

1 Thessalonians 1:1 “The Thessalonian Church’ April 30, 2023

I. Welcome and Intro

A. Good morning! Ohayogozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni. It is so good to be here with you all as we gather to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let’s go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School class.

1. *As well as the Bible English class (Second Service)*

C. Today marks a significant change for us here at Calvary. For the past two years we have been making our way through the gospel of Luke, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, starting at Luke chapter 1 verse 1 and making our way all the way to Luke chapter 24 verse 53.

D. But this morning we start a new adventure as we continue to make our way through the New Testament here on Sunday mornings. Today, we’re going to start a study through one of the oldest, if not the oldest, epistles contained in the New Testament.

1. Today, we begin a study through the book of 1 Thessalonians. A book many consider to be the first epistle to be put to papyrus from the New Testament; the only other epistle that may have been older is the epistle of Galatians, but scholars are divided on the timing of the book of Galatians. Either way, what we are about to dive into is one of the first letters written to the church and while short, contains some very important and practical application for us even today.

2. As we get into our study, you’re going to find that the church in Thessalonica shares some similarities with the church as we know it today. Some of the things they were dealing with in the middle of the first century are things that we are still dealing with here in the 21st century.

E. Now, some of you may be wondering, why we are going into the book of 1 Thessalonians and not going into the book of John, which is the next book of the Bible, or perhaps even the book of Acts which is really a continuation of Dr. Luke's account from his gospel record.

1. I'd like to share with you guys the heart and vision the Lord has given to me for my role as a pastor/teacher.
 - a. In the book of Acts, Paul on the way back from his third missionary journey, stopped by in the city of Miletus and called for the elders of the church in Ephesus to come to him.
 - b. Now Ephesus was a city that Paul had spent several years with, preaching the gospel, and teaching both Jews and Gentiles of the importance of repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ.
 - c. And it was during his brief stop in Miletus, while addressing the Ephesian elders that Paul declared to them, "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." (**Acts 20:25-27**)
 - d. Paul had a burden to ensure that he faithfully declared the whole counsel of God to the people there in Ephesus. He wanted to make sure that he was faithful to preach to them and teach them everything that he could teach them.
2. And I have the same desire in my own heart. I want to teach through the entirety of God's counsel, I want to teach the entirety of God's Word to God's people.
 - a. Now, I know that obviously not everyone is going to be here for the whole teaching of the Bible, most of you are here for no more than a couple of years and then you are on to the next duty station.

- b. But there are a few that have been here since before I arrived and started this journey; Andre Young and Akiko Uchiyama come to mind.
 - c. One day I hope to be able to declare to them that “I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”.
3. Now, when I arrived here in Iwakuni back in 2013, the church was in the book of Matthew on Sunday mornings and the book of Job on Wednesday nights. And so, I continued to teach from those books, chapter by chapter verse by verse.
- a. And when we finished the book of Matthew, I had a choice to make: “Do we continue on to the next book in the Bible, which would be the gospel of Mark, or do we skip the three other gospels and jump into the book of Acts?”.
 - b. As I prayed about it, I felt like the Lord led me to come up with a plan that would have us go through the entirety of the Bible, but allow us to circle back to the gospels every so often.
 - c. Because many people in this community are coming and going, I didn’t want to spend too much time away from the gospels.
 - d. I knew that if I went straight on through the NT and covered Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, then we wouldn’t get back to a gospel account until we completed the book of Revelation; a timeframe that I felt would be far too long, and I just didn’t feel that was what God would have for us as a church.
 - e. I wanted to be able to routinely come back to the gospel and continually remind us of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
4. And so, I felt like the Lord led me to take the NT and divide it up into four somewhat equal portions of

scripture, with a gospel account at the beginning of each portion.

- a. So, what that looked like was taking the book of Matthew and then going to the book of Acts and Romans. Those three books actually make up over 30% of the NT, but it was the best I could do and still keep a little bit of order intact.
 - b. After we finished the book of Romans, instead of continuing to 1 Corinthians, we circled back to another gospel record and covered the gospel of Mark. After Mark, we picked back up our march through the epistles with 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.
 - c. Once we finished that second section, we circled back around to another gospel, the gospel we just finished in Luke. And so, now we pick up in the epistles back where we left off, by reading what is after Colossians, which happens to be the book of 1 Thessalonians.
 - d. After the book of 1 Thessalonians, should the Lord tarry, the plan will be to cover 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews.
 - e. After we complete the book of Hebrews, we will circle back and cover the fourth and final gospel, the gospel of John. If the Lord still hasn't come back by then, we will make our way through James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude, and finally Revelation.
5. So that is the plan. I have no idea how long it is going to take us. We started back in 2013 and we are technically over 2/3 the way through the NT now. Maybe another 5 years will get us to the end of the NT.
6. Then, we'll simply start back over with the gospel of Matthew.
- a. For those of you wondering, on Wednesday nights, we have circled back to the book of Genesis and will

be making our way into the book of Exodus in another week or so.

- i. Because we started in the book of Job, we still have a good way to go in our OT study. We are just over half-way through the OT at this time.
 - b. Should the Lord tarry and allow me to continue to pastor the flock here in Iwakuni, the goal is to have taught through the entirety of God's word from Genesis to Revelation one day.
 - c. That I, like Paul may be able to declare too "that I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."
 - d. I'm thinking, if the Lord still hasn't come back by the year 2030, I may have a chance. We'll see.
- F. So, now that you understand the grand plan and the direction we're headed, let's go ahead and turn our attention to our study in the book of 1 Thessalonians.
1. This morning we're going to be doing something a little bit different from our regular Sunday morning studies.
 2. Every time I start a new book of the bible, I always like to do a study on the background information of the particular book. I find that it helps to set the stage for the rest of the study and allows us to understand the overall context of the book and the particular flow of the book.
 3. And so, that is what we are going to be doing today. We will get into the opening section of the book of 1 Thessalonians, but just the greeting found in verse 1 as we look to first gather all the important background information for this particular epistle.
 4. The title of our study this morning is going to simply be "**The Thessalonian Church**" and our text, as I alluded to already, is simply going to be 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 1.

5. So, if you have your Bible with you this morning, go ahead and open it up to the book of 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians is a small book in the NT that comes right after Colossians, but before 2 Thessalonians and the books of Timothy.
6. Once you are there, I'd like to invite you all to rise to your feet in honor of God and His Holy Word. I'm going to read the opening introduction to this letter from my Bible, do your best to follow along in your own. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 1 opens with the following... (*R & P*)

II. Background;

- A. Well, before we dive into our verse by verse study this morning, I'd like to share with you all a little overview of sorts; share some background information regarding the letter we know of as "1 Thessalonians".
 1. And we'll do so by asking the basic question words about this particular letter; the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the epistle.
 2. Now, if you have a study Bible with you this morning, you can usually find a lot of the information we're going to cover this morning at the beginning of each book.
 3. Some of the more in-depth study bibles will do breakdowns about each of the books of the Bible laying out such things as the author of the book, the intended audience, the timing of the book, and a lot of other informative and helpful facts that allow us to gain a broader understanding of the overall setting of the letter.
 4. We're going to spend a good amount of time laying out all those details so that it will prepare us for all the Lord has in store for us over the next couple of months as we make our way through 1 Thessalonians.
- B. We're going to begin by asking a few simple questions pertaining to "who".

1. **Who wrote the epistle of 1 Thessalonians?** Who is the author?

- a. This one is pretty easy, the author identifies himself in the very first word of the very first verse we read this morning. It's none other than **Paul the apostle**.
 - i. In his introduction to the letter, Paul also includes two of his travel companions that played a role in the work that God did in and through the church in Thessalonica.
 - ii. Their names are Silvanus and Timothy; Silvanus is actually the Roman name of Paul's companion we more commonly refer to as Silas; Silvanus and Silas are one and the same person.
 - iii. And while Paul includes these two others in his greeting to the church, there is nothing that would suggest that this was a group letter of any sort. Paul simply added these other two as part of his traditional greeting, letting the recipients now that these two were with him and greeted them as well.
- b. Now, I don't mean to dumb this down too much for you guys, but it's been a while since we were in one of Paul's epistles and so I wanted to remind you all a little bit about who Paul is.
- c. Before he was known as Paul the apostle, this man went by the name Saul of Tarsus. And Saul of Tarsus was not a very pleasant person to be around.
 - i. Saul was a Pharisee, a well-respected and admired Pharisee, one of the up and comers amongst the religious elite.
 - ii. And he was a persecutor of the church; he tortured Christians, he imprisoned Christians, and even approved of the killing of Christians. He was there approving of the very first Christian martyr, Stephen, recorded in the Scriptures in Acts chapter 7.

- iii. This man was greatly feared by Christians throughout the land; and yet God reached out and touched this man's life and completely changed him and used him to be the mouthpiece of God to the nations.
- d. One day while on his way to Damascus with papers in hand granting him the authority to seize and arrest any suspected Christians, Paul had an encounter with the Lord.
 - i. The Lord appeared to him in a blinding light and spoke to him asking him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (**Acts 9:4**)
 - ii. To which Saul responded, "Who are You, Lord?"
 - iii. And Jesus said to him, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (**Acts 9:5**)
 - The term "kick against the goads" speaks of a tool that was used by animal owners to prod their animals in the right direction.
 - A goad was a pointed stick used to direct large beasts of burden. Sometimes they would try to go their own way and their owner would prod them with a goad to get them back on track, but sometimes the animals would kick against the goads.
 - This would often lead to injury and harm to the animal as they often would end up not just getting a poke, but sometimes even impaled by the goad.
 - iv. The sense we get from Jesus' words to Saul was that God was trying to direct him, trying to get his attention, trying to redirect him, but Saul kept fighting against the Lord and the work of His Spirit drawing Him to the Lord.

- v. There on that day, Saul surrendered to the Lord and God later called him as a chosen vessel of His to bear God's name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (**Acts 9:15**)
 - vi. Paul would be sent out by the Lord on three different missionary journeys throughout the land, preaching and teaching the gospel along the way and God did an amazing work through him, bringing countless people to salvation and planting churches throughout the land.
2. And that leads us to our next who question, "**To whom did Paul write this letter?**" Again, the answer to this one is quite simple, we are told in our opening verse that it was to **the church of the Thessalonians**.
- a. But who were the Thessalonians? The Thessalonians were a population of people that lived in the city of Thessalonica.
 - b. Thessalonica is a city you can still go and visit even to this day. Though the people there will call it Thessaloniki. It is a city that has a population of about 1,000,000 people in its metropolitan area and is the second most populated city of the country of Greece; second only to Athens.
 - c. Back in the first century, Thessalonica was a prominent seaport and the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia.
 - d. Because of its strategic location along the Via Egnatia, the main road from Rome to the East, and its vast seaport, it became a very successful city commercially speaking.
 - e. Historians estimate the population of the city during the first century to be about 200,000. Of those 200,000 within the city most were Greeks, but there were also many Romans and even a sizeable minority population of Jews.

- f. The church there in Thessalonica was very young and were experiencing a great bit of persecution. But more on that later.

C. Let's move on to another of our question words, focusing in upon "what?".

1. And we'll start with asking the question, **what is the main theme found in this epistle?** What is the main topic that is discussed throughout it?
 - a. Now, one of the best ways to discover the main theme of a book is to look for repeated words and/or phrases that come up over and over again. And in 1 Thessalonians, there surely is something that pops up over and over again.
 - b. The main theme of the book of 1 Thessalonians is **the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - i. Look down in your Bible to verse 10 of chapter 1, there Paul writes of how the church in Thessalonica had turned to God and how they waited for His Son from heaven, speaking of course of Jesus Christ. [**1 Th. 1:10**]
 - ii. Skim down to chapter 2 verse 19 there Paul states, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (**2:19**)
 - iii. Again, in chapter 3 at the end in verse 13, Paul writes, "so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our god and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." (**3:13**)
 - iv. Drop down a little more again into chapter 4 verse 15. Paul writes there, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." (**4:15**)

- v. Take a look at the opening of chapter 5 in verse 2. It reads, “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.” (5:2)
 - vi. And then Paul starts to wrap up his letter at the end of chapter 5 in verse 23 stating, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:23)
- c. So clearly the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is a key theme of this book. Now, when it talks about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we’re going to be looking at this in two ways.
- i. First of all, we’re going to be looking at it in light of His coming for His church in the clouds, we call this the rapture, and we’ll spend more time talking about this as we continue in our study of the book.
 - ii. And secondly, we’re going to be looking at it in light of His coming with His church, to the earth, we commonly refer to this as the second coming of Jesus. Again, we’ll look at this topic in more details as we make our way through Paul’s letter.
2. Another good what question we can ask ourselves is **what is the main verse(s)** of the book of 1 Thessalonians?
- a. There are a couple different ones, but I’m going to select two verses from chapter 5. **1 Thessalonians 5:9 & 10** states, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” (5:9-10)
 - b. As we put together the key theme, of Christ’s coming, along with the key verse it points to a very glorious truth.

- c. That when God pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world during what we commonly refer to as the 7-Year Tribulation, when He pours out the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments mentioned in Revelation chapters 6-18, we are not going to be part of that.
- d. For as our key verse states, “God has not appointed us to wrath”.
- e. But this idea about us not experiencing the wrath of God is not just found in our key verse. It is also mentioned at the end of verse 10 in chapter 1. “even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (**1:10b**)
- f. And again in Revelation 3:10 where Jesus promises to keep us from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.” (**Rev. 3:10**)
- g. Also in Romans chapter 5 verse 9 where Paul writes how “having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (**Rom. 5:9**)
- h. Jesus Himself instructed us in Luke’s gospel that we ought to “Watch therefore, and pray always that [we] may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (**Lk. 21:36**)
- i. Jesus is going to come for His church and rapture us out of the earth, then I believe this will usher in the 7-year tribulation where God’s wrath will be poured out upon the earth, culminating with the physical return of Jesus Christ to judge the nations and the establishment of His rule and reign upon the earth for a 1,000 years. Exciting stuff for sure. But, I am getting a little ahead of myself. Sorry about that.

D. We’ve answered the who and the what of the book, now let’s turn to the “how” questions of the book.

1. Starting with “**How was the church in Thessalonica formed?**” Well, the account of Paul’s work in Thessalonica is recorded for us in Acts 17.
 - a. **During Paul’s second missionary journey**, after exiting the city of Philippi, he and his companions came to the city of Thessalonica. And there, Paul immediately went to the Jewish synagogues to preach Christ to them.
 - b. We are told in Acts 17 that Paul went to the Jewish synagogues and reasoned with them from the Scriptures for three sabbaths, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’” (**Acts 17:2-3**)
 - c. And we are told that some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women all believed and joined with Paul and Silas. (**Acts 17:4**)
 - d. But, the Jews who were not persuaded, became envious, and took some of the evil men from the marketplace and gathered a mob together and set the city in an uproar, attacking the house of Jason where Paul and Silas had been staying. (**Acts 17:5**)
 - e. But when they didn’t find Paul nor Silas, they instead dragged Jason and some of the other believers before the rulers of the city and brought accusations against them that they were acting against Rome claiming that there was another king besides Caesar—Jesus. (**Acts 17:7**)
 - f. Because of the fall out there in the city the believers in Thessalonica immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night. (**Acts 17:10**).
 - g. And so Paul didn’t have a lot of time there in Thessalonica; at least three weeks, but probably not much more than a couple of months at best. Once

the church started flourishing after those initial three weeks, the Jews started getting envious and made trouble causing Paul to depart to Berea.

2. Another how question we can ask pertains to the overall flow and structure of the epistle. We can ask **“how is the book outlined?”**
 - a. The book of 1 Thessalonians can easily be broken down into **two major sections**.
 - b. Chapters 1-3 deal with Paul looking back and remembering the personal experiences the church had gone through.
 - i. He spends time reflecting on the founding of the church and how God worked in and through them. He commends them for the growth, and encourages them to continue how they started.
 - c. Then in chapters 4 & 5 Paul turns and starts looking to the future and gives them some practical exhortation on how to live their life in sight of Christ’s coming.
 - d. So, chapters 1-3; deals with personal experience looking back in their past, while chapters 4 & 5 deal with practical exhortation looking forward to their future.

E. Moving on, let’s ask ourselves some questions pertaining to when and where.

1. **When did Paul write this letter to the church in Thessalonica?** It would seem that Paul wrote this letter to the church during his second missionary journey.
 - a. Paul’s second missionary journey lasted roughly 3.5 to 4 years from around the end of the year 49AD to roughly the beginning of the year 53AD. It is believed that Paul passed through and started the church in and around the year 51AD, after his time in Philippi.

- b. We know that he probably only spent a couple months in Thessalonica and that part of his writing to them was to check in on them because of his quick departure.
- c. Most scholars put the writing of the book of 1 Thessalonians in the same year that it was started, **the year 51AD.**

2. This leads to our where question. **From where did Paul write this letter?**

- a. It would seem that Paul wrote this letter while he was on his second missionary journey while staying in **the city of Corinth.**
- b. Paul quickly exited the city of Thessalonica and made his way down to Berea and Athens and then on to Corinth where he ended up staying 18 months according to Acts 18:11. (**Acts 18:11**)
- c. When Paul exited Thessalonica, he did so with Silas and went to the city of Berea and preached there. But more trouble soon found them in Berea and Paul was immediately sent away via the sea to Athens.
- d. Timothy and Silas joined up with Paul in Athens, but according to 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul decided it was best to send Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to check in on them and to encourage them in their young faith. (**1 Th. 3:1-2**)
- e. When Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth, he was given an update about the church in Thessalonica from Timothy and it is believed that Paul sat down to write them this letter we have before us at that time.

F. So, we've looked at who, what, how, when, and where. Not let's turn to the question of "why". **Why was this book written to the church in Thessalonica?**

- 1. After Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica sooner than he would have probably liked, it would seem that

he grew increasingly concerned about their progress in the faith.

2. Those who had been persuaded to place their faith in Christ, were still brand-new believers. They were babes in Christ, and they didn't have anyone there to lead them, to teach them, or to model for them what it meant to be a follower of Christ.
3. Paul was so concerned for them that he soon sent Timothy back to them in order to have Timothy help establish them and encourage them in their faith.
4. Paul left them while persecution was on the rise. The envious Jews who stirred up so much trouble for them, didn't stop just because Paul left town. They continued to persecute those who had put their faith in Christ and Paul was deeply concerned for them.
5. As we go through the letter, you will hear the heart of a concerned but proud father, in Paul. He was so encouraged by how they had responded to the persecution and how they kept to the faith. But they still had questions and concerns and needed further instruction on certain doctrinal positions.
6. And so Paul wrote to them in order **to encourage** them to continue on despite the persecution; to keep the faith. But he also wrote to them to clarify a few things pertaining to some misunderstandings about the coming of the Lord and what that would be like.
 - a. It would seem that some in the church were concerned that some of their loved ones would perhaps miss out on heaven and being with Jesus because they had died prior to Jesus' return.
 - b. Others wondered if the persecution they were experiencing was what Paul was referring to when he spoke of the return of Christ and the wrath to come.

7. And so, he writes to clear up some of the confusion regarding those things. To put at ease their hearts regarding the return of Christ and to let them know that the wrath he spoke of was something that was not intended for them. That what they were experiencing was the persecution of the church from the enemy, not the wrath of God being poured out upon them.

G. And with that, let's go ahead and finally dive into our text, beginning with verse 1.

III. 1 Thessalonians 1:1;

A. We've already noted Paul and who he is in our introduction, but who are these other two mentioned by Paul?

1. Silvanus was Paul's travel companions for his second missionary journey. During Paul's first missionary journey he traveled with Barnabas, but the two of them had a slight falling out over whether or not John Mark should come along with them again.

a. John Mark had first accompanied both Paul and Barnabas, but soon after he departed and left them on their own. Paul didn't want to put himself in that situation again, bringing someone along that was just going to potentially bail on him. But Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another opportunity.

b. The two decided it was best for them to split up and for them each to go their own way. Barnabas decided to take John Mark with him and head to Cyprus to spread the gospel, while Paul took with Him Silas and went back through Syria and Cilicia visiting the churches he had started during his first missionary journey.

c. Silas was a leading man within the church there in Jerusalem. He was sent with Paul to share the decision of the Jerusalem Council to those in Antioch according to Acts 15:22. (**Acts 15:22**)

- d. Evidently, Paul and him became good friends and enjoyed working together, for Paul invited Silas to come along with him on his second missionary journey.
 - e. While upon this missionary journey Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi and were together during the unrest in Thessalonica. And would end up playing an important role in the early Christian work in Corinth.
2. The other individual mentioned was Timothy. Timothy was a young man that lived in the city of Lystra, one of the places Paul had visited on his first missionary journey.
- a. When Paul and Silas came through the city of Lystra again, during Paul's second missionary journey, Paul wanted to have Timothy join with them as a travel companion and assistant.
 - b. Timothy was a disciple of Christ, the son of Jewish woman named Eunice and a Greek father. He was well spoken of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium and make a wonderful partner in the gospel. (**Acts 16:2-3a**)
 - c. From his youth, Timothy learned the scriptures from his mother and grandmother according to 2 Timothy 1:5. (**2 Tim. 3:15**)
 - d. And from there he spent countless hours alongside Paul, learning from him and being used by him to support and encourage others in their faith. Timothy eventually became the pastor of the church in Ephesus and was a pillar in the faith.
 - e. Timothy is referred to by Paul as someone who was like a son to him. Their bond and relationship continued to grow throughout the years and God used them together to accomplish some incredible

things. But we'll get into those things when we get to the books of 1st and 2nd Timothy.

B. So let's take a look at Paul's very familiar greeting that he used in nearly every one of his epistles and we'll wrap up our time together this morning. Paul wrote, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

1. This was a greeting that Paul used several times in his letters to the churches in various places.
 - a. He wrote this same thing to the church in Rome, the church in Corinth, the churches in Galatia, the church in Ephesus, the church in Philippi, the church in Colossae, and even to his letter to Philemon.
 - b. Each of them saying the same exact thing, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
2. Grace was the typical greeting used amongst Greeks in that day when greeting someone you would say "Grace" to them.
 - a. Biblically speaking, grace is described as God's unmerited favor; getting what you don't deserve.
 - b. Those in Thessalonica were sinners and they deserved death; for the wages of sin is death according to Romans 6:23 (**Rom. 6:23a**)
 - c. And you and I are just the same. Because we have all fallen short of the glory of God. We've all blown it and sinned. (**Rom. 3:23**)
 - d. Therefore, we all deserve judgment because we're all sinners.
 - e. But because of God's grace, we are spared judgment. Jesus Christ took the judgment for us. His unmerited favor is upon us.

3. Peace is described as rest. It was the typical Jewish greeting used; the Hebrew word “shalom”; it means peace.
4. Grace and peace are said to be the Siamese twins of the NT. They are often found written side by side, but always in this order. Nowhere in the Bible will you see mentioned peace before grace.
5. And I think that is done purposefully. **Because you cannot really know the peace of God until you have experienced the grace of God.**
6. Pastor Chuck Smith, who was used by God in beginning the Calvary Chapel movement back in the late 60’s and early 70’s, used to always talk about his experience growing up in the church and serving in the church in his early days.
 - a. He would talk about how there were years in his Christian experience where he really didn’t have the peace of God. He had peace with God, because that was established through the death of Jesus Christ, but he struggled enjoying the peace of God.
 - b. He struggled going about his own works to try to establish a righteous standing before God. As long as he was seeking righteousness through his own effort, he never found peace. There was always a struggle in his walk with the Lord.
 - c. He always tried to be just a little bit better, he’d make promises to God to try harder and do better and he never had the peace of God.
 - d. Until one day the Lord finally broke through and Pastor Chuck experienced the grace of God. And he understood that it was all about grace. That without grace there was no way to ever have the peace of God.
 - e. Once we understand God’s grace, we can then enjoy His peace, His rest. Grace is always first, and

if you haven't yet experienced the grace of God, then you really won't be able to know the peace of God in your life.

7. Maybe some of you here can relate to that. Maybe some of you have been trying so hard on your own, in your own effort and in your own strength, to try and be better for God. Maybe some of you need to come to a better understanding about what grace is all about.
 - a. It's unmerited, unearned. You can't get it through your own righteousness, your own efforts.
 - b. We need to simply humble ourselves and recognize our need for God's grace. To realize that we can't do it on our own, that we can never be good enough.
 - i. **James 4:6** declares, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
 - ii. Humble yourself before the Lord. Stop trying to earn His favor. Realize you can't do it on your own. Acknowledge your need for Him and He will supply you with the grace that is needed.

C. Next week, Lord willing, we'll really start our dive into the meat of this letter. Today was simply more of an overview and introduction to the book. I hope you are excited to get into this book and that our time together piqued your interest in studying this small but impactful book of 1 Thessalonians. Let's pray.