

Parson to Person
1 Corinthians 1 (Part 5)
Grace and Peace

“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 at 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 (1 Corinthians 1:1–3 NKJV).

Grace

There is no end to the many pages and dialog on the definitions of grace. Grace, correctly stated, is unmerited favor. It can be favor granted by one for another but in the biblical context it is unmerited favor with God. Grace cannot be earned or repaid. *“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt [something earned or owed]”* (Romans 4:4). Grace cannot be diminished or enhanced—it is all sufficient. Why? Because grace is a unique manifestation of God. It is an undeniable immutable attribute of His nature. Therefore, one would be forced to suggest that God can be diminished or enhanced if we were to suggest the same of grace. Grace cannot be fortified or supplemented—nor can it suffer any weakening or lessened. Moreover, because Jesus is the image of the one and only invisible God (Colossians 1:15), and that *“in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9), one might correctly suggest that Jesus is the full manifestation of Grace!

Grace in Full Manifestation: Jesus

John wrote about Jesus, with clear definition, at the introduction of his Gospel account.

He wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me."' And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:1–18). Little more needs said!

Grace for Grace

Beyond the definitions of grace, we must examine the active work of grace. Regarding this, John mentioned “grace for grace,” an oft misunderstood or neglected phrase.

The fact that God, the Creator of all things, created us for His own pleasure, “*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13), and, within the scope of His creative acts foreknew all things, foreknew all people, and foreknew all He would redeem—for “*known to God from eternity are all His works*” (Acts 15:18), and therefore knew that man would need His *enabling* grace as the equipping power fitting us for the reception of His *saving* grace. For, “*He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee*” (2 Corinthians 5:5). Therefore, we note that God extended *enabling* grace toward us prior to our reception of His *saving* grace, “*We love him because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). This, I suggest, is the proper meaning of “*grace for grace.*”

I need to say that again—in yet another way. God, in His great love for us, provided us enabling grace, whereby we become the recipients of saving faith, through which we might respond to His saving grace, thereby obtaining the forgiveness of sins, complete redemption, absolute justification, total sanctification, and the climactic glorification every believer, every believer, get this, every believer will receive. Were it not for God’s enabling grace, we would not be the recipients of His saving grace. Were it not for His foreknowledge and predetermined plan, for His own good pleasure, we would not have a desire for salvation, would not have

not been provided the means of salvation, and would therefore by no means be saved. *“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him”* (1 John 4:9). He, *“having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself”* (Ephesians 1:9) has made a way, provided the way, and is the way. This is my friends, “grace for grace.”

Peace

Paul’s introduction to the Corinthians included both the expressions of grace and peace. Herein then we must also note that grace precedes peace, and that peace only comes from God—by grace. Moreover, we might note that men and women seek peace and that the search for peace is often directed toward that which fails to and cannot satisfy. Jesus mentioned this when He said, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you”* (John 14:27a). Therefore, “peace” in its biblical usage must also be defined.

Peace *with* God

Peace with God is the removal of enmity between God and man. It is the elimination of all that has caused enmity with him—namely our sin.

Sin in its earliest form began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2–3) where we learn the history of Lucifer’s rebellion, mankind’s disobedience, sin’s consequence, and the earliest act of redemptive forgiveness. Complete redemption and restoration will follow—when God’s plan comes to its climactic fruition. Therefore,

peace with God is provided through the forgiveness of sin: the removal of the enmity.

Peace with God should be understood as complete and total! The God-bought/God-given justification every believer receives is lacking in nothing—by grace, through grace, as grace! God has provided perfect restoration through the absolute, sufficient, and therefore satisfactory work of Christ. Peace with God does not rest in us, through us, or by us. The peace every believer is granted rests fully in the work of God. However, many believers have come short of fully grasping the peace they have in Him. Many think that God is looking for their shortfalls. They believe that God is anxiously anticipating their slip-ups and will therefore be disappointed, angry, or wrathful toward them. However, they are wrong! God knows all things and has reconciled us completely to Him. He justifies us in spite of us—providing us a position of rest and peace in Him, with Him, and for Him.

When We Are the Problem

We become the problem when we think God is “out to get us,” and therefore miss the fact that He knows all things and knows we have fallen short, knows we will fall short, and has nonetheless provided us a righteousness not our own. *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). *“He is our peace...”* (Ephesians 2:14). We are *“accepted in the beloved”* (Ephesians 1:6). We have peace with God!

Peace *in* God

The believer's peace *in* God must be seen from two separate perspectives. The first is how we see ourselves in Him—having had the enmity removed—and the second is the inner rest we have as we live and walk *in* Him.

As mentioned, Peace *with* God is positional and immutable. Peace *in* God relates to our understanding, maturity, experience and choices. Peace *with* God reflects the fact that God is no longer angry with us—the enmity is gone. Peace *in* God comes as we grow to understanding how we should see ourselves *in* Him—thereby entering into spiritual “rest.”

How We see Ourselves *in* Him

Do you know that you are forgiven? Have you come to rest in Him? Do you worry about your eternal future? Do you worry about a future evaluatory judgment—whereby you fear having your shortcomings exposed? Are you aware of the fact that God has cleansed you from sin—completely? Do you know that God has sealed you for the day of redemption? Do you worry about the day to day journey? Are you anxious and stressed? Do you have peace in the Lord—trusting that He cares for and provides for his own? Think this through: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6–7). Do you believe this passage applies to you? Well, it does—you, we, and every believer! As we grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, we will grow to experience the peace of God (in the inner man) in ways we have yet to fully grasp. This is what the Lord wants for you, wants for me! My

friends, “*in Him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17:28a). We are called to peace *in* God. We are *in* Him and He desires we rest *in* His grace. As we grow, we will come to understand this grace in ever increasing abundance—moment by moment—day by day.

Peace of God: When We Are the Problem—Part 2 (Self-Inflicted Grief of Soul)

Finally, we must give some attention to an instructional attribute of grace. A work that the Lord employs *in* us—as we grow. This is the grace that makes the genuine believer uncomfortable with sin—whereby we forfeit the peace *of* God.

When a believer acts out in rebellion against the will and ways of the Lord, he or she will be grieved from within—by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of God is grieved in you—you are grieved. There is a lack of inner peace. This is a wonderful gift. This grief of soul *is* a manifestation of grace. I call it blessed misery! It is not a lack of peace *with* God, as though He is angry with you or that enmity remains—nor is it a lack of peace *in* God, as though you have become a disappointment to Him and should anticipate rejection. It is a self-inflicted, Holy-Spirit-generated grief of soul leading to repentance.

Be blessed by this misery—if indeed you are experiencing it. It is an evidence of your life *in* God that leads to growth—a greater reflection of the life of Christ in you.

Grace and Peace to you—in Jesus’ name.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul