



# STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

## Foundations to Stand On

*1 Thessalonians 1:1*

Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy had a special relationship with the church in Thessalonica. The Lord used these three to bring the gospel to this area and to help plant the church in this location (Acts 17:1-10). Unfortunately, because of the persecution against the church of the Thessalonians, Paul and his companions were sent away quickly for their own safety. However, Paul didn't leave Thessalonica and forget about his brothers and sisters who were experiencing persecution there. He continued to pray for and to think about the church in Thessalonica, and he eventually sent Timothy back to them to check on them to see how they were doing amidst the persecution. Timothy returned with good news of the church's faith and love (1 Thessalonica 3:1-6), and this is the context of his first letter to the Thessalonians. In the opening "to" and "from" of this letter, Paul identifies the trio that was with him in sending the letter, and he identifies who the letter was sent to. In his introduction, what he recognizes about the disciples in Thessalonica is important. It's not unique. These truths are reinforced in Paul's other letters in the New Testament, and they point to truths about who we (disciples of Jesus Christ) are by God's grace in our lives.

### **Disciple-makers recognize that disciples are the church (1).**

- *As a disciple, you should be a member of a local church (1b).*

One of the most consistent things about Paul's recognition of other disciples is that those disciples were not isolated, lone-ranger disciples of Jesus; rather, they are disciples who together form the church of the living God. Their identity – Paul's identity – was found in their relationship to Jesus and their subsequent relationship with one another through Christ. They were the "called out ones," who were called by God and assembled together as his people. They were the church, and that church was not just the universal church without a location and personal relationships. They were the church in Thessalonica. They were called out and gathered together in a specific location, connected together by a shared identity and relationship as those called by God in Jesus Christ. Today, this reality is still true! If you are a disciple, you should be a member of a local church.

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study on "church." How does God define the church? Do you see one another/yourself as the church? Why, or why not?
2. How do the New Testament letters reinforce God's design for membership in a local church? Are you a faithful member of a local church? What does that mean? If not, why not?

### **Disciple-makers recognize that disciples are the children of God (1).**

- *As a disciple, you are a child of God (1c).*

Another consistent truth that Paul recognized about other disciples is the reality that they were the children of God. In verse 1, Paul reminded them that they were "the church of the Thessalonians in *God the Father*." The same God who was Paul's Father was their Father. Through God the Son – Jesus Christ – they were children of God by God's grace through the gift of faith. This means that they were not just the ones who were called out and assembled together by the King of kings, they were also the ones who were adopted and joined together as brothers and sisters as the children of God. Paul recognized this important aspect of a believer's identity, and today, we should as well! If you are a disciple, you are a child of God.

1. In your church, do you see one another/yourself as family? Why, or why not?



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2. What are some ways that we can cultivate the reality of family relationships in the church?
3. By his grace, God gives us the right through Jesus Christ to be called the sons of God (his children!). How does this reality impact the way you think about and relate to God? Are you a child of God?

## **Disciple-makers recognize that disciples are followers of Jesus (1).**

- *As a disciple, you must follow Jesus as your Savior and Lord (1d).*

Equally true to being a child of God was the fact that Paul consistently recognized that true disciples were followers of Jesus. In verse 1, Paul went on to state that they were “the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the *Lord Jesus Christ*.” This is a common and repeated way that Jesus is identified in the New Testament. One of the words is his given name (Jesus), and the other two are titles that reveal his true identity (Lord and Christ)! In other words, Jesus is the Creator God who is Lord of lords and King of kings. Jesus is the master who is worthy of all glory and honor and praise. If Jesus is Lord, then a true disciple will follow him and worship him. Also, Jesus is the long-awaited Christ or Messiah. He is the one who fulfilled all the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and who perfectly accomplished the work of the Savior in being the atoning sacrifice for sin that redeemed his people from the wrath of God against their sin. Today, nothing has changed! If you are a disciple, you must follow Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do word studies on “Lord” and “Savior.” How does God use these terms? Discuss how these terms identify Jesus of Nazareth?
2. When did you become convinced and submit to Jesus as Lord and Savior? Why are both of these so important in the way we understand the person and work of Jesus?
3. Are you a disciple, following Jesus as Savior and Lord in your life? If not, why not?

## **Disciple-makers recognize that disciples need God’s grace and peace (1).**

- *As a disciple, you are saved and sustained by God’s grace and peace (1e).*

Finally, Paul ends his greeting with the familiar “grace to you and peace.” This ending used the common Greek greeting of “grace” along with the familiar Jewish greeting of “peace.” However, the greeting was far more than just an accommodation that recognized the combination of Jews and Gentiles as the church and the family of God. This greeting was theological. It recognized that peace is only possible with God – and through God with others – by God’s grace! It is the grace of God in Jesus Christ that makes the peace of God a reality that is experienced in the heart of a disciple and in relationships in the church. God’s grace and peace is what is required for salvation, but his grace and peace are always what is needed each and every day for the life of those who are saved! Paul’s greeting revealed Paul’s love and concern for the church. He desired God’s grace and peace to continue to strengthen and to protect them – to sustain them – to the very end. If you are a disciple, you are saved and sustained by God’s grace and peace!

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do word studies on “grace” and “peace.” How does God define these terms through their use in the New Testament?
2. Share how you have experienced God’s grace. Next, share how you have experienced God’s peace. How are these two related?
3. Do you know someone who needs God’s grace and peace in Jesus? Pray for them right now, and make plans to share Jesus with them this coming week.