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"GRACE AND PEACE"
I THESSALONIANS 1:1

It is amazing to watch the transfer of power of the greatest political force on earth this week. But 20 centuries ago an even greater power transformed lives. What a thrill to begin this morning plunging into this most special epistle!

Paul as he writes is consumed with one theme:
UNBLAMEABLE LIVING BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S RETURN.
He notes that theme at the end of each chapter.

This first chapter speaks of our PRESENT HOPE OF SALVATION. As we examine that present hope we see it in the introduction to the gospel they received.

Hope demonstrated in this chapter:

- ❖ v. 1 Paul's introducing the gospel
- ❖ v. 2-5 Thess. reception
- ❖ v. 6-10 Gospel's impact

Now, let's see specifically the INTRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL.

In your outlines you see a...

- Devoted introduction
- Divine position
- Doctrinal foundation

What do we mean by a DEVOTED INTRODUCTION? Let me sketch the events that precede these words of v. 1:

1. Paul born about AD 4.
2. Saul of Tarsus chief persecutor until about 28 years old (Acts 7-8).
3. Saved on Road of Damascus (Acts 9).
4. Immediately persecuted, let out of city over wall in basket
5. (Acts 9:25).
6. Arabia (Gal. 1:17). Taught by Lord on to hometown of Tarsus for 12 years from age 28-40 doing the work on to Antioch to serve.
7. First journey sent out (Acts 13 to end 14) at age 40-42 STARTS
8. As missionary faces:
 - ❖ Stoning 14:19
 - ❖ Threats
 - ❖ Deprivations.

In fact he wrote a travel diary - let me read it to you: 2 Cor. 11. "But whatever anyone dares to boast of...I also dare to boast of that....Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches."

Most of those events are not in Acts so this is such an

intimate look!

- Add to this the constant walks up and down those Roman roads and all that it entailed of over 1200 WALKING miles.
- On top of all that we noted early the cruel beating in Philippi... 97 miles on foot and Thess. that's devotion!

* So these 3 write and mirror a devoted life was their introduction.

WHAT ELSE? Gospel of hope introduced was of A DIVINE POSITION.

Look again at V. 1 "The church of Thess. (no article) in God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ."

WHAT A STATEMENT. These former lost pagans were IN God and Christ.

"God as Father" denotes SECURITY
LOVE
STRENGTH

"Lord Jesus Christ" denotes God the Son is also Lord, the Sovereign who MUST be obeyed.

Many other times we find this divine position emphasized.

> Scriptures have 215 OT and 190 NT names of God. Of the no less than 16 names and titles of the Godhead in this epistle we find other key aspects: We are -

- In the Holy Spirit (1:5-6)
- Serving a living and true God (1:9)
- Waiting for the Son (1:10)
- Sanctified by the God of peace (5:23)

So, a DEVOTED TEAM INTRODUCED them to the gospel.

And, they presented them to be wondrously placed by God into a DIVINE POSITION. WHAT IS THAT DIVINE POSITION?

1. SECURE in God the Father (1:1)
2. SUBMISSIVE to Christ as Lord (1:1)
3. ENERGIZED by the Holy Spirit (1:5-6)
4. SERVING the living and true God (1:9)
5. WAITING for the Son (1:10)
6. SANCTIFIED by God of peace (5:23)

But we must ask ourselves one last question. UPON WHAT WAS ALL THIS BASED?

> The answer is at the end of verse 1. "GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE". They had a DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION as Leon Morris, the renowned expositor said:

"There may be significance in the invariable order in which these words occur. First grace, than peace. There can be no true peace until the grace of God has dealt with sin."

Paul based his ministry upon declaring the whole counsel of God: Sound (healthy) doctrine.

They could be WORTHY of such a DEVOTED INTRODUCTION and a DIVINE POSITION because of the truth of what God has done. That truth is our:

DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION

Paul clearly states that they needed grace - the undeserving bestowment of all.

And thus had peace - from HEBREW SHALAM "TO BE MADE COMPLETE"

GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU!

Oh that thou hadst hearkened to me!

This epistle is rich in doctrine: Let's look ahead:

"In them he touches briefly on a number of themes:

1. the doctrine of inspiration and authority of Scripture 1.2:13; 2.2:15; 3:6,17;
2. the doctrine of one true God 1.1:9
3. existing in three Persons 1. 1:1,5,6; 4:8; 5:19; 2.1:1,2; 2:13;
4. the doctrine of Jesus Christ's deity 1.3:11,12; 2. 2:16,17;
5. the doctrine of salvation based on Christ's death 1. 4:14; 5:9,10; 2. 2:13,14;
6. and the believer's union and identification with Christ 1. 1:1; 5:5; 2. 1:1;
7. and the doctrine of sanctification as relates to personal purity 1.4:3-8,
8. love 1.4:9,10,
9. vocational diligence 1.4:11,12; 5:12-15,2. 3:6-15,
10. motivation 1. 5:16-18, and other areas.
11. Also by his example he teaches important lessons on discipling others 1.2:1-12, 17-20;3:1-5 and
12. prayer 1. 3:11-13; 5:23,24; 1.1:11,12; 2:16,17; 3:5,16."
13. As well as the obvious teaching on Christ's return.

So was the Thessalonians introduction to the gospel of hope: It came in a devoted team. They received a divine position and all was upon a doctrinal foundation.

Let me ask you this morning - have you received God's gracious offering of being IN GOD?

And if so, have you become at PEACE? Complete by Him that formed you?

May God accomplish His work in you today!