

November 8
(modified)

Grace, Mercy, and Peace

**Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith:
Grace, mercy, and peace.... (1 Timothy 1:2)**

Grace and Graces No. 8

If you've ever felt like problems were mounting and growing all around you and you didn't have enough strength to make it another step, then I have some very good news for you! Today you're going to discover that God extends a very special measure of mercy to people who feel like they are being swamped by the affairs of life. Stay with me, because what you're about to read is exactly what you need to start your day!

In all of the apostle Paul's epistles, he begins by greeting his readers with "grace" and "peace." The exact wording from letter to letter may vary, but each of these epistles begin with some variation of a greeting that involves the words "grace" and "peace." (See Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; and Philemon 1:3).

Why did Paul so often use these two words in his greetings when he wrote his epistles? The answer is very simple. Because he was an apostle to the Gentiles or the Greek-speaking world, it was necessary for him to greet his foremost readers in a customary Greek manner. During New Testament times, the salutation of "grace" was the customary greeting exchanged between Greeks when they approached each other. Just as we would say, "Hello, how are you doing?" as a polite way of greeting someone we meet, the Greeks would say, "Grace!" when greeting one another.

This word “grace” is the Greek word *charis*, which means *grace* but also carries the idea of *favor*. So when a person greeted someone with this salutation, it was the equivalent of his saying, “I greet you with grace and favor.”

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But Paul wasn’t only addressing the Greek world. As a Jew himself, he also wanted to greet the Jewish world that would be reading his epistles. When the Jews met each other, their customary way of greeting one another was to say, “Shalom!” In fact, this is still the customary greeting exchanged between Jews in Israel today. The Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word *shalom* is the word *eirene*, which is the word for *peace*.

By using both of these two greetings at the beginning of his epistles, Paul brilliantly reached out and embraced both the Greek and the Jewish world at the outset of his writings. One scholar has said that by using both the terms “grace” and “peace,” the doors were thrown open for the whole world to read his letters. It is obvious that Paul deliberately addressed those letters to both the Gentile and Jewish world.

Because of the meaning of the words *charis* and *eirene* and how these words were used as a form of greeting, it is as though Paul was saying:

“To those of you who are Greeks, I greet you with grace and favor, and to those of you who are Jews, I greet you with peace and shalom.”

When Paul wrote the books of First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus, he inserted the word “mercy” between the words “grace” and “peace” in his greeting, making the salutation read “grace, *mercy*, and peace from God our Father.” In all three of these epistles, he was not writing to an entire congregation; rather, these letters were private letters intended to be read only by Timothy and Titus.

Why did Paul alter his traditional greeting to include the word “mercy” when he wrote these personal letters? Well, in all three of these letters, Paul was writing to someone in the ministry who felt overwhelmed by the affairs of life. For instance, when he wrote his first letter to Timothy (the book of First Timothy), Timothy was feeling overwhelmed by the phenomenal growth in the church under his care. Such growth is every pastor’s dream; however, Timothy was young, and he was pastoring what had become the world’s largest church. This was therefore a very challenging time in Timothy’s life.

Timothy was feeling so challenged that he apparently wrote a letter to Paul, asking him for advice on how to choose leaders for his fast-growing congregation. As the young minister faced this daunting task, he needed to be reminded that there was special “mercy” available to help him in his time of need. Thus, when Paul wrote to Timothy, he inserted the word “mercy” between the traditional greeting of “grace” and “peace.” He said, “Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, *mercy*, and peace...” (1 Timothy 1:2).

Several years after Paul wrote that first letter to Timothy, the political environment in the Roman Empire radically changed and public opinion turned violently against believers. Just as the Church had grown quickly before this change occurred, it now began to quickly diminish as believers were captured, imprisoned, enslaved, and killed. Many believers also defected from the Christian faith and went back to their old pagan temples in order to comply with the wishes of the government and to save themselves from death.

The tragedy occurring inside Timothy’s church was devastating. The size of his prized congregation was declining daily right before his eyes. His heart was broken as he watched leaders defecting and going back to their old ways in order to escape death — trusted team members who Timothy had thought would be faithful to the very end.

Apparently Timothy had written a letter to Paul, expressing his fears and hurts about the crisis he faced, so Paul wrote him back. That second letter to Timothy (the book of Second Timothy) is Paul’s response to Timothy and to the predicament that surrounded the younger minister on every side. Writing Timothy to encourage him to be strong in the Lord, Paul began his second letter by once more inserting the word “mercy” between the words “grace” and peace.” He said, “To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, *mercy*, and peace...” (2 Timothy 1:2).

The third time Paul inserted the word “mercy” between his traditional greetings of “grace” and “peace” was in his letter to Titus. As with Timothy, Titus found himself in a very difficult circumstance. After Paul started the church on the island of Crete, he left before the church was completely established and before leaders were firmly set in place. Paul left Titus to finish the job he didn’t complete in Crete, instructing him to make the final selection of church leaders and then to establish them in their positions.

The people who lived on Crete at that time were famous for being lazy gluttons and liars. They were a devious, mischievous people who were very difficult to trust. Even more, Crete was known to be a repository for criminals and barbaric-like people. Paul wrote to Titus and told him, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting...” (Titus 1:5). This would have been a monstrous task for even the most seasoned leader, and it loomed before Titus as a huge and daunting assignment.

The circumstances Titus faced were so immense that when Paul wrote to him, he said, “To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, *mercy*, and peace...” (Titus 1:4). It wasn’t enough for Titus to hear about grace and peace — he also needed to be reminded that there was special mercy available to help him in his situation.

In all three of these cases, the readers were facing serious situations and needed to be reminded that God’s mercy was extended to help them bravely face and overcome their challenges. You may need to be reminded of the same thing today. If you are facing a situation that would normally be devastating or overwhelming to you,

grab hold of this good news: God has made a special measure of His “mercy” available to you! Don’t try to face the ordeal in your own strength until you end up feeling swamped and overwhelmed; instead, realize that God’s mercy is available to meet you right where you are. If you’ll open your heart to receive from God, He will tuck a special measure of mercy between the grace and peace He is offering you today. *So why don’t you allow God’s mercy to assist you with the challenges you are facing at this very moment?*

Taken from Rick Renner’s Sparkling Gems From The Greek

Sermon of 09/25/11 at Joy Christian Center, Oxford, N. C. 27565-1980 www.PastorBruce.org

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Questions For You To Consider

1. Can you think of a time when you were suddenly invigorated by a supernatural flow of divine mercy that surged into you and gave you the strength and courage you needed to face and overcome a difficult situation?
2. When you became aware of that special mercy, how did it affect both your attitude and the situation you were facing?
3. If you are specially challenged by a situation in your life right now, why not take a few minutes today to ask God to give you a special measure of mercy to help?

My Prayer for Today

Lord, I thank You for making special mercy available to help me in times of struggle and hardship. I admit that I often try to handle all my challenges on my own, but I know it is impossible for me to overcome my obstacles without the help of Your mercy. So today I am opening my heart and asking You to extend a special measure of mercy to assist me through this challenging time in my life. I thank You in advance for pouring this mercy upon me, and by faith, I receive it right now. I pray this in Jesus' name!

My Confession for Today

I confess that God's mercy is working in me! God promises mercy to me, and I receive it by faith. That mercy empowers me to overcome my negative emotions, my struggles, and all the obstacles the devil has tried to set before me. Because God's mercy is working in me, I am well able to rise above the struggles I face and to overcome them victoriously!

I declare this by faith in Jesus' name!

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