

A STUDY IN GALATIANS
Part 2 – “Grace and Peace”
Galatians 1:1-5

The epistles of Paul begin with a salutation that always includes the words, “grace to you and peace” or “grace, mercy, and peace” as in the case of 1 and 2 Timothy. Paul’s salutations include the writer, the recipient, and the greeting proper, which follow the style of other letters of his time. Paul’s salutations add a new truth, however, due to the meaning of the words “grace” and “peace” for believers in Christ.

Remember we began our study last week with a look at the “Law of the Harvest.” There were three essentials about that law:

- You always reap when you sow.
- You always reap what you sow.
- You always reap more than you sow.

Now as we continue our study we begin at the “beginning.” While “grace to you and peace” recall the normal Greek and Hebrew greetings. Paul basically coined a slight variation to connote the deepened Christian truth of grace. *Charis*, the Greek word translated “grace” goes beyond the typical *chairein*, or “greetings” as it is used in Acts 15:23; 23:26; and James 1:1. By doing this he placed the focus on the unmerited blessings given to believers in Christ. Through God’s marvelous grace sinners are delivered from their sins and brought into a saving relationship with a holy God by the work of God on their behalf completely free of charge. This grace does not cease with salvation from sin’s penalty, but continues on as the foundation of the believer’s life with God throughout all eternity. These blessings of grace Paul wishes for his readers. So exactly what was it that Paul was wishing for his readers? First, let’s look at the Scripture:

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:1-5).

Grace AND peace! Is there really anything that we need more in this world of ours today? Chip Ingram, senior pastor of the Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, California, tells a wonderful story of a “new dance” originated in the Silicon Valley. He says it is one born out of the common attitude of many people in our world today. The trouble with this dance is that it is utterly exhausting. In order to do it you must dance “*bigger, better, faster, and more.*” As is true with any development in technology, especially computers, we are constantly seeking the bigger, better, and faster machine. Then we get it, we want more. In fact, Pastor Ingram goes on to say we have adopted this as a principle for our lives. We feel driven to get bigger, better, faster, and more! The more we get, the more we want. The faster we go, the faster we want to go. It steals our peace. It prevents us from possessing our joy! The solution is simple: *Grace and Peace!*

The Apostle Paul understood this in the face of his world's challenges and writes to this fledgling church to help them recover their grace and peace. There are two principles to center our focus around.

FIRST, WE OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GRACE AND PEACE.

Our language really doesn't have two more important and precious words. The word translated "grace" is a word peculiar to the Christian's experience and understanding. The Greeks used this word to describe something stunningly beautiful. They placed great value on the *charis* of something. The lexicon defines the word as "property, which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, or charm." In the New Testament it came to more specifically mean "good will, loving kindness, and favor." Commonly we have defined it as "God's unmerited favor."

Grace, then, is the merciful kindness by which a Holy God gives saving deliverance and forgiveness to guilty, undeserving sinners. It is the Good Shepherd leaving the ninety-nine sheep safe in the sheepfold and venturing out into the dangerous night to recover the one sheep that has wandered away refusing the safety of his care and protection. It is the Great Rabbi gathering thousands of people on a small hill north of the Sea of Galilee, hungry, poor, and lost without direction for their lives then feeding them their full of both physical and spiritual food. It is the Son of God, fully man and fully God divesting himself of the position and honor of heaven to come to earth and willingly die to cover our sins forever. It is God the Father granting free forgiveness and stature as his sons and daughters even when we deserve nothing more than condemnation and death. It is our receiving something incredibly, indescribably beautiful and wonderful when we deserve nothing at all. And that merely scratches the surface of this great gift called *charis*!

Do you remember the story of Manasseh, king of Judah? Manasseh (not to be confused with the Israelite patriarch Manasseh, the grandson-made-son of Jacob) was the son and successor of King Hezekiah of Judah. Manasseh was only twelve years old when his reign began. He remained king for the next 55 years, a monarch noted as much for his longevity as for his evil and corruption *before* the grace of God opens his heart to forgiveness and blessing. Ultimately his kingdom fell to the Assyrians. Once in the court of his captor, he listened as the king's attendant announced the entry of King Ashurbanipal: "The great king, the legitimate king, the king of the world, king of Assyria, king of all the four rims of the earth, king of kings," and the next words gripped his heart with a wave of fear, "prince without rival, who rules from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea." Being in the judicial custody of his enemies banished from Manasseh's thoughts all but the bleak prospect of being publicly humiliated and killed. He realized then that he might never behold his own capital city again. The vivid memories of butchering thousands of his own citizens and filling Jerusalem's streets with blood haunted him. He remembered sacrificing his own children as burnt offerings in the valley of Hinnom. He recalled consulting spirit mediums, fortunetellers and sorcerers. Manasseh felt the stares of his surviving subjects as the Assyrian soldiers once again jerked the barb that placed him completely at their mercy. Yet, what devoured his peace more than all this was how far his own lost soul had wandered away from God. Of all the Hebrew kings who had reigned, few were so offensive to God and man as Manasseh, son of King Hezekiah of Judah.

However, that was not to be the end of the story. Manasseh genuinely repented. His repentance was full and deep, and God moved the heart of King Ashurbanipal to release Manasseh to return home and be restored to his throne for many additional years. During that

time, he undid much of the hellishness that he had revived. He removed the foreign idols from the hills and the Temple and tore down the pagan altars. He then rebuilt the altar of the Lord, and offered sacrifices upon it. When Manasseh died, he was buried beneath his own palace, and his son Amon became the new king. Amon was not as righteous as his father, yet God's grace still prevailed. Amon was assassinated after two years on the throne. His son, the grandson of Manasseh, Josiah, took the throne at the age of eight. He would become a great king, a man determined to bring the people of Israel back to the Lord. Neither Amon nor Josiah would have been born had God not delivered Manasseh from the hand of Ashurbanipal in the grace of His forgiveness.

We are going to see throughout Galatians that is precisely how God has treated us. He has cancelled out all of our charges and restored us. He has done all of this in spite of our attitudes and actions. It is a mystery that can only be explained by the love and mercy we find in the heart of God. Surely this is the answer to our world of chaos today. Surely this is the solution to our fear and anxiety as we dance the dance of bigger, better, faster, and more!

But, what about peace? [Peace means more than the absence of hostility as some have suggested. It does indicate the hostility between God and man has ended, however, it also indicated the reconciliation of the warring parties.](#) We have had a beautiful example of this recently. Who could have imagined the outpouring of benevolent aid from our nation to the people of Japan on the days immediately following December 7, 1941? Not only have we responded with our government but also numerous agencies and people have responded sacrificially as well, coming to their aid in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami. The war between our nations ended formally On September 2, 1945, when a formal surrender ceremony was performed in Tokyo Bay, Japan aboard the battleship USS Missouri. The outpouring of help is a clear indication that reconciliation has also taken place.

SECOND, WE OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THE SEQUENCE OF GRACE AND PEACE.

It is noteworthy that these two words always appear in this order in the greetings of Paul. It is always grace *then* peace. Never does the apostle pray for peace and then grace. He understands that without grace there can be no peace. [This is the sequence in divine provision.](#) God expressed his grace first in the sending of His only begotten Son into the world to redeem the world. The grace had to come first. It was the same in the Old Testament order of the sacrifices. A sin offering had to be given before a peace offering.

Our experience also follows this sequence. We are first saved by God's grace then peace may follow. It is mere foolishness to expect to change this order, yet men have been trying to manufacture peace without the affect of the grace of God for centuries. It will never work.

Why is it that as soon as you're back from the grocery store, you find five more things you're out of? Picked up three gallons of milk? Well now you need bread. Got the bread? Fine, but you get home to find you should've gotten peanut butter. You cross off one item there are three more. It's like the list has a sinister mind of its own. It's just waiting for you to finish the shopping, and then it snickers menacingly and gets rid of whatever is left in the tub of butter sitting in your fridge. Or, knowing that you've seen seven boxes of cereal in the pantry, it steals all but five crumbs from each box so that you've suddenly got a bunch of boxes of cereal dust, but no cereal. I could list other evil things the list does, but if I did, the list would probably try to

shift the blame over to me. It can be wicked like that, the list can. There is no rest from the wickedness of the list!

Incidentally, we all used to have a "wicked list." Can you imagine having to write down everything wrong we've ever done? And the list would just go on! But we don't have to list any of it when we've given it all to Jesus. Everything on that old, wicked list has been crossed off. And I do mean, "crossed." Our Heavenly Father made that provision through the sacrificial death of his son on a cross of redemption. Listen to the message of God: "But I, yes I, am the one who takes care of your sins - that's what I do. I don't keep a list of your sins." (Isaiah 43:25 The Message).

THIRD, WE OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE OF GRACE AND PEACE.

Paul makes it abundantly clear that the source of this is *from god the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is of interest what place Paul gives Jesus in this sequence. He is equal to God the Father. In the construction of the Greek sentence it is clear that Paul approaches them as being equal in every way, especially as being the source of grace and peace. This is so incredibly significant.

1. **First, the God who provides grace and peace is "Father."** In this letter he is presented as the gracious Father of the believing. He is the Father who sent His Son in the fullness of time. He is the Father to whom the Spirit draws men in trust and devotion. As such, He is the source of grace and peace.
2. **Second, the God who provides grace and peace is also "the Lord Jesus Christ."** He is the one who gave Himself that we might be delivered from this present world. He is related to the Godhead as Son, but to us as "Lord." When men receive grace and peace from Him, they know Him as their Lord and God.

One thing is absolutely clear. There is no other source of grace and peace. It cannot be found in churches or religious activities. It can only be found in God and Him alone.