

## 2 Thessalonians (5): The Lord of Peace

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(2 Thessalonians 3:16-18)

### I. Introduction

- A. World War I was one of history's bloodiest wars in all human history
1. 20 million people died as 20<sup>th</sup> century technology met 19<sup>th</sup> century tactics
    - 1) Defense treaties, nationalism, imperialism and militarism are listed
    - 2) An obscure duke (*Ferdinand*) in obscure land (*Austria*) was shot...
  - b. The cause of WWI was really arrogance, pride and greed... *all other wars*
  2. The most celebrated battlefield of the war witnessed its most amazing event
    - a. After weeks of trench warfare in Flanders, German soldiers stopped firing
      - 1) They decorated trench, sang Christmas carols and lit a Christmas tree
      - 2) British soldiers sang carols & held placards saying "*Merry Christmas*"
    - b. They shook hands, exchanged gifts, "Christmas cheer" & played football
  3. For a week, there was peace on earth during the *Christmas Truce of 1914* (*Orders are orders, and after New Year's Day 1915, they started the slaughter all over again*)
    - a. Memorial was built in 2008 on site of Christmas Truce football game
    - b. Last veteran died in 2005 at 109. Frederick Niven, "*Carol From Flanders*"  
*O ye who read this truthful rhyme, from Flanders kneel and say  
Godspeed the time when every day shall be as Christmas day*
- B. This time of year we hear a lot of "*peace on earth and good will toward men*"
1. For many, that's true meaning of Christmas—the "Christmas Spirit"
    - a. That's why it was at Christmas they stopped war and ate with the enemy
    - b. It is at Christmas that we are more giving to other and forgiving of others
    - c. It is at Christmas that we are more jovial and jolly (*except at the mall*)
  2. At Christmas, we focus on promise of peace on earth... if we read the KJV
    - a. What the angels actually said comes across differently in other versions  
*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests* (NIV)  
*Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him* (MES)  
*Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God* (NCV)
    - b. Promise of the birth of Jesus isn't that world peace will break out one day
    - c. Promise is that men and women can come to have peace with God

3. There will be war and rumors of war, nations rise against nation (**Matt 24:6**)
    - a. So Jesus didn't come so that there will be literal peace on earth
    - b. We know because Jesus said He didn't come to bring peace (**Matt 10:34**)  
*"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*
      - 1) He goes on to talk about the conflict arising when some accept him
      - 2) Some will have to choose loyalty to Him over loyalty to families
    - c. Conflict will exist between those who serve God and those who don't
    - d. God's peace is promise to *"to those he is pleased with on earth!"* (NIrV)
- C. This morning, we come to the end of our study of the book of **2 Thessalonians**
1. Paul ends the book with this benediction of peace (**Read: 2 Thess 3:16-18**)  
*<sup>16</sup>Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. <sup>17</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*
    - a. Paul seems to have dictated his letters to an amanuensis (secretary)
      - 1) Here he takes the pen to write the final paragraph himself
      - 2) Large letters is why some think "thorn in the flesh" was bad eyesight
    - b. This is Paul's third benediction for the church in the letter
      - 1) The first is for their encouragement and strength (**2:16**)  
*May the Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup>encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word*
      - 2) The second is to know God's love and Christ's perseverance (**3:5**)  
*May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*
    - c. Now his prayer is for the Lord of peace to give them peace (**3:16**)
  2. The church at Thessalonica had a lot of reasons not to feel at peace
    - a. Paul had to leave not long after the church began because of persecution
    - b. That opposition directed at Paul had been focused on the church as well
    - c. False teachers had upset them over false ideas about the second coming
    - d. Lazy, idle members expected the church to feed them (*causes stress*)
  3. There is a peace that is possible even despite conflict and stress
    - a. Jesus didn't come to bring world peace, but give peace in world (**Jn 16:33**)  
*I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world.*
    - b. The only real peace we can know in this world is what we have in Jesus

## II. May the Lord of Peace Himself Give You Peace

A. Jesus came to give us peace through the sacrifice of the cross (**Eph 2:14-15**)  
*He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace*

1. The death of Jesus removed the sin barrier that separated us from God
  - a. But it also removes the barrier that separated us from one another
  - b. As we move closer to God, we also move closer to one another
2. Wouldn't it have been easier just to build two churches—Jew and Gentile
  - a. **Jews:** Knew the Law, focus on tradition, formal worship, shun Gentiles
  - b. **Gentiles:** Didn't know Law, no stress on tradition, informal, hated Jews
3. There were so many differences, why not just establish two churches?
  - a. Because the message and the promise of the gospel was PEACE
  - b. At the cross, we have peace with God and also peace with one another
  - c. The wall of separation was torn down at the cross—we have to live that!

B. This doesn't mean that peace will be easy— Paul's point in **Romans 12**

1. Paul is building fellowship among disciples having problems with peace
  - a. It makes sense that he says some touchy-feeling fellowship things (**12:15**)  
*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn*
  - b. It makes sense when he commands/demands this fellowship (**Rom 12:16**)  
*"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."*
  - c. But the next command shows the difficulty in living this out (**12:17-18**)  
<sup>17</sup>*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*  
<sup>18</sup>*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*
  - d. He goes on to talk about enemies (**12:20**), and he's talking to the church!
2. God gives peace, but we must live peacefully... even if others make it hard
  - a. Jesus said **too much** about enemies for us to think we'll not have any!
    - 1) Jesus says we are blessed when people mistreat us (**Mt 5:10-11**)
    - 2) He says to love our enemies just like God does (**Matt 5:44**)
    - 3) He warns us the world will hate us just as it hated Him (**John 15:18**)
  - b. Those kinds of texts wouldn't be there if we were never to have conflict
3. Peace isn't the **absence** of conflict but **presence** of the God of peace

### III. Knowing a Peace Beyond Knowledge

- A. In Philippians 4, Paul is dealing with a church that definitely isn't at peace
1. Conflict between two sisters has escalated and embroiled the whole group
    - a. He speaks to them directly (read in church) and calls on others to help
    - b. They have to live out the peace and unity that Christ died to give them
  2. Paul promises that they can know a peace that is beyond knowing (**4:7**)  
*"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"*
    - a. God can give us a peace that is beyond our ability to know or explain
    - b. It's a peace that defies circumstance—like Stephen calming facing end
    - c. Jesus struggled in Gethsemane, but calmly faced cross afterward. How?
- B. There is a supernatural peace from God, but Paul mentions four things to do—
1. **First**, we *"rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"* (**4:4**)
    - a. We spent a series on true joy<sup>vs</sup> the happiness of what's happening now
    - b. What we need to do is to focus on what God is doing and rejoice in it
    - c. When we focus on worship and thanksgiving, we are pointed to peace
  2. **Second**, we focus on others, *"Let your gentleness be evident to all"* (**4:5**)
    - a. NLT puts it, *"Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do"*
    - b. If you want to know peace, then you need to treat everyone peacefully
    - c. Won't know peace within if you are always looking for fight without
  3. **Third**, we are not to worry *"Do not be anxious about anything"* (**4:6a**)
    - a. Jesus gives us a good argument against worry—doesn't work (**Matt 6:27**)  
*Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life (or single cubit to his height)*
    - b. Jesus goes Dr. Phil on us, points to worry, *"How's that working for you?"*
    - c. We often respond to warning on worry, *"I'm not worried, I'm concerned"*
      - 1) Greek word here comes from root that means *"divide"* or *"distract"*
      - 2) Nothing distracts us from God's peace more than worries & concerns
  4. **Fourth**, we are to bathe our worries in a **process of prayer** (**4:6b**)  
*In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God*
    - a. If we really think God gives supernatural peace, aren't we going to ask
    - b. Again we must focus on God—not ourselves or our circumstances