

Grace and Peace to You!

Eph 1:2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

In every letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the church he opened with a declaration of the grace of God and peace to those who were in Christ. Too often we just breeze right by this phrase in order to get the “meat” of what Paul wanted to say to us. However, this phrase, “Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” was in a nutshell the meat of what Paul wanted us to understand! When something is repeated in the Bible it shows its importance. This phrase is repeated 16 times in the letters written to the church. This phrase is the **only thing** that is repeated in every letter that Paul wrote to the church! Some I believe look over this because they may think it was just a customary greeting people used in letters. It was customary to wish people good health and peace but notice Paul does not **wish** good health and peace upon those who he is writing to. **He declares**- Grace to you! Peace to you! And **he does not say he declares it**, but says Grace and peace to you **FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**. Paul was writing this in behalf of God. These are God’s words for us. These are the words He wanted to burn into our hearts so He had them repeated **16** times to us! God wants us to know that He is offering us grace. This grace is offered based upon the finished work of His Son on the cross. Jesus fulfilled all of the law of God in His perfect life and died a substitution death to pay for the sins and transgressions that were against God’s holiness. Through Christ God gives righteousness because of what Christ has done. This means that we no longer have to try to do things to get the favor or blessings of God by what we do or refrain from doing. Christ is the fulfillment of the law for us forever. By His one offering he has put away our sins, past, present, and future. We have **NOW** no condemnation. (Romans 8:1) **Now** means **now** my friend! Have you had a bad day? Did you blow it? Well God’s message to you is that there is **NOW – right now-** no condemnation to you! Why? Because Jesus was punished for what you did wrong. God will not punish you for your sins because He has already punished His Son Jesus for them already! He is too righteous and just to punish the same sins twice. Jesus paid it all. Matter of fact He overpaid! The blood of the spotless Lamb of God was a gross overpayment for your sins. It was like paying off a \$5 debt with a million dollars! Christ paid it! God is offering you all His blessings (grace) today based upon the merits of Christ and not yours!

One thing I want you to see is that this declaration of God’s grace and peace upon you dear Christian is found in the **very opening** of each letter **BEFORE** anything else is even said; Before any command; Before any demand to do anything is given to us. Why is this so important? It is because most

Christians feel they must live up to a certain holy standard before God will bless them. They feel that if I blow it then God can't bless me but if I do good enough then God is free to bless me. God's blessings then are dependent upon how good I am. Do you see that this is reverting back to the principle of law? That was how things worked under the law! The law said if you perform good enough you got blessed if you did not live up to your side of things then God will not bless you. Christian, if this is God's plan for you today then why did Jesus come to die? **His sacrifice is made meaningless if you could deserve God's blessings.** No, my friend, God wants to talk to you and the first thing He wants to say and to tell you over and over is- **GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM ME AND MY SON.** This is the declaration of God!

Well Rick, are you saying that God is not interested in me living a holy life and doing good things that honor Him? God forbid! What I am saying is that God blesses you based upon the merits of Christ and not your works. **In Ephesians 1:3 it goes on to say that He has ALREADY blessed you with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Again He declares this before any request for you to do anything for Him or for others. Did He do this because you deserved it? No! He did it because of Christ!** Because you are in union with Christ you share what belongs to Him freely! God loves to shower His blessings upon His Son and Jesus delights in sharing it all with you freely based upon what He did for you on the cross. **Do you know that it is only when we receive this glorious grace of God and peace that we are equipped to live out all the commands God gives us later in each letter. It is actually the grace of God and the blessings of God freely given to us because of Christ's work on the cross that empowers us to live a God honoring life!**

Well brother Rick, it is great that each letter begins with grace but what if I fail to live up to the teachings that come after the grace part. What if I blow it? What if I sin and do not live up to everything a Christian ought to be living out. Does that mean I God is mad at me and will not bless me anymore? Well, my friend, just go to the end of each letter of the New Testament and read the end of them. Read these wonderful words- **grace to you! Not only does each letter start out with grace to you, but they all end that way to!** So, if you fail and sin, God still is there to bless you because Christ blood is still there before the throne of God that shouts to Him- **FORGIVEN! RIGHTEOUS! REDEEMED! HOLY!** Be done with condemnation in your life. There is **NOW** therefore **NO MORE** condemnation to those in Christ Jesus! There is just grace to you and peace from God your Father and your Lord Jesus Christ that empowers you to live a God honoring life full of victory and peace. Grace to you. Amen.

1. Why does God bless us as Christians?
2. Have you been approaching God and the Christian life by the principle of His grace or by the principle of law and how good you try to be?
3. How does an understanding of what Jesus did to pay for our sins help us not live under condemnation and guilt?
4. **Faith Exercise:** What do you need from the Father right now? Instead of looking at yourself and how worthy you are, look in your heart at Christ

and look at how worthy He is. Now boldly ask the Father in the name of Jesus for that thing based upon the worthiness of Christ. (Faith comes alive when your focus is only on Christ and not at yourself or your ability to even believe.)

5. **Confession:** Father I thank you that you are declaring over and over to me your grace and peace. It is not based upon my works or effort but upon Jesus' merit and His work on the cross. I thank you that in Christ you have already blessed me with forgiveness, healing, prosperity, protection, favor, and blessing all because of Jesus. I am so thankful to know that you cover me with your grace. My day begins with your grace and it ends with your grace. The blood has me covered! I love you God!

Rick McFarland