and repeated those things to others (I Corinthians 4:17 and II Timothy 2:1-2). In that sense, they were teaching the word of Christ as well, but not in the direct manner in which the Apostles were doing (John 16:1-13). So, when Paul writes here “I charge you by the Lord” he is exercising the authority of his office. For clarity, I am not saying that Silvanus and Timothy were not speaking the words of Christ. We read earlier in this letter that they had taught the commandments of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:1-2). I am just intending to establish the unique position Paul was in to use the authority given to him that Silvanus and Timothy did not have.

Paul is using his authority to give a “charge.” The Greek word that is translated “charge” [ὀρκίζω] is defined as: “1) to force to take an oath, to administer an oath to; 2) to adjure (solemnly implore)” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon; Strong’s # 3726). This term is used only two other times in the New Testament. Interestingly, both of the other times this term was used it was used by evil spirits (Mark 5:7 and Acts 19:13). In the first of the two references, the evil spirit is referring to the authority of the Father. In the second reference, the authority of Christ is being referred to.

The charge given by Paul to the saints in Thessalonica was that this letter be read to all of the holy brethren. Paul instructed the saints in Colosse similarly: *“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea”* (Colossians 4:16). While we today realize that all Scriptures are profitable (II Timothy 3:15-17), it is possible that some could have thought that the letter was intended for elders or evangelists rather than the whole congregation. It is also possible that some might have thought a letter was only for one congregation. This instruction made it clear that this letter was not to be kept private.

The fact that the terminology “holy brethren” appears does not infer anything beyond the fact that faithful brethren are holy. From the time that Jesus walked on this earth it is clear that brethren, in the sense of the spiritual relationship, are those who are obedient to the will of God (Mark 3:31-35). When it comes to the word “holy”, that too describes saints. Notice: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love... Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (Ephesians 1:3-4 and I Peter 1:13-16). In fact, the Greek word translated “holy” [ἅγιος] (Strong’s # 40) is also translated “saints” (Acts 9:13, Romans 1:7, Romans 12:13, Romans 15:25-26, Romans 15:31, Romans 16:2, Romans 16:15, I Corinthians 1:2, I Corinthians 14:33, II Corinthians 1:1, II Corinthians 8:4, II Corinthians 9:12, II Corinthians 13:13, Ephesians 1:1, etc.).

This epistle then concludes with the extension of grace from our Lord to these holy brethren in Thessalonica. This is a common conclusion to letters that Paul wrote to saints (Romans 16:20, and Romans 16:24, I Corinthians 16:23, Galatians 6:18, Philippians 4:23, II Thessalonians 3:18, and Philemon 1:25). Yet, Paul was not the only one to extend grace to brethren (II Peter 1:2 and Revelation 22:21).

For me, when I read letters such as this, it is powerful to read the conclusion as it relates to the grace of our Lord. It is a reminder for me that we can have grace because of Jesus Christ (John 1:17 and Romans 5:21). It also reminds me that grace gives me responsibilities as well (Titus 2:11-14 and II Peter 3:18).

This concludes our study of the first letter to the saints in Thessalonica. As with most studies, there is some meat left on the bone (so to speak). As you use these articles in this study challenge yourself to find things in the text that we did not address. There is a wealth of information in this text and others. Enjoy your studies of God’s word!