



Paul's letter to the church of Jesus Christ at Oklahoma City  
The Greeting Continued

In all 13 of his letters Paul ended his greeting with a blessing. In 10 of his letters the blessing was....

"grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 1:1-3: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In both letters to Timothy and his letter Titus Paul added mercy to this blessing.

1 Timothy 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, a true son in the faith: grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

If Paul was writing a letter to OKC, I believe that he would include a blessing in his letter and he would say something like this?

Oklahoma City 1:1-2

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, to the church of Oklahoma City, to those who are beloved of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Why was this blessing so important to Paul? What difference would it make in the lives of the disciples that received it? Is this blessing meaningful to you? Do you ever use it?

For us to understand why this blessing was so important to Paul we must first understand what this blessing means.

In his letters, Paul used the words grace and peace to describe both a position and a condition.

He used the word peace to describe the disciples position with God through Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1

5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
NKJV

The word peace comes from a Greek word that means “to be joined.” The disciples were at peace with God. They had been joined to God through Jesus Christ. There was no longer an enmity between God and the disciples. They were no longer the enemies of God. They were no longer the objects of God’s wrath.

But Paul also used the word peace to describe the disciples condition.

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

NKJV

They were at peace with God but Paul blessed the disciples with peace because he wanted the disciples to be at peace in their soul despite their difficult circumstances.

Paul used the word grace to describe the disciples position with God through Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:14

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

NKJV

In the New Testament grace is the word charis. It means to lean toward someone to extend favor or blessings to them. In his letters, Paul said the disciples were under grace. They were in a position with God through Jesus Christ in which God was always leaning toward them to extend to them His favor. They did not have to perform for God to be in this position.

But Paul and the other apostles also used the word grace to describe their condition.

Acts 4:33-35

33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

NKJV

The disciples were under grace but in his letters Paul used the word grace to describe a motivation the disciples needed in their souls to follow Jesus. He wanted this motivation to grow in them.

The apostle Peter said...

2 Peter 3:17-18

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

NKJV

So, Paul's blessing of grace and peace was both an affirmation of the disciple's position with God through Jesus Christ and an appeal to God for their condition.

This raises four questions.

1. Are you under the grace of God?  
What is your position?
2. If you are under the grace of God are you experiencing the grace of God?  
What is your condition?
3. Are you at peace with God?  
What is your position?
4. If you are at peace with God are you experiencing the peace of God?  
What is your condition?

To be under the grace of God and be at peace with God, you must believe upon Jesus and receive Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin.

Romans 5:1-2

5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

NKJV

To grow in the grace of God and the peace of God, you must accept God's purpose for your life.

Romans 5:3-5

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

NKJV

God's purpose is to produce in you the image of Jesus.

Romans 8:28-29

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

NKJV

2 Corinthians 3:18

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

NKJV

God's purpose for your life is that you would glorify Jesus by being transformed into His image?

Why should you accept God's purpose?

If you are a disciple of Jesus...

- You are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)
- You are the temple of God's Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
- You are under grace (Romans 6:14)

In the New Testament grace is the word charis. It means to lean toward someone in order to extend favor or blessings to them. This can be done man to man. This action is one that we appreciate but it is not considered to be remarkable. It is an action that most everyone practices from time to time when we lend someone a helping hand.

What makes grace remarkable is when the object of grace is undeserving; a couple adopts a child with special needs; a Jew in Germany extends favor to Nazi soldier; a Samaritan extends favor to a Jew.

What should be expected from the undeserving is a response of gratitude that would be appropriate based on the relationship and the ability of the recipient.

The most remarkable example of grace is God. The bible says that God is full of grace. (John 1:14). Almighty God is leaning toward us to extend favor and blessings to us through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.

Do you see this as remarkable?

What makes God's grace remarkable is that we are so underserving and the price that God paid to show us His grace.

A genuine response to the grace of God cannot occur until you see how undeserving you are. I am sad to say that countless thousands of people have prematurely passed through the waters of baptism without this experience. It is one thing to feel guilty and want your guilt relieved and quite another to see God and know you are undeserving.

The difficulty with seeing that you are undeserving is caused by an inaccurate view of God and yourself.

If I asked you to describe God what would you say? You may use words like Holy but what does that mean?

If I asked you to describe yourself what would you say? You may use words like sinner but what does that mean?

I want you to first consider your view of God. In the bible when people saw God they were terrified. And it was not just reverential awe. When they saw God, they felt that something terrifying was about to happen to them.

God said to Moses that no man can see my face and live.(Exodus 33:20).

When Job saw God he abhorred himself and repented in dust in ashes.(Job 42:5-6).

Gideon saw the angel of God and thought he would be struck dead. (Judges 6:22-23).

Manoah and his wife saw the angel of God and Manoah said to his wife we will surely die because we have seen God.(Judges 13:22).

Isaiah saw God and he was so overcome by feelings of terror he said he was ruined.(Isaiah 6).

When Daniel saw God, he lost all the strength in his body and he fell face down on the ground.(Daniel 10:7-9).

When Peter saw, that Jesus was God, he fell at the feet of Jesus and said depart from me for I am a sinful man. (Luke 5:8).

When Peter, James, and John saw Jesus transfigured and heard the voice of God the Father, they were terrified and fell down with their face to the ground.(Matthew 17:6)

When soldiers came to arrest Jesus, when He identified himself they drew back in fear and fell down.(John 18:6)

When Jesus appeared to his disciples after he rose from the dead, they were terrified and frightened.(Luke 24:37)

When the apostle Paul saw Jesus for the first time on the road to Damascus he was terrified and fell down.(Acts 9:3-6).

When the apostle John saw Jesus glorified, he was terrified and fell down at his feet as a dead man.(Rev. 1:13).

In the bible, in both the old and new testament, both before and after Jesus died, when people saw God they were terrified. When they saw God, and saw what God was like, they saw what they were like, and they were terrified. Their knowledge of God created within them an awareness of their sinful condition and their need for the grace of God. When God extended that grace to them through Jesus Christ, they were converted. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost when 3000 were saved.

If your view of God has not caused you to be terrified then you have never had the right view of God. If you have never had the right view of God, you have never had the right view

of yourself. If you have never had the right view of God and yourself, then God's grace through Jesus Christ will not be remarkable to you. If God's grace through Jesus Christ is not remarkable to you then you will not be moved be a disciple of Jesus. You will fall away or not grow in grace and peace or become legalistic and judgmental.