Peace For God's People

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast. A podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Open your Bible with me to 2 Thessalonians chapter 3.

As we finish the last part of the text here of this New Testament letter we've been studying. It's been interesting the last three weeks in verses 6-15 talking about the way that a Christian should work and how we approach the tasks that we've been given to do and the work ethic that we should have that honors Christ.
I've told a few people this week, I don't know that I've had as much conversation and feedback and dialogue about a couple of sermons in the last number of years as I've had the last couple of weeks in this text talking about how we are to approach our work.
I began that three weeks ago by saying that I thought it was really something that is not often talked about or taught in the church and it's really reinforced that and probably something we should come back to with some regularity just based on the feedback that I've been able to have from so many of you.
So I pray that we are approaching, I don't mean work just vocationally, but anything that our hand finds to do, that we're doing it as unto the Lord of all of our might.
[1:29] When we get to the end of the letter, chapter 3, verses 16-18, it's this benediction that talks about the peace that God's people can have.

I heard a friend of mine a few years ago, a fellow pastor friend of mine who referenced something he had seen about the states in the U.S. that were the most stress-filled places to live.
And I thought of that as I was considering the ending of 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. And so I went back the last couple of weeks and have done some updated research to look into what is out there.
Wallet Hub compared all 50 states using 40 different metrics across four key dimensions. There was work-related stress, talking about how many hours you work, how long your commute time is, job security.
There was money-related stress that involved that state, what their average income was versus expenses, credit scores, economic security in that state.
[2:51] A third broad category was family-related stress that dealt with divorce rates, child care costs, parental stress. And then a fourth broad category of health and safety that talked about whether the people in that state have fair or poor health, what the physical activity rate is among the people in that state, the suicide rate, all of these different factors.

Each metric was graded on the same scale, and then a weighted average was given across all these metrics to provide a final score of how stressed states are in our nation.
The data that was used was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the CDC, and a few others. Putting that all together, here is the results of the most stressed U.S. states.
All right? Here, I'll give you just the top ten. The most stressed state to live in, according to this research, is Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Arkansas, number six, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, number nine, Oklahoma, number ten, Texas.
This clearly was done before the NBA Finals because we are number nine to no one. Are you surprised that Oklahoma is in the top ten most stressed states?
[4:42] I was. In comparison, the top ten least stressed states, so if you want to move, let me tell you where to move to.

Number 41 least stressed, so we'll go 41 up to 50. Hawaii, Nebraska, Delaware, North Dakota, Idaho, Iowa, number 47, New Hampshire, Utah, number 49, South Dakota, and the least stressed state in the U.S., Minnesota.

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So I looked at this, and I tried to say, is there any obvious explanation? Is there any commonality among states that seem to be the most stressed or the least stressed?
I looked at everything I could, every different way, just to try to see, is there anything of any note or any interest that would help us know what is it that's making people in our nation feel significantly stressed versus those who seem to not?
Four of the ten least stressed states are among the top ten coldest states. I'm looking for anything here that would give us some insight.
[6:10] That just confused me when I put that together. Eight of the ten most stressed states are in the top ten poorest states.

It's interesting. Only two of the ten least stressed states are in the top ten of education.
So it's not as if the states with the great education makes your life not stressed. There doesn't seem to be any obvious pattern on those issues.
So after spending a few hours looking at all these different statistics from the Census Bureau, the Labor of Statistics, CDC, and all these other self-reporting metrics and measures, what I've come up with is I have no idea why people are stressed based on where they live.
But it does strike me as uniquely meaningful that the state that I've loved, I'm 52 next month, I've lived in Oklahoma my entire life, I live about 12 miles today from the house I grew up in when I was five.
[7:24] My whole life has been lived right here. And the state that I've lived and served and ministered in my entire life is in the top ten most stressed states.

We also, per capita, have about as many churches in our state as is possible. What causes people to live in constant stress and to feel a lack of peace?
Well, that's a question that everybody should answer, but I just got to warn you, you better be able to answer because apparently you're in the ninth most stressed state to live in in the Union. So, we certainly better be able to figure this out.
And I suppose if we kept looking and digging, we might find some correlation, some things that may show why certain states are stressed or not as stressed.
But in the end, in the end, when you get rid of, because there is one thing I did not tell you because it was not a part of the research, or not a part of the survey.
[8:41] They looked at health, they looked at education, they looked at economy, they looked at all those factors. But all those things are all moving targets.

All those things are temporary things that come and go. The quest to find true peace doesn't matter what state you live in.
The quest for true peace is a quest simply to say, do you know, love, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? You can live in a cold state or a warm state.
You can live in a state that's dry or Oklahoma, which apparently is the new rainfall capital of the world. Something new to enjoy. You can live in a state that's got a booming economy, small state, big state.
But if you want a life of peace, it is not about the location in which you live ultimately. It is about the condition of your soul.
[9:57] And you can live in a state with people that go to church, and you can be one of the ones who go to church. I can't help but wonder though if it's possible that one of the most stressful conditions of the human soul is to be an unconverted person who regularly goes to church.

That would seem to me to be the most unsettling way to live. Pretending to be something you're not, trying to work your way to something you cannot attain, and all the while singing the songs of faith in Jesus with an unconverted heart.
Peace will not come based on attending church by itself. Peace comes simply from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.
At the end of this letter, we'll read it here, he says, May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way.
The Lord be with you all. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand this is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine.
[11:27] It is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. We've looked many times through the last number of months in 1 Thessalonians in the fall, 2 Thessalonians in the last several months, that part of the background behind a forged letter that seems to have been

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sent to the church which is why he ends with that wording.

I won't redo all that, we've covered that, but that seems to be a part of what he's addressing here. But his final words here to the church in this letter is all about the peace and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Christ. And so just as he simply ends his letter, I want to simply present to you this morning the beauty and the hope and the peace available for God's people.
Number one, make note of this, true peace only comes from God. True peace only comes from God.
May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. Let me do remind you of what we've looked at.
[12:51] This church he's writing to was facing opposition from every possible way. They've got opposition from Gentiles and they've got opposition from Jewish population in this area and they've even got opposition from false teachers trying to lead them astray.

This church to which Paul writes this letter is getting pressed on every side. And yet he says may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way.
That tells us that true peace is not dependent upon your circumstances. That feels so counterintuitive doesn't it?
It seems like peace would be present when you're healthy and strong with a good income that those things would bring peace.
But all you have to do is talk to a few people and recognize that our nation has people falling apart from the inside out who have all those things.
[14:21] There's never been a nation or generation with as much ability to communicate or medicate. Your circumstances are not what bring peace.

And just to flip it even more on its head, some of the most at rest people I've ever talked to are those who have been through or are going through the most difficult situations imaginable.
Even right now, there are some people that I'm in pretty constant conversation with that are going through extremely difficult situations and they are resting and living in a true sense of the peace of God.
Peace is not based on our circumstances. True peace only comes from God. If you're seeking peace from your circumstances, it will always evade you.
You're not going to find it. Make note of two things about the peace that comes from God. One is we can have peace with God and two we can have the peace of God.
[15:46] Both of these things go together. As a Christian we can have peace with God. This is the good news that He forgives us of our sin that by grace through faith we can be saved and that we who are enemies of God can have peace with God.

We can be in a right standing with God. And when you have the peace with God you experience the peace of God that we've just sung about today.
I've already read to you John 14 27 our verse for the month of June. Let me read to you also Colossians 3 15 let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.
The peace of God is to rule in your heart. In other words everything else is subject to that. Someone who rules is the dominating force.
Scripture says the peace of God is to rule in your heart. It's to be the most dominating force of your life.
[16:59] Everything else bows in submission to that rule. It's the peace of God active and alive in your heart that is to dominate your life.

life. And that's not dependent upon circumstance. Because Christ's power never depends on circumstance.
as long as Christ rules his peace reigns. And that has nothing to do with how cold your state is or how educated your state is or the median income.
It has to do with your rest in the power and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. True peace only comes from God.
Number two. True peace should impact all of your life. True peace should impact all of your life.
[18:13] He says the Lord be with you all. This is for all believers that we would have peace at all times in every way.

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Live every day every situation in the awareness that the Lord is with you. The result of thinking like that the result of meditating on the power of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in your life on the victory Christ has won the result of thinking on these things is that you will practice godly things.
So as Philippians 4 reminds us verse 9 what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.
So we learn of the Lord we obey the Lord and as we do that we remind ourselves that God's peace is with us no matter what.
So here's the New Testament's thinking on peace. Let me just kind of put it all together in one way of thinking. We think about godly things and then we practice or do godly things as we practice them with the right heart and mind we experience holiness that the Holy Spirit produces in us and the result of living a holy life is enjoying the peace of God.
[20:08] So this comes down to what you believe what you do how you do it and then the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit to his people.

What you think about matters. What you believe matters. How you live matters. Your motive with which you do what you do matters.
And so he tells us in Philippians 4 learn receive practice so this is right thinking followed up by right living a holiness that is produced within us and the result of that is the awareness that we have peace with God.
That's where you find peace. by thinking on the right things living the right way doing it with a God honoring attitude and seeking the holiness that can only come from the work of the Holy Spirit.
This is where people find peace. The longer you live the more phases and seasons of life you go through you recognize that life always has lots of happiness and lots of sadness.
[21:52] This is always true. This is true on Father's Day. Father's Day is a wonderful day for most.

It's a really hard day for others. And probably for many in the sanctuary Father's Day is a little mixed.
You're really joyful that you have a father and for some though it's hard because your father is gone. For some it's heartbreaking because your relationship with your dad isn't good.
Father's Day is wonderful because so many dads are grateful for their children and they celebrate in that but for many it's hard because maybe their children aren't living in obedience to the Lord or maybe those relationships are strained or maybe you've lost a child.
I mean even just the mention of Father's Day itself is going to produce great feelings of happiness and also for many feelings of sadness and for many in our church it's both of those at the same time.
[23:10] That's kind of how life is right? It's a constant mix of happiness and sorrow of great joy and also sadness.

You're going to see it in a couple of months on the first day of school you're going to see moms and dads who are taking their little ones to school for the first time and they're so happy and they're so proud and they're going to cry in sadness on the way home.
And you say are you happy or are you sad? And they're going to say I don't know. You're going to see it with parents who are going to move their college freshmen into a dorm room for the very first time.
So much joy, so much pride, so much excitement and they're going to be miserable on the way home. And you say why are you so sad? I thought you're excited. Well I am excited.
Why are you crying? Because I'm heartbroken. But I thought you were happy. I am happy. What is this? It's called being human. Right? It's all of this. And if you have children you rejoice and you grieve and it's exciting and it's hard and you get the thrill of your child leaving the house and seeing them live life on their own and you celebrate and are so excited when they do well and it breaks your heart if they do poorly and make unwise choices and life is just filled with circumstances that are sometimes high and sometimes low and often both of those at the exact same time I just want you to hear me friends tell you from the authority of scripture here that if you're waiting on circumstances to align to bring your heart to peace you're never going to find it because even if you could even if you could get all of your family at peace with each other at peace with the
[25:27] Lord nearby in close proximity even if you could get everybody's job good and income good and relationships good even if you could make all that happen what's going to happen to you in 10 or 20 or 30 years you are going to get sick and die so if you're waiting on circumstances to

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align you can't and even if you could you're the weak link because eventually your health is going to decline and your death is going to mess up all this circumstantial happiness that your family achieved I don't say that to be depressing I say that to help you focus to recognize that in the scripture peace is not based on your circumstances it's based on your salvation you have in

Christ Jesus and so scripture says think on these things practice these things let holiness be produced in you and as you do you have peace with God and now the peace of God that is with you at all times verse 16 and in every way Philippians 4 7 says you have the peace of God Philippians 4 9 says you have the God of peace here in 2 Thessalonians 3 it's called the Lord of peace himself you have the Lord of peace with you the God of peace is with you so think of it this way if you're a college student you come home for college and you're leaving on your way out to go back to school and your dad says to you are you hungry and you say yes

I'm hungry he says well on your way back to college stop and give you something to eat and gives you a three dollars when you go through the drive through now because he gave you ten because it's ridiculous to eat at a fast food restaurant it's wonderfully good it's just extremely expensive and you go through the drive through and you say that's wonderful my dad gave me ten dollars that's great that was good that was helpful here's what's far far more helpful when your father instead of says here's ten to eat you pick the restaurant and now you sit down and you don't care how much it costs why because dad himself is with you this isn't just him giving you something that he has and now you have whatever he gave you this is him going with you and if dad is with you you don't have to wonder how much it cost who cares he's with you he's paying for it because dad himself is with you if

I'm taking my family out to eat I don't want them to look at the menu to see how much something costs that's why I'm there it's me and Marcy let's go before five and get the cheap stuff but if dad is present he didn't just give you some money to spend it's his presence that takes care of the concern so when Paul ends this letter he says may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way how is that going to happen how are you going to have peace at all times in every way how are you going to have peace when your child is sick how are you going to have peace when you bury your parents how are you going to have peace when you lose your job how are you going to have peace when you're sick how do you have peace when the circumstances of my life are so messed up here it is the end of verse 16 the

Lord be with! you all that's how he's not just giving you stuff he's giving you himself the Lord himself is with you third make note of this true peace comes because of God's grace true peace comes because of God's grace verse 17 I write this greeting with my own hand this is a sign of genuineness in every letter of mine it's the way that I write verse 18 he says this the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all now look at the end of verse 16 and the end of verse 18 the Lord be with you all the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with!

[30:57] all! this is how God's people live in peace because his grace is always with us you always have direct access to him and because the Lord is with you always you're never alone this is where peace comes from it's his grace that produces peace like this you're never alone so if you were to be a frequent church attender but not know Jesus you would be someone who sings about peace all the time hears about peace all the time pretends to have peace all the time but always feeling alone

I think that would be the saddest place to be to sing of that which isn't true for you to teach that which isn't true for you and pretend that it is and so when you get to the end of 2 Thessalonians the question is do you know the grace of Jesus Christ do you live in the peace that only he can bring some of you heard me tell the story before it was the summer of 93 so whatever that is 32 years ago it was early Sunday morning I was at a church I worked part time for a summer job at this church and someone was sick and so

I got to church early that day they asked me to go to the hospital to visit this church member early in the morning before church started went to the elevator this is! so this and I'm on the elevator and the elevator got stuck started to go up and it jammed and shook and it got stuck I wasn't worried about it figured I'd wait four five six seconds and it would fix itself and open up and it didn't that's kind of strange I wonder what's going on wasn't worried at all because in every elevator there's a phone open the little cabinet and the problem is the phone was a corded phone and it had everything you need except a cord it was a mobile corded phone that doesn't work that way now I picked it up just to make sure it did not work and then

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I got panicked the circumstance was the same the difference was I assumed that the presence of the phone meant I wasn't really alone I could pick it up push zero and talk to someone at the hospital and say hey by the way here's the elevator I'm in I'm stuck oh my goodness I'm so sorry we've got someone they'll be there in two minutes no problem because I wasn't alone in that but the presence of a broken phone meant I was alone if I were to ask you is it scary to be in an elevator for two minutes none of you would say that was scary but if I said you're stuck and no one knows is two minutes going to be five is two minutes going to be an hour will anyone even recognize
I'm missing if tomorrow comes and goes it was the presence of feeling alone that was so frightening when Paul says the Lord be with you and the grace of our Lord be with you he is reminding you that your circumstances may be all kinds of difficult but you'll never be alone this is the peace that's available for God's people not the presence of circumstances how you want them to be but the assurance that he is always with you and as long as he is true to his word God's people truly have nothing to fear what
[36:17] I hope you hear clearly from the text today at the end of this letter is that true peace is absolutely available but it's found only in a relationship with God through the work of his son the Lord Jesus Christ this isn't something you earn this isn't something you achieve peace isn't found because you went to church a certain!

peace isn't found because you are better than others peace isn't found because you did something to try to satisfy your spouse or your parents or your kids true peace is found because you in faith repent God lot want going first… God love God love doing i love our God love him are going to come for my name this time for us is there as there are going for us on our together for us are here for us will make us happy to fear because the one who created the universe lives within you. And the way you experience peace is to think on that, live in response to that with a motive that honors Christ, and then you experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.
You don't need to move to a new state. You don't necessarily need to get a new job.
You don't necessarily need circumstances in your life to be different. What you need to do is repent of your sin, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then live in response to the work He has done with gratitude and love and obedience, reminding yourself, the Lord is with me at all times in every way.
Should you be here this morning and you've not done that, there's never been a time where you've repented of your sin, where you have asked God to forgive you by His grace?
[38:49] I do want you to understand that the Lord is still a gracious, forgiving God. And maybe on this Father's Day, some of you would say, I don't need to do that. I know the words of the songs.

I've been to church hundreds of times. But that would be basing your peace on your circumstances, what you've done, where you've been.
Peace comes from receiving the work He's done. Or perhaps you say, I don't need to do that because my life is so messed up, and if God really loved me, my marriage would be better, my kids would be better, my finances would be better.
But understand, the promise of God being with you is not the assurance that your circumstances are going to always align in the most preferred way. It's the promise that He is with you, that He is working in you, and in the end, all things are working together for your spiritual good and His glory.
Exactly what we sung about this morning. And if you think that you don't need to trust Christ as your Savior, whatever reason you would give why, is simply the evidence that you're trusting in some circumstance, and that's going to lead you astray.
[40:32] Trust instead in the finished work of the one who lived, died, resurrected, and is coming again.

And if you want to know true peace, then call upon the name of the Lord and be saved, knowing at all times, in every way, the Lord Himself is with you.
That is where peace is found. And it's the sweetest promise for all who would believe. Lord, we thank You for Your Word today, and pray that it would be used to give us hope and to give us peace.
We pray, Lord, for those who may not know You, that even this day would be the day they would call upon Your name and be saved. We pray that would be done for Your glory and for their good. Amen. Love you, church family. Happy Father's Day. God bless you. You're dismissed. Jesus Christ. Thank you.
[41:57] If you know what's good about our church or the ministries that our church provides, please visit us at fbcmustang.org. We would love to follow up with you and get to know you better.

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As always, we try to emphasize, if at all possible, if you could be here physically present with us, We would love that. And that'd be a joy to serve you in that way.
But thank you again for joining us via live stream today. Have a great day. Thank you.

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