



Coming to a Close

The apostle Paul really cared for the brethren in Thessalonica. The love of God indeed had been poured out within his heart, and he earnestly desired their proper eternity. Hence he was willing to bare his soul before the brethren, and in all sincerity to implore them to make necessary changes in their lives and outlooks. Therefore, when it came time for him to close this epistle, his sincerity and love show through in the finishing lines; these were not merely standard closings, but appeals from his own pure heart.

◆ **God of peace** — Satan and his angels rebelled against God. As earth was created, and man was placed on this planet to till the ground and husband his family, the outcast angel was able to persuade man to

participate in that same rebellion. But God is peaceful and willing to reconcile; hence He sent Christ into the world to “extend the olive branch,” offering each individual forgiveness and reconciliation. This was not something He was obligated to do — it was what He chose to do as an exhibition of His character, that He is indeed “the Lord of peace.” Hence, as Paul closes this second epistle to the Thessalonians, he is going to reference that quality, and use that as a reminder of what God could do for this persecuted congregation. “Now may the Lord of peace Himself,” he appeals, “continually grant you peace in every circumstance” (2 Thessalonians 3:16). Only the Lord of peace can give peace. And what a blessing it is for those who have come out of the realm of guilty consciences, anger, and total clamor and confusion to be able to come into the realm of the inner peace and calm which emanates from His very being. Another note: this is peace for *every* circumstance! This is appropriately followed with the prayer and the promise. “The Lord be with you all.” How blessed indeed is the Christian, if only he has faith enough to see it!

◆ **The mark of Paul** — As part of the discussion in this epistle, Paul pointed out that there was a possibility of false information coming from “a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us” (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Since what is involved here are the words of eternal life, the twisting of those words is far more important than finding out someone hacked a company’s data or that someone’s earthly identity has been compromised. The apostle then lets the brethren know what an epistle from him has that would stand out from something fake. “I, Paul,” he emphasizes, “write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write” (2 Thessalonians 3:17). God has always had ways of making sure that there is a distinction between His message and His messengers and the pretenders. The mark of Paul was one of those.

◆ **God’s grace** — The apostles and early brethren recognized that without God’s grace, there would be no redemption or blessing for the people of God. “The Law came through Moses,” was John’s observation, “but grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The customary close of epistles, then, sincerely invokes this grace upon the saints. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” prays Paul, “be with you all” (2 Thessalonians 3:18).

This powerful, punchy epistle to the saints in Thessalonica certainly has its special place among the twenty-seven “books” of the New Testament writings. Herein we receive more information concerning the second coming of Christ and His judgment upon those who do not know God or obey His gospel. Herein we have the warnings about the developing lawlessness that would result in someone claiming to be the head of the temple of God, and “displaying himself as God.” Herein we are apprised of the necessity of Christians being hard workers, producers rather than consumers. And herein we receive the exhortation to stand firm in the lifestyle we were taught by the apostles, and to take major encouragement from the fact that God “has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope”!!!

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This is a powerful, punchy epistle to the saints.