

*Grace and Peace*  
*II Corinthians 1:2*

**INTRODUCTION**

What the world needs now is grace and peace. It was the conviction that lived in the heart of the Apostle Paul. He expressed this conviction in the greeting which opened each of his letters. It was customary to express your heart wish for the persons to whom you were writing in such a greeting. Paul makes his wish a heart prayer directed to God for his friends to whom he is writing.

Greek-speaking men greeted each other by letter or in person with a form of this word "grace." Their word meant "joy," "joy to you," or "rejoice." They wanted their friends to know joy. Paul took the form of the word that meant "grace, or unmerited favor from God."

Hebrew-speaking men then and now greeted each other with *Shalom* - peace. They felt man's greatest need to be "peace." With keen Christian insight, Paul combined the two. He knew that these two blessings are companions, and you need both of them to meet the greatest needs of man.

Modern man does not use such meaningful greetings in our day. We are more likely to greet each other with an empty, "How are you?" when we could really care less. Or maybe with a "Have a good day." But the needs of modern man have not changed. He is still in desperate need of grace and peace.

Let's consider this familiar greeting of Paul detail tonight.

***I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRACE AND PEACE.***

If we can understand these two words, it will open the windows of divine truth to our eyes. The human tongue has never spoken two more beautiful or significant words.

Grace is peculiarly Christian. When the Greeks used the word *charis*, which we translate grace, they spoke of something beautiful. Beauty was a thing of great importance to them. One lexicon defines the word as "properly that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness." But the basic content which the Christian faith deposited in the word is "good will, loving kindness, favor." We commonly define it as "God's unmerited favor."

Grace is the merciful kindness of Holy God which bestows deliverance and salvation upon guilty sinners. It is the Good Shepherd seeking stubborn sheep who have willfully gone astray. It is the Just One dying for the unjust upon the

Tree. It is receiving the priceless gift of eternal life when you have done nothing to deserve it.

In the Old Testament we find an incident that illustrates this word grace. When David assumed the throne of Israel, the house of King Saul was destroyed. All of the descendants of the King were killed either in the battle or in the take-over. However, Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul, escaped. He was a crippled son of this friend of David. When his kingdom was established, David found it in his heart to want to honor any of the descendants of his friend Jonathan that might have escaped. A search for survivors found this crippled son. As a member of the family of Saul, Mephibosheth would have justly been under the condemnation of the king. Instead, David bestowed grace upon him for the sake of Jonathan. He provided him a place at the king's table, put him under protection of the crown, and gave him a place to live in the city of the king. He restored to him the inheritance of his father that had been lost in the overthrow. No need of this crippled young man was left unmet. It was all because of the love and grace that was in the heart of David. The young man had done nothing to deserve it.

Ills is our situation. Like Mephibosheth, we are justly under the Condemnation of the King of the Ages. We have no claim upon His provisions. But instead of bestowing upon us the condemnation we deserve, He has searched us out and given us grace. He has bestowed upon us heaven's best. He has given us a place in His heavenly family and treats us as full sons of God. It is grace!

Peace means more than the absence of hostility. Where there is peace, hostility has ended; but, there is more. There has been a full reconciliation and restoration to favor. In the Hebrew mind, peace included the experience of the fullness of life. It was to enjoy health and the good things of life. Dr. Ray Summers says that here peace meets the needs of the conscience of man. When grace has done its work of redeeming man, peace is what follows. It is the quietness of the heart of a man who sees that his guilt has been cared for through the death of Christ. It is the inner awareness of the spiritual blessings that God has bestowed upon us in Christ. It is the inner awareness of being near to the heart of God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Peace! Is not *this* kind of inner peace what the world needs now?

## ***II. THE SEQUENCE OF GRACE AND PEACE.***

The order of these two blessings is always the same. Every time Paul expresses this greeting, they appear in just this sequence. Grace always precedes peace. This is not accidental.

Grace and peace reflects the order of the divine provision. This is the sequence of the divine provision. In the Old Testament the sin offering always preceded the

peace offering. This pictorially demonstrated that man's sin-must be removed by grace before he could enjoy the peace of God. In the New Testament we have exactly the same order. We have the death of Christ for sin, and then the peace with God. Paul stated it, "Being justified by grace, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the sequence of divine provision - grace and then peace.

Grace and peace also reflect the order of the human experience. In our experience, we know the grace of God before we experience peace with God. You must receive the removal of your sin through grace before you can know peace with God. Foolish man is forever attempting to change this. He wants to know the experience of peace, but he does not want to humble himself to receive grace. He proudly refuses to admit that he needs grace, and then wonders why he cannot know peace. There can be no peace with God until the sin question has been settled. The only means known to man for the settling of the sin issue is the grace of God. "By grace are you saved." Peace is the result of the removal of sin by grace.

We want to sit at the King's table like unworthy Mephibosheth, but we do not want to admit our unworthiness. We want to sit there on the basis of our own merits and efforts. But the peace with God which fills the life with the peace of God comes only to those who have admitted their unworthiness and received grace. The sequence has been divinely established. Any attempts on our part to change it are destined for failure.

### ***III. THE SOURCE OF GRACE AND PEACE.***

This greeting of the Apostle makes clear the source of grace and peace. They are to come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. There is some profound theology in this simple greeting of the Apostle. The construction of the sentence makes it clear that in the mind of the Apostle, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ share an equality. They are equally the source of this grace and peace. Those who could deny our Lord's share in the Godhead have just not read the New Testament carefully enough, or have refused to receive its witness.

While the Father and the Son are equal and one, there is a distinction to be made in their relationship to us. To the "saints" God is Father and Jesus is Lord. This is a relationship known only by those who have come to God through the Lord Jesus in faith. In the family of God, Jesus is the only begotten Son. His Sonship is unique. But the privileges associated with His Sonship are shared with those who accept Jesus as Lord in their lives. God becomes the Father in a special way, and they become heirs with the Lord Jesus.

We are probably to understand that God the Father is the great Provider of grace and peace. He is the great reservoir from which they flow. The Lord Jesus Christ

is the channel through which the provisions flow from die reservoir. If you are going to receive this grace and peace from God the Father, you must receive them through the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no other source. You find grace and peace only in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not find them in the church - not in any church. Some have proclaimed the church as being the place where you find grace and peace, but this is a serious error. They are found only In the blessed Godhead.