
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 1:1

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We have already covered some information about the church in Thessalonica in our first article of this study. So, we are going to jump into the verse by verse study of this epistle. The first verse of this letter is as follows: *“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (I Thessalonians 1:1). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus addressed the church in Thessalonica in this epistle and in the second (II Thessalonians 1:1). These three men obviously worked together in the preaching of the Gospel (II Corinthians 1:19).

The word translated “church” [ἐκκλησία] has various meanings. One dictionary defines the term like this: “a calling out, that is, (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church” (Strong’s # 1577). So, the congregation; assembly of the Thessalonians is being addressed in this letter. When letters like this were written they were read during the assembly of those saints. Notice: *“Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 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 4:15-16). In fact, at the end of this letter to the church in Thessalonica we read this instruction: *“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren”* (I Thessalonians 5:27).

When a congregation is being addressed, there will be things that apply collectively, concurrently, and individually. In this epistle there is an instruction to *“comfort yourselves together”* (I Thessalonians 5:11). That is obviously something that applies when the saints are together. The warning of the unruly could apply collectively. However, it is something that could also apply concurrently. By concurrently, I am meaning when two or more brethren would be together, but the whole congregation may not be. You can see this displayed in the following: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”* (Matthew 18:15-17). The whole church was not involved in the instruction above until verse seventeen.

What we will find in this letter is the same thing we find in most of the letters written to the churches. The majority of the instructions herein will not apply to the congregation as a collective body. We understand this. Brethren are not assembled together all of the time. The fact is, most of our lives are spent outside of the assembly. So, when this congregation is told to *“abstain from fornication”* (I Thessalonians 4:3), that instruction is not about the time they are assembled together. That is simple and obvious. So, don't let the fact that the church is addressed cause you to dismiss the instructions that are in this letter for Christians to apply in every day life.

This congregation is addressed as being *“...in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Similar addresses are made in other epistles. For example, this was written to the church in Corinth: *“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours”* (I Corinthians 1:2). When Paul wrote the Galatians this phrase was used: *“And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ”* (Galatians 1:22).

The phrases “in God” and/or “in Christ” are used in regard to Christians throughout the New Testament (Romans 12:4-5, I Corinthians 1:30, II Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:26-29, Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Philippians 4:21, Colossians 1:2, Colossians 3:1-3, I John 4:15-16, etc.). The phrases we see that are like the one used to address this congregation are used to describe the relationship of the faithful with God. For example: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (I John 1:3).

The extension of grace and peace in a letter to Christians was not uncommon. Such was written to the saints in Rome (Romans 1:7). It was written to the saints in Corinth (I Corinthians 1:3 and II Corinthians 1:2). It was written to the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:3). On and on we could go (Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, I Timothy 1:2, II Timothy 1:2, Philemon 1:3, I Peter 1:2, II Peter 1:2, II John 1:3, and Revelation 1:4).

As citizens of the kingdom, we have the grace of God (Hebrews 12:28). That grace not only works toward our salvation (Ephesians 2:1-10), but also instructs us how we are supposed to live and please God (Titus 2:11-14). That grace we have from God is something we are supposed to grow in (II Peter 3:18). As Christians, we have peace that comes from God. Our God is the “God of peace” (Romans 15:33, Romans 16:20, I Thessalonians 5:23, and Hebrews 13:20). Think about this statement: *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful”* (Colossians 3:15). So, do not take the wording that this and other epistles begin with as just a common introduction. Grace and peace are vital to us as Christians. Such are not to be taken lightly or quickly passed over. Think on these things as we study this letter going forward.