

## Godliness and Grace

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 1a, the Sing Psalms version, page 1 of the psalm books. We sing the whole of this psalm.

The tune is creditin. Psalm 1, blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinner's paths or sit with those who mock.

We sing the whole of this psalm. We stand to sing to God's praise. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinner's paths or sit with those who mock.

Hence, yet he finds the holy law, his joy and the delight.

He makes the presence of the Lord, his sunny day and night.

[ 1 : 20 ]     He prospered, ever like a tree, as mounted by a sea.

And in due season yields its fruit, his season always came.

[illegible]

Let us pray Lord our gracious God We thank you for this day that you have made for us A day that you have given From the very foundation of time A day that we are to come and rest And worship and praise You as our Lord and as our God And that we are to do it together All of us as a body of people From the youngest to the oldest We thank you for all who are here today For all who are tuning in online And for all who gather just like we do here In so many different parts of our island Our nation And indeed throughout the world We are reminded so often that you have your people To all the ends of the earth Boys and girls Men and women In different situations and circumstances And yet with you as their Lord And as their God And so we thank that we belong to you To your family That we are your children And that your children are near and far Here in this world in which we live And that we as we pray here today

That you have people praying All over the world For us as we worship And for all your people As they worship you this day To know your blessing And your goodness with us And we do pray that for us all together here For our Sunday school Our creche Our tweenies And for our Bible class We pray that As they will shortly go out to the classes That you will be with them To help them To understand your word And to know That you are their God And that you are there for them We do particularly pray For the Bible class trip This coming weekend as well We thank you for all Who have helped to organise it And for all who will be there Over this coming weekend And we do ask for safety and blessing In the midst of all that they do That they would know That you are with them in it That they would know more of Jesus Our Lord and our Saviour We pray that we would all know that today That we would learn more of How precious you are And your great grace and love towards us

[ 4 : 52 ] As we ask it all In your precious name Amen Before you go out to your classes I just want to say a little word to you And it's about a word today A particular word That we find quite often in the Bible And we're going to be looking at this word In our sermon this morning As we look at Paul writing a letter To a place called Thessalonica The letter to the Thessalonians And he speaks about this word there at the end And at the beginning He mentions it And it's the word grace Grace It's a great word Grace But what does it mean?

What do you think of When you think of the word grace? There's maybe a few things That come to mind Maybe first of all You think of a person Because there's plenty People Girls especially That have the name grace It's a lovely name Behind that name Is a lot of meaning And I'm sure that's why parents Give the name grace To a child Because it means goodness It means Favor It means blessing It means generosity But even the best grace In this world Can't always be generous And kind And all of these things Because we all make mistakes But grace Is a wonderful name So maybe you think of it In that way You think of someone Who's called grace I'm sure we all know Someone who's called grace Maybe you also think of grace In this way though Something that you say Before you have a meal Maybe when you sit down To have your dinner today You'll say grace You might say it together

Or maybe someone Just one person Will say grace And what does that mean? Well It means that we're Not just saying a few words To ourselves But we're saying a few words To God We're giving grace To God We're giving thanks To God For his Generosity to us And providing for us In our food And for all that we enjoy When we sit down To enjoy that food together The peace that we have The homes that we have The people that we have Around us And the food That's on the table So we think of grace In that way It's something that we enjoy Together around a table But when Paul Is writing about this word Grace And when he's using this word Grace It has a much deeper meaning Than all of these things It has the meaning of Knowing his gift To us When he writes To another church In Ephesus He speaks of it In this way He speaks of grace

As a gift From God It is the gift Of God For by grace You have been saved Through faith And this is not Your own doing It is the gift Of God Grace Is a gift Something that we cannot Earn ourselves Or get ourselves It is the gift That God gives When someone has A birthday You receive a gift And you don't expect To pay something For that gift You don't expect Someone to give you Something And you have to say Oh how much do I owe you For that They say no You take it It's a gift And that's what God Has done for us By his grace He's given us A gift And we might think Well what can I do To pay you back He says you can't Pay for it This is my gift To you All you have to do Is believe Have faith In me Because it is a gift As Paul says That you have been Saved through faith That is the gift

Of his grace To us So believe That he has come To save us That Jesus came To save us  
And that his grace Is his gift to us So we might know That is his goodness His generosity  
to us In all of these things He has been so good To us So let us believe In him And trust  
him That we might know His grace More and more Well may God bless These thoughts to  
us We're going to say The Lord's prayer Together now Our Father Which art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy name Thy kingdom come Thy will be done On earth As it is in heaven  
Give us this day Our daily bread And forgive us Our debts As we forgive Our debtors And  
lead us Not into temptation But deliver us From evil For thine is the kingdom The power  
And the glory Forever Amen Well we'll sing again

[ 9 : 35 ] Of voy voy The Lord so most entirely art Hath waved with all my grace For in my time  
before I see Thought any word can be But all together, O Lord

This is well known to Thee Behind before the past be said And laid on me Thy hand Such  
knowledge is too strange for me Too high to understand From Thy split wither shall I go Or  
from Thy presence I Ascent I am, though Thou art there

And in heaven have I lie If I in the morning wings can dwell There that was parts of sea In  
there, Lord, shall I hand me lead Thy light and all shall be We'll turn to read together now  
In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 We'll take up our reading at verse 12 And down to the end of  
the chapter 1 Thessalonians 5 Around page 1189 of the church Bibles

We'll take up our reading at verse 12 We've been looking at this chapter Previously, twice  
previously We've looked at I just want to look at The last few verses In this chapter  
together today So we take up our reading at verse 12 We ask you, brothers, to respect  
those who labour among you And are over you in the Lord And admonish you And to  
esteem them very highly in love Because of their work Be at peace among yourselves  
And we urge you, brothers Admonish the idle Encourage the faint-hearted Help the weak  
Be patient with them all See that no one repays anyone evil for evil But always seek to do  
good to one another To one another and to everyone Rejoice always Pray without ceasing  
Give thanks in all circumstances For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you Do not  
quench the spirit Do not despise prophecies But test everything

Hold fast what is good Abstain from every form of evil Now may the God of peace himself  
Sanctify you completely And may your whole spirit and soul and body Be kept blameless  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ He who calls you is faithful He will surely do it  
Brothers, pray for us Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss I put you under oath before the  
Lord To have this letter read to all the brothers The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ Be with  
you Amen And may God bless that reading from his word We'll again engage in a word of  
prayer Let us pray Lord our God we do thank you for your word And just pray that as we  
approach it anew today That we would come with that encouragement That joy and  
delight in knowing That it is you who is speaking to us That you have not left us in the  
darkness of this world

[ 14 : 52 ] But that you have sent your light and your truth into this world That we have it before us  
That we have it with us Not just for today But each and every day of our lives We have  
your word to lean upon And not leaning on our own understanding As we think of the  
memory verse that the children have just now But to lean upon you for all wisdom and  
help And we thank you that you give That you are a God who abundantly gives As we  
think of your grace towards us Your riches towards us in Christ Jesus That we have so  
much to be thankful for That we have such blessings in Christ And in our fellowship And in  
our families And in the world in which we live A world that we so often see In all its  
wickedness and cruelties And hurts and pains And yet we realise too Lord That there is so  
much joy in this world too That you have given us much to enjoy Your creation

That we see the beauty of around us so much That we see in so many different ways And we see it in the people that you give us in life We see it in the places that you put us in life We see your glory in our midst Lord And we thank you for that That you have not abandoned us as a people That you have not left us And so we continue to pray to you as our Lord And as our God To help us to acknowledge you To help us to commit our ways to you And to trust in you with all our heart And we thank you Lord That it is by your grace that we are enabled And we thank you that that grace that was given Down through all the generations We think of all your people From the very beginning of the creation of the world And we go back to our The beginning there in the garden With Adam and Eve And how grace was shown to them And how we see it Lord worked out Through the Old Testament and the New We see it fulfilled in Christ

And we see it offered to us through him By faith And so we ask Lord that you will help us That you would give us that faith that is so necessary That faith that we so often doubt As we look to ourselves Help us that we would not look within But look to you And to the one who is able The one who is faithful The one who will surely do it As we have read in these words And so we thank you Lord For your constancy towards us in every way And we pray that you will hear all our prayers together today As we offer them up For all the different issues of life Whether it's personal Whether it's in our own church or community National or international We thank you that we have in prayer Such a wonderful gift That we can pray not just selfishly Or for ourselves But we pray for all We pray for all around the world today And we think of our meeting last Wednesday And how we were reminded of

The great poverty of this world And South Sudan and Haiti And other parts of the world that we saw And your people there And yet the joy of the Lord in them And we thank you Lord for that joy That is a strength to your people And we pray that your people everywhere Would know it today and always Whether it's in times of great needs Or in times of great rejoicing That the joy of the Lord would be a strength to all So we thank you Lord for all that you do for us We thank you for every need that you meet for us as well Whether it's practical needs of food Or comforts practical in this world Or whether it's our spiritual needs Or all the different issues that go on in life We thank you that as we sang in Psalm 139 There is nothing hidden from you Not any words or concerns that we have Not any place that we go That you do not see us

That you do not uphold us And so we pray that people all around our communities here We would know your great upholding power and strength Especially those who mourn We know that there are many in our own congregation And in our community just now Whose hearts are heavy We pray for comfort We pray for help We pray that your strength will be towards them And the comfort of your spirit and your word Would be so precious to them at this time We pray for those who are going through times of ill health Or concerns about health Their own or others We pray Lord for help and healing in that We pray Lord for those who are anxious and fearful For those who are lonely and isolated For those who have many different troubles in this life And yet we come Lord pleading with you To meet with them And that they will be able to lean upon you So Lord we ask that you will continue to bless us And watch over us this day Give us refreshment in your word

[ 20 : 01 ] As we turn to it now And rest this afternoon And the joy of worship again this evening as we gather Remember Gordon as he ministers here this evening Bless him and uphold him in that And all others who preach your word today as well Lord we pray that there will be a real sense of your presence As your word is proclaimed And our praise Lord that it will be to your glory as well That you would hear us in all of these things And receive our thanks and all our worship And may glory be yours in all of it As we ask it all with the forgiveness of our sins In Jesus name Amen Again sing to God's place Before we turn back to look at this passage We're going to sing in Psalm 36 We're going to sing Psalms Page 44 Of the psalm book Psalm 36 We sing from verse 1 to 7 The tune is Huddersfield My heart has heard an oracle about the wicked sin There is no fear of God in him He feels no dread within

He views himself with blind conceit His sinful nest in eyes He speaks with evil and deceit  
No longer good or wise We'll sing from verse 1 to 7 To God's praise His holy name is  
God's praise Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Please voy voy voy

Please voy voy! Please voy voy voy! voy He speaks within the land he seeks, no longer  
good or wise.

And that he calls his evil ways, he schemes throughout the night.

I'll see the Lord lift himself to sin, rejecting what is fine.

[ 22 : 56 ] Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high.

Your faithfulness is wonderful, extending to the sky.

Your righteousness is very great, like mountains high and sea.

Your justice is like ocean deep, of man and peace to hear.

O precious is your steadfast love, what confidence it brings.

[ 24 : 17 ] O high and low, my shelter in the shadow of your wings.

We can turn back together to our reading in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5. We look at the  
end of the chapter from verse 23 down to the end.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit  
and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus  
Christ, and so on.

We've been looking at this chapter. We looked at it, I think, first of all, in the light of  
Advent, and the coming of the Lord, not just thinking of it as the first coming of the Lord,  
but thinking of the Lord's second coming.

That's when we first started to look at this chapter. And you find that throughout this letter  
that Paul writes, the coming of the Lord is something that appears throughout.

[ 25 : 27 ] We see it even here in this final conclusion that he has in verse 23, where we read that  
you may be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's a theme that runs right throughout. That's a very practical letter as well in terms  
of how we are to live our lives. Paul's writing to this young church where he's visited, he's  
preached the gospel.

The gospel has taken hold in many people's lives, but he's been torn away from them. But  
he wants them to go on growing in the faith. And the last time we looked at it, we looked at  
verse 12 down to verse 22.

We were seeing, in light of the coming of the Lord, how are we going to go on living? How  
are we to live our lives? But now we look at this last section, which we could easily just  
miss out, if you like, just glance over it as not as important as the rest.

Maybe when you write a letter, or more so an email these days, or even as you're texting  
someone, one of the questions you ask when you're finishing is, how am I going to finish  
this off?

[ 26 : 35 ] What am I going to write at the end? And how are the people who are going to receive  
this, how are they going to understand what I'm saying? Does it sound cold? Does it  
sound too warm?

You know, you think of writing a letter, it's usually yours sincerely or yours faithfully. They  
have a different meaning. One has more depth to it than the other. But how do you write at  
the end of an email, or even just in a text?

What do you put? And you think, well, I hope it's not misunderstood, whatever I put at the  
end. Well, here Paul comes to the conclusion of this letter that he's writing to the people in  
Thessalonica.

And he leaves them in no doubt. He leaves them in no doubt as to what his meaning behind it all is, what he's looking to leave them with. It's not about himself.

It's all about the Lord. You see there in verse 23, Now may the God of peace himself. It's all about the Lord. It's about all giving glory to the Lord.

[ 27 : 34 ] And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. There's warmth, there's blessing, and there's concern in it. So as he's saying almost like a goodbye to them for now, he's leaving them with that warmth.

And goodbyes can be a hard thing. We all know that in life in different ways. Saying goodbye to people in many different circumstances is hard.

It's emotional. And here we find it's hard for Paul to write to them in this way and just knowing what to say to them. Because you find throughout this letter that there is that warmth that you see between the people and Paul himself as well.

The verse that we're looking at today, Paul's closing remarks, are in many ways a hard goodbye for him. But they're still full of confidence in God and looking for the people to know this confidence themselves.

And it's remarkable because he hadn't been with them very long. And yet you see the bonds that the gospel brought between them. He hadn't been there very long. But when you go back to chapter 2, verse 17, it shows us there just the kind of parting that they had.

[ 28 : 54 ] Since we were torn away from you, brothers. For a short time, he's saying this hopefully, in person but not in heart. We endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face.

You see there's so much in these words. Torn away. It wasn't something that they wanted to happen. But something that they needed to do for a time. For their own safety.

But he says only in person, not in heart. You're still very much in our hearts because we're praying for you and remembering you. And we're endeavoring the more eagerly with great desire to see you face to face.

So there's just warmth and there's just love there as well. And again, it's seen in chapter 3, verse 5. It's almost like he couldn't wait any longer to hear what was happening with them.

They weren't living in the days of communication that we have. We can keep in touch with people instantly. They had to wait for a time to hear what was happening. And when you look at chapter 3, verse 5, it says, For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for the fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

[ 30 : 10 ] There was this concern. He was longing to hear what was happening. And as he heard a good report, as he heard back from Timothy who had gone to them, he wrote then this letter to them, encouraged to hear of their faith, but still concerned that they would keep going.

And so now as he comes to the conclusion of his letter, to his goodbye in this section, the benediction as it's called from verse 23 to the end, it's a prayerful concern for them.

And the hope and security that God is with them, and that that's what counts. It's not just yours faithfully or yours sincerely.

It's the full blessing of God be with you. And so for ourselves today, as we look at these concluding verses of this chapter, we think of what Paul's longing for the church at Thessalonica was, the longing that he would have for ourselves today as well.

The longing that we should have together to see what he's saying here is so important for ourselves today too. To know this great benediction, this great blessing of God on us, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with us today and always.

[ 31 : 36 ] And there's three things that Paul gives in this benediction that I want us to look at. The first thing we see is godliness. We see that in verse 23 and 24.

The power of God in our midst. The godliness that we see here. The second thing is the gifts. The gifts that we see in verse 25 to 27.

There's gifts there. And then finally we see the grace that we see in verse 28. So we're going to look at these three things. Godliness, gifts, and grace. So first of all we see godliness.

Verse 23. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And so he goes on there. How well do you know God?

How well do you think the church at Thessalonica knew God? They didn't have all the answers of faith, but still they knew God in a powerful way.

[ 32 : 39 ] And that knowledge of God is often the knowledge that we have ourselves as well. We may not have all the answers. We may not have all the understanding of every point that we find in Scripture.

But it doesn't mean that we don't know God. God is known through his word. God is known through his spirit at work in us. God is known through Jesus Christ as our Lord.

And we see that when we know God in these ways, we know God as a God who is steadfast towards us, who is loving, who is gracious towards his people.

And as Paul concludes his letter here, he concludes it not looking just to the people at Thessalonica and saying, you take care of yourselves, look after yourselves, I'll be remembering you.

He's not looking to himself as all important. Don't worry, I'm still here for you, although I'm at a distance. They're looking first and foremost to God.

[ 33 : 44 ] Now may the God of peace himself, may he be with you. He's written to them to believe in this God, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now he's reminding them in this conclusion, in this benediction, that this is all important and it's all encompassing. The gospel is at the heart of everything that he's saying here, the good news of Jesus Christ and the God who makes all things possible, the God of peace himself.

And then in verse 24, he says, he who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it. There is godliness in this.

It's all about God. And so his benediction here, and we think of godliness, it contains both a request and a reminder.

A request and a reminder. And we see, first of all, his request in two parts. Now may the God of peace himself, it's this prayer that the God of peace would be with them.

[ 35 : 00 ] So do we know that it is only God that can give us peace? The God of peace himself. We are by nature a restless people.

We are by nature a people who don't always enjoy peace in our lives. Sometimes it's because of ourselves. Sometimes it's because of circumstances going on around us.

And when you think of what the church in Thessalonica was like, they had experienced both sides of the coin. They had experienced that restlessness, that lack of peace, that lack of assurance in their lives.

And yet, when the God of peace himself came to them, they understood in a new way what peace really was. It's not the absence of trouble, but it's the presence of God in it.

And the God of peace himself was there for them. And we as a people too, we are restless without God. We are restless.

[ 36 : 10 ] We are anxious. We are leaning on our own understanding, as it were. We are doing all things and trying to do them all by ourselves. And how do we cope?

How do we manage? The reality, ultimately, is we don't and we can't. If we're looking for peace outside of God, that cannot be found.

And so as Paul concludes this letter, he's saying, now may the God of peace himself be there with you. We are not in control of our lives.

He is. And we have to look to him in the midst of everything that goes on around us, in the search for peace in our lives, in our hearts, or the lives of others.

It is found in God alone. The God of peace himself. Otherwise, we are pulled and tossed in so many different directions, going one way, then another, searching for this peace.

[ 37 : 13 ] And it's not there. And so Paul's prayer, his benediction, is the focus is on the God of peace himself. We cannot have peace apart from God.

Then there's the second part of his request here. The God of peace be with him, but to sanctify you completely. May your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know that it is only God that can save you? Only God can give you peace and only God can save you.

He is sanctifying his people completely. It says, may he sanctify you completely with your whole spirit and soul and body. May he work in you to the completion of all things.

And sanctification is ongoing. It is God at work in his people to be more like him. You see it mentioned in chapter 4, verse 3.

[ 38 : 23 ] For this is the will of God, your sanctification. This is the will of God, your sanctification. That you would be kept going, learning, growing, and more and more becoming like him.

Robert Murray McShane was a famous preacher. And he died at the age of 29. He preached in what is now the Free Church in Dundee, St. Peter's Free Church in Dundee.

And he described sanctification in this way. He said, it is God making us as holy as a saved sinner can be.

God making us as holy as a saved sinner can be. We're saved, but yet we're still sinners. We're never perfect. They were not complete Christians here in Thessalonica.

Neither was Paul as he was writing to them. He knew himself his own failings. But he trusted that God was able to work in him and them.

[ 39 : 27 ] And we are not the finished product. If you see yourself as the finished product, as good enough, you're not. But that is where grace comes in.

It is the gift of God that by faith, we can know that he can make us right. We can try and live a holy life as we should.

But it is not that we are trying to do it to save ourselves, because that's impossible. It is only God who can save us. It is only God who can bring us blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we have these two requests here in godliness, that we would be knowing the peace of God and the salvation that there is in God.

But there's also a reminder here in verse 24, he who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. So when we think, well, we cannot do it, I cannot save myself.

[ 40 : 32 ] I cannot have peace with God. But he who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. And isn't that a great reminder for ourselves today?

That in our own weakness and frailties, in our own lack of godliness, in our own lack of sanctification, as we see ourselves, he who calls you is faithful.



He will surely do it. We can trust God and seek to be sanctified in him, by him.

So there is godliness first. The second thing we see here is gifts. We see that in verse 25, down to verse 27. We see three gifts here.

Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

[ 41 : 31 ] As we said, when Paul is writing this letter, there's a sense of separation. There's a sense of distance between them. But in these verses, he's showing the gifts that they share together, even at a distance.

And the three things that we have here is prayer, fellowship, and the word of God. Three things that distance doesn't matter in. Distance kind of brings us even closer together.

As you think back to Wednesday evening and Mission International and the presentation Roddy gave, when you're hearing about people in different parts of the world and yet realizing we can pray for them.

We have fellowship with them. We don't even know them. Yet we can have fellowship with them as we pray for them and as we are around the word of God, that we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

And there's this great distance between Paul and the church at Thessalonica. Pray for us. And there we have that first gift.

[ 42 : 35 ] That first gift is prayer. They prayed for them and they were praying for each other and prayer for the gospel to flourish. Is there any greater request that you could make to someone than will you pray for me?

Or to know that somebody is praying for you. What a powerful gift there is in that. Just a simple message.

I'm praying for you. But what it means. And what it meant for the church at Thessalonica to know Paul was praying for them as he outlines at the beginning.

And now he's saying, brothers, pray for us. It brings us close to God. I had a Sunday school teacher who when I was leaving Sunday school, he gave me a piece of paper with a few words of a hymn on it.

And he promised that he would pray. And the words of the hymn that he gave me were this. It was very much setting out on life. And that's the theme of the hymn. You're starting my boy on life's journey along the grand highway of life.

[ 43 : 40 ] You'll meet with a thousand temptations. Each city with evil is rife. This world is a stage of excitement. There's danger wherever you go.

But if you are tempted to weakness, have courage, my boy, to say no. And those words remained with me. And his prayers remained with me.

And they still do to this day. I still know that he prays for me because he often reminds me. And what a wonderful blessing that was. And having gone through life away from home in so many different places to know that he was praying.

And the power that there was in that. And if I was to say today, is there anyone here who does not need prayer? Put your hand up. No hand should go up.

Because we all need prayer. And is there anyone here who has asked someone to pray for them? Hands up? Well, probably not many hands will go up because it's not something we do naturally.

[ 44 : 44 ] Are we afraid sometimes to ask for prayer? Yes. Because we almost feel that maybe it's just a sense of weakness or shame to ask someone to pray.

And yet it's the greatest gift that we have to pray for one another. Brothers, pray for us. And so you see that leads then into the second gift.

That gift of fellowship. Because this is what encourages prayer. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. This is something we're going to introduce.

Don't panic. We might not go right down the path of greeting each other with a holy kiss. We're not going to ask the people on the door to greet you in that way. But what's behind it? We have to ask, what's behind it?

Well, it was the custom of the time. It was the way many people, even in different cultures today, this is the way they greet one another, with a kiss. Sometimes on the forehead.

[ 45 : 44 ] Sometimes on the cheek. It's what different cultures do. It may not be in our culture, but what's behind it should be. It is this greeting, this welcoming, this fellowship, this warmth, this sense of belonging.

We don't have a kiss, although with some we may well do in different circumstances. But at other times, it's a warm handshake. You're welcoming people in.

Other times, it's with words. That's so powerful. powerful words that we have to say welcome. You're here among friends. You're here around God's word.

That you feel a part of this place and this people. Because there are times when you hear of people coming and going from church and they'll say, nobody even spoke to me.

Nobody said a word to me. And what impression does that leave with them? It's a sense of nobody was interested. Nobody cared to say anything to me.

[ 46 : 47 ] And so we have this powerful gift as well of being warm greeters to each other. To be concerned, to be caring towards one another.

So we have that gift. We also have this gift of the word of God that we should never take for granted. Look at what he says in verse 27.

I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. It's powerful.

He's not just saying, well, read this letter in your own time. He's saying, I put you under oath. I want you to take this vow before God that you will read this letter.

And not just to one or two, but to all the brothers. Because what binds us together in prayer, what binds us together in fellowship is the word of God.

[ 47 : 51 ] The word of God that instructs us, that guides us. And you notice here, he's saying, make this promise. Take this vow, this oath before the Lord that this is your duty.

This is your calling. This is what you are to do as a people together. Not just with some, but with all. Read it to all the brothers. Why does he make this point?

Well, it's because as you read through the letter, you see there are different points that are hints that there were some divisions. That there were some disagreements along the way.

But he's saying, don't let these divide you. Let the word of God bring you together. Make this vow before God to have this letter read among all the brothers.

And so for us, it's that responsibility in all of these things, these gifts, to pray for one another, to greet and welcome one another, and to share the word of God with one another.

[ 48 : 57 ] This should be our oath before the Lord, that we will honor him who has honored us by being faithful to him in all of these things and to all of our brothers and sisters and all who we come into contact with.

Pray, greet, and the word of God is at the heart of the gifts that the church has today. The final thing I want us to see here is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The last verse there, verse 28, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. In many ways, Paul is concluding and saying, as I started, so I'll finish.

You see, when you go back to the opening verses in chapter one, what does it say? To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace.

Grace to you and peace. Now he has said in verse 23, may the God of peace himself, and then in verse 28, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

[ 50 : 13 ] The close is the same as the opening. He begins and ends with grace. Why? Because grace underguards it all.

Grace is what is needed in everything that we do. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, it's not just I'm remembering you warmly, faithfully, sincerely.

I'm remembering you in the Lord. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Because grace is powerful.

Grace is not just something that we need at the beginning. of our Christian life. To see our sins are forgiven by grace. It's something we need all through the Christian life.

And so are there any better words that he could leave them with than this? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. The generosity, the favor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 51 : 16 ] All of these things that they would be with you through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the benediction at the end.

And it's no less important than anything else that you read through the word of this letter. Someone put it, it's not just hollow words to conclude a letter.

It's not like a story book that says the end. It is not a standard yours faithfully or yours sincerely. This is the heart of the gospel.

Grace be with you. And what is grace? Grace is the gift that we have through faith in Jesus Christ.

The one who lived a life that we couldn't. The one who died a death that we couldn't. the one who died a death he never deserved that we might receive forgiveness of sin.

[ 52 : 20 ] The one who rose from the grave that we might know him as the resurrection and the life. All at his expense freely given.

It is the gift of God in which there is forgiveness and which there is power. Grace empowers and makes us willing and without grace we are lost.

And so Paul is leaving us with these words. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I read in one commentary and I want to quote it in full because it's so powerful what was being said.

One commentator puts it like this. Paul does not simply wish strength or prosperity on them but rather invokes a blessing on them for what they needed most.

The grace that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. This letter began with this desire for grace and peace and here as there it summarizes the essence of the faith they have received.

[ 53 : 30 ] The person of Jesus the Lord and Christ is the fountain from which the grace of God flows out to them. This benediction is far from being a formality tacked at the end of the letter.

The blessing of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ embraces the fullness of salvation that comes from one who is the soul and sovereign saviour.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our soul and sovereign saviour. it is not just a few words tacked to the end.

It is the power of God to salvation to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with us. Why do I say a benediction?

Why does every minister say a benediction at the end of a service? It's not just something tacked on. It's not just something just before we go out the door.

[ 54 : 35 ] It is pronouncing a blessing and a longing that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you until we meet again. So Paul's last words are grace to you until we meet again.

He doesn't know when that will be. He has a longing to meet them face to face. But he knows one day that through grace he will be with them again and forever and eternally.

And that's the power of the gospel in the midst of all that we experience in this life. That we would know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with us.

With us every day but with that powerful reminder that it is this grace that will bring us together at the coming of the Lord.

The coming of the Lord runs throughout this letter. And it is this grace the gift of God in Christ that will help us in that day and for all eternity to be safe with him and with all his people.

[ 55 : 51 ] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven we do rejoice in the godliness of your word.

How it encourages us that we who are imperfect are sanctified through your working in us. We thank you how it reminds us of the gifts that we have as a church and as a people.

The gifts of prayer and fellowship and your word. And we thank you above all Lord for the gift of grace. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ poured out upon us freely.

By our sovereign and soul saviour. And so we thank you for all of these things and pray that they would become more and more precious to us as we ask all with the forgiveness of our sin.

In Jesus name. Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 28 in the Scottish Psalter.

[ 56 : 56 ] page 238 of the Psalm books. Psalm 28 sing from verse 7 to verse 9. The Lord's my strength and shield.

My heart upon him did rely and I am helped. Hence my heart doth joy exceedingly. We thank God for the strength and help that he does give us and the joy that is found in him.

We're going to sing verse 7 to 9. The tune is Arlington and we stand to sing to God's praise. The Lord I strength and shield my heart upon him did rely and I am there against my heart and I am helped with hence my heart of joy exceedingly.

And with my song I will embrace and send this thought voy voy!

voy! voy! voy! For people do our share, Bless time and evidence, And also do our kingdom, And also do our kingdom, Forevermore and grand.

[ 59 : 36 ] After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Please pray, Please pray, Please pray, Please pray, Please pray, Please pray, Please pray, Please pray,