



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N32

August 6, 2023

LIVING HOPE

"A Final Word of Peace"

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Peace

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:6-7



How important
is peace?

In the creedal statement, "I am *free from anxiety* because things are right between God, myself, and others," *peace* connotes the inner tranquility that comes from having a right relationship to God and others. Paul uses the term with a similar connotation in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13, "Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no *peace of mind*, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia." "To be at peace" or "to have peace" regarding a personal decision or one's personal situation carries a similar connotation.

But the term is used much more often in the New Testament to refer *not* to an internal emotional state but rather to refer to an external conflict free relationship—either with God or with others. One commentator goes so far as to say, "Peace is not an internal emotional state of tranquility but rather refers to a political or social reality . . . In the social sphere it consists of the absence of discord and conflicts between citizens" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 357).

For example, *peace* refers to a conflict free relationship *with God* in a number of passages. In Romans 5:1-2a, Paul writes: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." Believers are no longer at enmity with God, no longer alienated from him, but they have been reconciled to God. In Colossians 1:21-22, Paul writes: "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

And for example, it refers to a conflict free relationship *with others*, both believers and unbelievers, in a number of passages. In 1 Corinthians 7:15 Paul writes: "God has called us to live in peace." And in 1 Thessalonians 5:13, he writes: "Live in peace with each other." It seems that peace is the glue that holds the body of Christ together. To the Ephesians he writes: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (4:3).

By far, Paul's most frequent mention of peace is found in the *salutations* and *closings* of his letters. His salutations generally include the words "Grace and peace to you . . ." (cf. Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). And in his closings, he often mentions *peace* (cf. 2Co 13:11; Gal 6:16; Eph 6:23; 2Th 3:16) in a benediction.

In Paul's closing to 2 Thessalonians, he offers this wish-prayer. "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and *in every way*." On the meaning and scope of this prayer for peace, one commentator writes: "The last part of the phrase indicates the breadth of Paul's concern. He has in view not simply an absence of conflict within the congregation (perhaps provoked by the problem of the *ataktai* in 3:6-15) or (in light of the persecution and affliction they had experienced) between the congregation and the larger community (cf. 1:4). Peace, for Paul, also encompasses a state of well-being and wholeness characterized by reconciled relationships (cf. Rom. 5:1-11)—with God (cf. Rom. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:9). With each other in the congregation (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9), and finally with those outside the community, to the extent possible (cf. Rom. 12:18; 1 Thess. 3:12" (Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 276).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Read in other translations

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (ESV)

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all. 17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, which is how I write in every letter. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "of peace" in v. 16.
- Circle "himself" in v. 16.
- Circle "peace" in v. 16.
- Underline "be with" in vv. 16, 18.
- Bracket "in my own hand" in v. 17.
- Underline "in all my letters" in v. 17.
- Circle "grace" in v. 18.
- Bracket "of our Lord Jesus Christ" in v. 18.

What one word would you use to describe the **tone** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **theme** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Based on verse 16, describe the relationship of “peace” to “the Lord.”
2. Why does Paul include the *reflexive* pronoun, “himself,” in his sentence. What does it add?
3. Explain why Paul might think that the Thessalonians needed peace (cf. 3:6-15; 1:4).
4. Define the meaning of “peace” in this context.
5. Paraphrase the expression “at all times and in every way.” Put it differently in your own words.
6. Paul prays “the Lord *be with* you.” What does that mean?
7. What do you infer regarding the *composition* and the *penning* of 2 Thessalonians from verse 17?
8. Define the meaning of “grace” in this context.
9. Paul prays “grace . . . *be with* you.” What does that mean?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about how what Paul writes to the Thessalonians pertains to you.

Commentary On The Text

The closing of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonian church is found in 3:16-18, and contains the following three items: a wish-prayer (v. 16), a guarantee of the letter's authenticity (v. 17), and a benediction (v. 18). In the first, he prays that the Lord Jesus, who is the source of peace, will personally give his readers peace. "Unlike the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, where the petition is addressed to 'the God of peace' (see comments), here it is offered to Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of peace" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 357). Together the two prayers reflect the close relationship of Jesus to God in the mind of Paul, implying that he believed in the deity of Jesus. *Peace* here implies, at the very least, the absence of conflict both *inside* and *outside* the community of faith—the first, conflict resulting from the refusal of the "idle and disruptive" to "settle down and earn the food they eat" (vv. 11-12; cf. 1Th 4:10-12; 2Th 3:6-13) and the second, conflict resulting from the conversion of those "who turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1Th 1:9; cf. 1:6; 2:14). He prays that this peace might be his readers' "at all times and in every way." "'At all times' asks that there be no break in the flow of Christ's peace (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Col 3:15); 'in every way' asks that the prevalence of peace continue no matter what the outward circumstances" (Robert L. Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 336). His prayer ends with a blessing, "The Lord be with all of you." On this, one commentator writes: "This blessing, which anticipates the final benediction of the letter (v. 18), reflects the consciousness that permeated the ancient church that the Lord was always with them (Matt. 28:20; Acts 18:10; 2 Tim. 4:22); for that reason Paul could pray and hope for his presence in every situation (Rom. 15:33; Phil. 4:9; 2 Tim. 4:22). In the midst of conflicts and confusion, Christians are never alone. The Lord is always 'Emmanuel'—'God with us' (Matt. 1:23)" (Green, 358).

In the second, he guarantees that his letter is not a forgery (cf. 2:2). In Paul's day, letters were often penned by an *amanuensis*, that is, a secretary, who wrote the letter as it was dictated by its author. In the closing of Paul's letter to the Romans, we read, "I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord" (16:22). Apparently, some amanuenses learned an early form of shorthand that allowed them to write as fast as someone could speak. And so, one commentator writes: "When authors made use of the

services of an amanuensis, it was customary for them to include a greeting in their own hand at the end of the letter (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; Phlm. 19). At times this greeting would be written without any indication that it was the author himself who added it by hand. A number of ancient letters that have survived include a final note in a hand other than that which wrote the body of the letter, with no indication that the author took the pen apart from the change in handwriting. This was the most common practice. The change was evident to anyone who read the letter. However, Paul frequently included a note about the change in his hand because his letters were read publicly in the assembly of the Christians. Not everyone could see the greeting in his handwriting, but everyone could hear it" (Green, 358-59).

The fact that 1 and 2 Thessalonians were two of Paul's earliest letters—Galatians being the only earlier one—raises a question regarding the number of letters the apostle had written to this point. Here's one commentator's answer: "It is reasonable to assume that Paul had written numerous letters, including some to churches, prior to the production of 2 Thessalonians. Paul had, as Best points out, 'been an active missionary for many years before this.' And it is evident from Paul's extant epistles that some of his letters have not been preserved (see 1 Cor 5:9-11; 2 Cor 2:3-4; Col 4:16). It is reasonable to believe that Paul wrote instructions and encouragement to the churches he founded (e.g., those recorded in Acts 13-14) well before the middle of his second missionary journey" (D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, 292).

In the third, he offers a benediction (cf. 1Th 5:28)—shorter than "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Nu 6:24-26), but in the same vein. This blessing of grace comes from "the Lord Jesus Christ," and includes all the good things that come from his hand including but going beyond the blessings of salvation. Paul's wish-prayer and benediction imply how believers might pray for themselves.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 16 of peace Prepositional phrases introduced by “of” in English are called genitive phrases in Greek. These phrases can have a host of different nuances, e.g., they can indicate *attribution* (Jesus characterized by love), *source* (love that comes from Jesus), et al. Here “of peace” is a genitive of *source*. “May the Lord, the source of peace, himself give you peace at all times and in every way.”

v. 16 himself The *reflexive* pronoun is included for emphasis. “The word is intensive and emphatic [Hb, NIC]. It adds dignity to the name [El]” (Richard C. Blight, *An exegetical Summary of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 2nd ed., 257).

v. 16 peace Lit. “the peace,” namely, the peace that comes from the Lord. “Peace [here] is not an internal emotional state of tranquility but rather refers to a political or social reality. Peace could be the state of a nation that is not involved in war (cf. Acts 24.2; Rev. 6.4), but in the social sphere it consists of the absence of discord and conflicts between citizens. Taking into account the hostility the Christians suffered at the hands of their compatriots, a principal concern of this and the previous letter (1.4-10; 1 Thess. 2.14), this prayer should be understood as a petition that the Lord would bring an end to this conflict. A number of commentators link the prayer for peace with the internal situation of the church, seeing it as a counterpoint to the discord between the disorderly and the other members of the church (3.6-15)” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 357).

v. 16 be with Connotes the enabling and encouraging presence of the Lord. “‘The Lord be with you all’ echoes Jesus’ promise to be with his disciples (cf. Matt 28:20). Similar prayers occur in Rom 15:33 and Phil 4:9 with (as in the prayer in v. 16a) ‘God’ as the subject rather than the ‘Lord.’ Bruce probably is correct to identify this as a ‘liturgical benediction.’ Such benedictions would have been familiar to the church but not so routine as to lose any of its impact. The presence of the Lord of peace with ‘all’ in the church should serve both to encourage and to unify the entire fellowship” (D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, 291). “‘The Lord be with all of you’ requests what was previously guaranteed for Christians. His promise never to leave or forsake his own provides the assurances of this (Heb. 13:5). Here is an instance of the cooperation of prayer in

fulfilling what God’s purpose predetermines (cf. 1:11,12)” (Robert L. Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 336)

v. 17 in my own hand “Paul was dictating to an amanuensis up to 3:17 (cf. Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18). At this point he took the pen into his own hand to add a closing greeting. Though he undoubtedly did this quite frequently, he has called attention to it only here, in 1 Corinthians 16:21, and in Colossians 4:18. The greeting in his own hand, ‘which is the distinguishing mark’ in all his letters (v.17), includes also the benediction of v.18. Apparently Paul followed this practice consistently, expecting churches where he had served to recall his distinctive handwriting. It was particularly needed in this Epistle as a deterrent against any future attempt to forge a letter in his name (cf. 2.2). The practice was customary in ancient times (Frame, p. 312)” (Thomas, 337; see also Green, 358-59; Martin, 291-92).

v. 17 all my letters Paul didn’t start writing letters to churches on his second missionary journey; he must have made this his practice from the very beginning of his missionary ministry. “When Paul says ‘in all my letters’ (v.17), he does not mean just the letters previous to this, for he was also to follow this procedure later. Neither is the expression to be limited only to books found in the NT, because he is known to have written other Epistles besides these (cf. 1 Cor 5:9)” (Thomas, 337).

v. 18 the grace . . . Here again is a genitive of *source*, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” refers to the grace that he bestows. And “grace” connotes the unmerited blessings that go beyond those of salvation per se that he bestows on a daily basis.



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Pray for the peace that transcends time and circumstances,
which the Lord Jesus Christ, its source, wants to give you.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

It's pretty clear that Paul didn't have children. All you have to do is casually read through 2 Thessalonians 3:16 to figure this out, "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way." This is clearly the writing of someone who never had to breakup sibling warfare on a road trip, never dealt with a toddler meltdown in the middle of Walmart and never tried to get seven people ready for church on time and still be holy. Peace is every parent's dream for their home and hope for their kids. What we wouldn't do for three minutes of everyone getting along and playing well or, let's face it, an uninterrupted bathroom moment. But peace isn't something that comes from us. It's a fruit of the Spirit given by our holy God. And peace isn't dependent on our horizontal surroundings or circumstances but instead directly correlates to our vertical relationship with our loving Father. We can't make peace happen or force it into being. Through surrender, hope and trust in a faithful God, we can find this elusive peace Paul talks about and let it flood over us at all times and in every way. If you're feeling a desperate need for peace today, ask God through prayer. Double up your efforts with a memorized and often recited Bible verse. (Isaiah 26:3 or Philippians 4:6-7 are great!) Breathe and meditate on God's faithfulness. Fast from something (say video games) and replace that with time in God's word. Consider bringing one of these spiritual disciplines to your family and see how God will transform your time together.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18.

1. Who gives peace?
2. When does He give peace?
3. What two words does Paul use to start and end this letter? (See 2 Th 1:2)

What Do You Think?

Why is it important that Paul writes the greeting with his own hand?

What Do You Do?

There are 249 verses about peace in the Old and New Testament.

CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

MEMORY VERSE: Zephaniah 3:17

"The Lord our God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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