

- Today, we begin a new book of the Bible. The Book of 1 Thessalonians.
 - Now, if you have attended our fellowship for any time at all, then you know by now that the introduction of any book or letter is one of my (if not my) favorite parts of the study of scripture.
 - And why?
 - Because it sets the tone for the entire book or letter, but more than that, the introduction is so important because of context.
 - As we know, context is key in understanding the scriptures correctly.
 - And so, for that reason, the opening of any new Book of the Bible is crucial if we want to stay in context.
 - Another way to say it is that the introduction of any letter or book of the Bible is vital in understanding the where, the why, and the who.
- So, here we are for the 18th time in 11 years, studying the introduction of yet another book of the Bible.
 - And today, that book is 1 Thessalonians.
- We will begin by asking ourselves, “Who wrote 1 Thessalonians?”
 - As always, if you don’t know the answer (say, on trivia night at your favorite Mexican Restaurant), then just answer with Paul, and you have better than a 50% chance of getting it right.
 - Because, as we know, Paul wrote most of the New Testament.
 - And how many books did he write?
 - 13 for sure and maybe more.
 - And how many books are in the New Testament? 27
 - And just for fun, how many books are in the Old Testament? 39
 - 66 Books total in the Bible, written by roughly 44 authors.
 - And they all harmonize perfectly together, fitting together like a glove as an integrated message system, speaking to one main theme.
 - That is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
 - And then, of course, along with that, is how His work on the cross provides redemption/salvation to mankind.
 - And that theme is what led John to write this in:

[John 3:16](#) For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life

- So, belief in Jesus is the key to salvation, and this morning I want to do something unorthodox in today’s service.
 - And that is, I am going to offer up salvation to anyone sitting here today.

- And I say it's Unorthodox because, normally, there isn't a call to salvation until the end of the service!
- So, one more time, belief in Jesus Christ, specifically His work on the cross, followed by repentance and confession, is the process by which a man, woman, or child is saved.
 - Then, of course, once we are saved, we are commanded to be water baptized
 - Which, as we know, provides a sign to the outward world that you have placed your faith and trust in Christ.
 - And so, if you haven't made that profession of faith, and you would like to do so, or you have been considering doing so, then please mark Salvation on the connection card, and we will take them up at the end of the service. And I will call you soon!
 - Also, if you have made a profession of faith, but have never made it public through baptism, and you would like to do that, please note that on the card as well, and we will get you lined up to do so.
 - So, no altar call at the beginning of today's service, but that's okay, just fill out the card, and I will call you!
- So, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, but why is the book or letter called 1 Thessalonians?
 - It's the same reason that we have the Book of Galatians, Romans, Philippians, and so forth.
 - The Books or letters of the Bible are many times named after the City or Area, or even the person (as in the case of Philemon), to whom Paul was writing.
- A few weeks ago, I was talking to a dear brother in the faith. One who attends another church/denomination.
 - He said, 'You know in Biblical times, there was only 1 Church, and that was Christ Church.'
 - He was angling toward saying that his denomination had the correct name, where others did not.
 - The problem with that theory is that the name on the building has zero to do with the identifying mark of "Christ Church".
 - As a matter of fact, the true Church is, by definition, the Ecclesia.
 - Or maybe better said, the true church is comprised of all those who are saved.
 - Which means, once again, the name on the building is irrelevant as an identifying mark of God's Church.
 - And so, the church is made up of those who have placed their faith in Christ.
 - Which means, if you are saved, then you are part of "The Church".
- Moving on, so why is the letter we are studying here today called 1 Thessalonians?
 - The same reason as the letter to Ephesus was known as Ephesians.
 - And the same is true for Galatians (Galatia), Philippians (Phillipi), and here we see it again, as Paul writes this letter to the people in Thessalonica.
 - That is why this letter is called 1 Thessalonians.

- The Thessalonians are the people who live in Thessalonica. Hence the name!
- And to be honest with you, the whole naming of the letter and book thing makes sense and is simple to understand, unless you are a human being who loves to theorize and fixate on different Biblical concepts, or if you are a person who likes to complicate things.
- If that's you, and you hang with those theories, then of course, over time, they tend to blossom into traditions.
 - And in a sense, become "Law".
 - Which, then, when in full bloom, they can cause a group of people to start a whole new denomination.
 - Even though those Traditions and Laws cannot be backed up by scripture.
- And let me say one more thing on this topic before we press on.
 - Since the beginning of time, people have always taken simple concepts and instructions and complicated them.
 - The reason being, humans have been given brains to think with, which is great and it's important.
 - As a matter of fact, it's crucial for our survival, and I have no issue with that.
 - Having said that, the problem arises when we take simple instructions and begin overthinking them.
 - I see it all the time in business. We give a simple instruction, and somehow that turns into something completely different than what we told the person to do.
 - And on many occasions, I am left shaking my head and saying to myself, how in the world did they get this out of that?
 - The truth of the matter is, it's all because God designed humans intrinsically to inquire, to think, and to process information.
 - It's a built-in defense mechanism
 - And as we inquire and begin to think, our minds begin to race, and suddenly we feel we don't have all the information we need to make the right decision.
- And so, we begin to question what we were told, saying to ourselves, "Well, I know they told me to do this or that, but what about this?"
 - What about this thing or that thing that might pop up?
 - Something that maybe that person didn't tell me in their instructions, what do I do?
 - And so, we begin feeling as if we don't have enough information, even though we have been given all the information we need.
- As I said, God designed us this way, and it's all that kind of thinking that provides us protection in life. But it's also all that thinking that can get us into messes.
 - And when dealing with scripture, this is where it can really get out of hand.
 - Where someone reads a verse or a set of verses, and once again, their mind begins to race, and that individual begins theorizing.

- And all of this begins the same way. with the verse or verses being read as stand-alone verses.
- Where there is absolutely no way to know if you are, or are not, in “context”
- And from there, the individual’s mind takes the Christian off into never-never land as he or she begins to imagine what the writer must have meant.
 - And let me say – most of the time (not every time), what the individual has drummed up in their head, (as it pertains to the writer’s intent), is not what they meant.
 - But regardless, their misunderstanding of what they are reading leads Christian people down a road where they are 100 percent convinced, they are correct, which then leads them to think they have discovered something that no one else has seen or understood.
- So basically, they think they have found the “Ark of the Covenant”
- The “Secret Sauce”
 - And once that person’s theory is settled into their mind, and that individual or individuals believe they are correct, they then begin looking for other one-off verses to support their position.
- This simply leads them into more verses, which are also taken out of context.
- This entire process is why America has on record over 4000 denominations, with more forming each year!
- Guys, let me say this. The scriptures were officially canonized in or around the 4th Century.
 - Which means, we have had our Bibles, and thereafter, multiple translations for 100’s of years.
 - In which many brilliant biblical scholars and theologians, and Bible teachers have literally torn the scriptures apart, examining them, breaking them down, and putting them back together over a variety of topics.
 - And those topics range from:
 - Once saved, always saved.
 - Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy.
 - Baptism, is it or is it not essential to Salvation?
 - Other gifts of the Spirit – such as healing, etc.
 - And what’s interesting about all of this is that whatever denomination or belief system someone finds themselves in when they are introduced to another belief system, if they aren’t grounded in the entire counsel of God, many times they will drift.
 - Often, they say to themselves, ‘Wow, my denomination has never taught this or that, and so, based on what I’ve now been shown, I believe we are missing the boat.’
 - This happened to Daffney and me years ago, when I became interested in the outward working of the Holy Spirit.

- I'm specifically speaking about tongues and other gifts.
- Interpretation of tongues, healing, etc.
- I had been preaching for several years, and I thought I knew what I believed, but after studying with other people from other denominations on these topics, I began to question what I thought I believed.
 - And soon, I began gravitating toward other church denominations.
 - Which, to be honest, was good because I believe God was teaching me.
 - Rounding off my rough edges, "Doctrinally Speaking"
 - And I am thankful for the experience, because, as with everything I am passionate about, it caused me to dig and study on my own.
 - Which then led me to where I am today.
 - It also grounded me and educated me so that I could stand on what I discovered to be the truth.
- Now what's interesting is, (keeping with the theme of people creating Biblical theories on what is and what is not correct), I found that even when one denomination believed something, say, about the gifts of the spirit, and another denomination believed in those gifts as well, many times (even though the two denominations set up shop in the same camp), one denomination would say to the other, yes, we believe in the gifts as well, but not the same way you believe in those gifts.
 - This educated me even further about how, even in the same camp, there are still many disputes and variations over what the churches say they believe.
- Now, why am I heading down this path? Because the Bible was not written in a way that requires a PhD in systematic theology to understand it.
 - If it were, then we would need to revert to Catholicism.
 - Where the only people allowed to have a bible are the priests, and or the most well-educated sect of biblical society.
 - That would make things easier if all you needed to do when you were confused was simply ask one of the spiritual intellectuals, and they would tell you!
 - Only one problem with all that: Corruption
 - These super-spiritual, intellectual individuals become corrupt and self-serving, and I can assure you God knows that.
 - That's why He would never give one man or a group of men that type of power.
 - He knows they will eventually mess it up.
 - And why? Because of pride.
- So, the Bible was written so that we all can understand it.
 - That's if we stick to the concept, one that my former mentor espoused.
 - Which was, "When the plain sense makes common sense, we are to seek no other sense."
 - And if it doesn't, then we must dig deeper and study for ourselves and find that

these things might be true.

- If we do that, we will arrive at the right conclusion.
- Now, one more thing before moving on with this topic.
 - When you study scripture over a long period of time, you will begin to see the same themes emerge.
 - In other words, remember one of my favorite sayings, “The Sum of thy Word is Whole”
 - What a great saying, because it lets us know that there is no conflict in scripture.
 - There are only misunderstandings and disputes over individual one-off verses
- You see, when you study the entire counsel of God correctly in context, you can often answer a question about apparent conflicting verses, and you can do so with ease.
 - Because the sum of God’s Word is whole and consistent.
 - The problem is, if you don’t study correctly or study at all, then you will resemble an [Ephesians 4:14](#), man or woman.
 - “Where you will be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.”
- Now, let me say this before moving on. I am not making these statements based on what someone has told me. I have come to this realization on my own, through almost 20 years of in-depth Bible study! I have found my statement to be true over and over again.
 - Many times, my theory is put to the test.
 - Where someone will ask me about a particular verse or verses in scripture, and even though I may not have studied it in depth, I can generally answer without having previously studied those verses.
 - All because I have studied and taught over 18 books of the Bible over many years.
 - So, the “Sum of thy Word is Whole,” and if you think in those terms, all that will be left for you to do is to study for yourself and or learn from a Pastor teacher.
 - Over time, you will become a strong and assured Christian in your foundational belief system.
- Now, I know this was a long opening statement, but it’s important because, as many of you know, one of my primary goals in ministry is to eliminate confusion in the mind of the believer.
 - And to do that, we must begin with a basic understanding of how we have arrived at where we are today in Church history.
 - There are so many theories and concepts floating around out there, as it relates to scripture, and to understand where we are, we must know from where we have come.
 - And that will deliver us a level set in our minds.
 - By the way, one more thing before I give you some background on Thessalonians.
 - If you have a concept or a doctrinal theory, and it doesn’t exactly line up with what I believe, don’t stress or worry about it because I am not going to become dogmatic

over any debatable topic in scripture.

- Keep believing what you believe, and do what Paul commanded Timothy to do.
In

[2 Timothy 2:15](#) Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

- Let's proceed into 1 Thessalonians and see what the Lord has for us. So, back to the question of the who, where, when, and why.
 - Who wrote 1 Thessalonians? Paul wrote it.
 - And who did he write it to? Believers who lived in Thessalonica.
 - And where is and where was Thessalonica located? Thessalonica was a city in Macedonia in Northern Greece.
 - And where is it today? In the same place, Greece.
 - Thessalonica was a happening place in Paul's day.
 - Paul and Silas traveled there on Paul's second missionary journey.
- Now, does everyone know what I mean when I say Paul's missionary journey?
 - Does everyone know why he took missionary journeys?
 - To preach and teach and establish churches in different areas.
 - It would be like when Tullahoma was established as a town on Oct. 4th, 1852, and then someone came here and set up the first church.
 - That's what Paul did. He was on a mission to set up churches and to do so in every area that did not have a church.
 - So, he went from town to town on his missionary journeys, accomplishing this task, and often he carried someone with him.
 - Which is why you will hear him mention that person's name in his writings.
 - Men like Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, etc.
 - And so, Thessalonica was one of those towns in Northern Greece, and as previously stated, it was a happening place. A port city, and it became the capital of the Roman province in Macedonia.
- In Paul's day, it was a self-governing community with enough Jews in its residence to warrant a synagogue, which is what we are told in [Acts 17:1](#)!
 - Today, Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece.
- Paul visited there for the first time on his second missionary journey, where he was accompanied by Silas, Timothy, and perhaps others as well.
 - Paul's visit came after they had been released from prison in Phillipi, at which time they made their way southward to Thessalonica.
 - Acts tells us that Paul reasoned in the synagogue with those present, and many people believed in the gospel – [Acts 17:2-4](#).
 - It seems clear that Paul wrote this epistle shortly after he arrived in Corinth.

- But why did Paul write this letter?
 - It appears that it was because Timothy reported on the condition of the Thessalonian Church.
 - Some of the Thessalonians apparently believed that Jesus Christ was about to return soon, which caused them to give up their jobs and become disorderly (for some reason).
 - Evidently, they had begun doing some things (spiritually speaking) they shouldn't have been doing.
 - We will call it “spiritual misuse” of sorts.
 - Which led them to lean back into some old habits of sexual impurity.
 - So, what was the purpose of this letter?
- Paul had at least 8 purposes in mind when he wrote this epistle.
 - 1 – He wanted to express his thanks and praise for the Thessalonian believers.
 - 2 – He wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their faith.
 - 3 – He wanted to defend himself against attacks by his enemies, specifically his Jewish opponents.
 - 4 – He wanted to exhort his readers (lift them up), reminding them to stand firm in the face of great persecution, and he also wanted to encourage them not to return to paganism.
 - 5 – He wanted to encourage his readers to continue growing in Christ.
 - 6 – He wanted to clarify the destiny of Christians who die before the Lord calls His own to Himself.
 - 7 – He wanted to urge his readers to indeed watch for the Lord's return.
 - 8 – He wanted to deal with certain aspects of church life, which we will find very applicable in our everyday life as well.
 - There is much more we could say in our introduction, but we will wait and deal with those issues as we come to them in the teaching.
 - So, with that introduction behind us, let's open our Bibles to 1 Thessalonians and see what Paul has to say in the first few verses. My 95 NASB translation entitles this section *Thanksgiving for These Believers*

1 Thess. 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.**

1 Thess. 1:2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;

1 Thess. 1:3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

[1 Thess. 1:4](#) knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you;
[1 Thess. 1:5](#) for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.
[1 Thess. 1:6](#) You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
[1 Thess. 1:7](#) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
[1 Thess. 1:8](#) For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.
[1 Thess. 1:9](#) For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,
[1 Thess. 1:10](#) and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

- Now, I don't want you to worry. We are not going to expound on all these verses today.
 - Instead, I'll just take a couple, and then we will close.
 - And we will begin with verses 1&2. Paul begins this letter, as he does with many of his letters, with an opening salutation.

[1 Thess. 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.

[1 Thess. 1:2](#) We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;

- So, Paul opens with the positive (that's what I call it), and notice here that he mentions his running companions, Silvanus and Timothy.
 - And so, he begins with the positive, which is always a good way to open a conversation, especially if you are getting ready to reprimand someone.
 - Personally, I don't think the old soften up with kindness method works, but that's what Paul does.
 - So that's what we will do!
 - He says greetings, Grace and Peace to you, as we give thanks to God always for all of you. Making mention of you in our prayers.
 - By the way, why does Paul always mention Grace and Peace in almost all his writings?
 - Because they need it, and guess what, so do we!
 - Am I right? Don't we all need some Grace and Peace in our lives?

- We do, but you know what's interesting, as I mentioned last week (or maybe it was the week before), notice what Paul prays, and then relate it to our prayers.
- Paul prays for them to receive Grace and Peace!
- Notice once again that he is not praying for stuff, stuff that he thinks might bring the Grace and Peace.
 - He is praying for God's Peace
 - This is very different than the way we pray, isn't it?
 - We want people to have grace and peace, but once again, that's not what we pray for!
 - Instead, we pray for money, a new job, healing, etc.
 - But I never see Paul pray this way – He prays for Grace and Peace.
 - And so, why does he do that?
 - Why doesn't he simply pray for whatever it is they need?
 - Why doesn't he pray for something specific that they may be facing?
 - Because – Grace and Peace don't come because of any of those things.
 - They come as a result of knowing God is in charge.
 - That God has got you.
 - That you are not aimless, floating around out here with no purpose or meaning.
 - And that realization in the life of the believer must be matured into, which comes by way of becoming more intimate with God.
 - The more intimate you are with God, the more Grace and Peace you will receive.
 - It's just that simple!
- And so, Paul's opening statement isn't just something for him to say. It has real purpose and meaning.
 - Another way to say it is that his opening statement has intent and purpose!
 - But here is a question for you – If the things that ail us in this life, those things that cause us pain, if those things are removed from our lives, wouldn't that bring us grace and peace?
 - Or why wouldn't the elimination of those things in our lives bring grace and peace?
 - Well, the answer lies in the type of grace and peace you are looking for.
 - There is a grace and peace that the world has to offer, and that grace and peace will bring some temporary relief, but the grace and peace that God has to offer is something totally different.
 - Honestly, it is something supernatural.
 - Paul describes it in [Philippians 4:4-7](#) where he says this:

[Phil. 4:4](#) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

[Phil. 4:5](#) Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.

[Phil. 4:6](#) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

[Phil. 4:7](#) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- So, Paul calls this Godly peace, a peace that passes all understanding.
 - Which in simple terms means, a peace when there is no reason for peace.
 - I relate it to Jonah, when he was on the boat, and the Lord caused the seas to rage. The seamen on the boat became scared, and yet Jonah was sound asleep deep in the hull of the boat.
 - But how could that possibly be?
 - Well, if you study Jonah, you will know that he was a devout believer in God.
 - He knew God was in control.
 - Then we have Paul himself. He is in prison, chained, stripped naked, and at or around midnight, he begins singing praises to God.
 - There is absolutely no way that a human (on their own) could display such peace while experiencing such despair, but Jonah and Paul many others, display exactly that.
- So, what is this, Peace? And do we have access to it?
 - The answer is yes, we do, but it only comes to us one way, and that's when we know that we know that we know.
 - God has got us!
 - And it's at that point that we can truly say it is well with my soul!
 - That's what Paul is praying for them, because he knows that is the only thing that will get them through it.
 - And by the way, the same holds true for us as well.
 - Guys, when we pray, let's begin to pray for grace and peace.
 - Not just the removal of the things that we think will give us grace and peace, because the reality is that type of grace and peace is temporary.
 - Where the peace that passes all understanding is permanent
- So, are you troubled this morning?
 - Are you burdened with doubts and fear? A fear of the unknown about a particular situation?
 - Pray that God simply gives you Peace!
 - Ultimately, what's going to happen is going to happen, and there is nothing you can do about it.

- And so, as believers, we must arrive at this mental state, because if we do, it liberates us and frees us up to focus on the things that matter.
 - Things for eternity.
 - And in place of all that worry, it moves us from the sidelines and empowers us to participate in the work of ministry.
- So, as we close, once again, are you at peace this morning, or are you burdened and heavy-laden?
 - If you are, let me pray for you that God will indeed give you a peace that passes all understanding.
 - Amen Amen!