

Romans
Message Ten
Grace and Peace 01
Rom 1:1-7

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to
the flesh;
4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the
resurrection from the dead:
5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all
nations, for his name:
6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God
our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

Introduction:

Today I want to look at the greeting which is recorded in v.7, “Grace to you and peace...” Many may know that the standard Jewish greeting in the First Century was, as it had been for many hundreds of years, “Shalom,” which is the Hebrew word for “peace.” In that greeting was contained many associated ideas and a great long history. The nation had fought a long war for the opportunity to possess the land which God had promised to Abraham, so ‘peace’ was a hard won commodity which was challenged many times over their history. This was also the word which would be proclaimed each year on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would appear from within the recessed of the Temple to declare that the Lord had accepted the offering for the sins of the nation and an official state of peace was recognized as exiting between the nation and her God. It was also an acknowledgment of the brotherhood of the nation and the fact that they all stood together in peace with one another, committed to the survival of Israel.

But when we come to the New Testament the greeting took on another dimension. This was the greeting with which Jesus addressed the 11 after His resurrection.

Luke 24:36

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. KJV

This, of course, signified the reality of which the Days of Atonement had only been a symbol and a peace that was real established between the Living God and His people, not just a formal and symbolic peace accomplished by the sacrifice of an animal.

But it seems that as Christianity began to develop and expand the greeting between Christians became “Grace and Peace,” that which Paul used in almost all of his epistles. It was also used by Peter and by John as our scriptures show us.

The only variation that we find is in the two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus in which Paul

added something to the greeting, “grace, mercy and peace...”

Our questions this morning is whether this greeting is just that, a polite wish for the audience of the letter, or was it a reference to some spiritual reality, something important that Paul would have his readers contemplate and grow in their understanding? Does it have real meaning? Does it express some sincere desire? If so, what? What does he mean by these words ‘grace’ and ‘peace’?

At the outset here I want you to know that I object to the notions that Paul, or any of the writers of scripture, ever used words carelessly or mindlessly. Parchment and ink, time and energy, were far too precious for that. His words, all of them, were carefully considered and wisely used.

Therefore, we are forced to conclude that Grace and Peace were real concepts and as such they expressed his yearning and sincere desires for all of the saints.

If we are going to take this position then we are forced to define the words and make some sense of this greeting of Paul to all of those to whom he wrote.

What is ‘Grace’?

For a long time now I have been seeking to demonstrate that ‘Grace’ does not mean what many have defined it to mean.

Typically, ‘Grace’ is explained as ‘unmerited favor’ but that understanding if applied to the texts where ‘grace’ is found typically does not actually work, it does not create a logical flow and that is true in the text before us.

Paul has just described these people as the recipients of incredible ‘favor’ from God. They have received apostleship, the ministry of the apostles in their world and in their churches, they have been called by God as belonging to Jesus Christ, they are beloved of God, and they have been called to be holy people. Of course, all of this ‘favor’ from God is unmerited as Paul will prove in the next three chapters of this book.

Thus, it does not follow that he would then desire for them some unspecified and unmerited ‘favor’ (Grace). That would be an empty use of the word and almost meaningless to anyone seeking to understand what he was saying.

People in our day with the sort of understandings that Modern Christianity (so-called) teaches might be tempted to think that these people at Rome, having received so very much, were not in need of anything else. What many are teaching today is that what such people need is to act on what they have already received and give up any notion of receiving more from God.

Think about this for a minute. Jesus Christ was the very epitome of all those things Paul had just affirmed concerning the Romans: sent, called, beloved and holy. There was not one iota of lack in Him concerning any of those things. So, please tell me why He would spend all night in

prayer? Why on that last night before His crucifixion did He need an angel to come and give Him additional spiritual enabling?

Luke 22:41-44

- 41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,
42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.
43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. KJV

After being strengthened “He prayed more earnestly.”

Or, do you remember when He sent out the 12?

Matt 10:1

- 1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. KJV

Here He was the one giving the ‘strengthening’ to others. He enabled them to have authority over evil spirits, sickness and disease.

But I want you to observe something that happened later.

Matt 17:14-16

- 14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,
15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.
16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. KJV

After having been enabled and having success against evil spirits they found themselves at a place where this was no longer true. The enabling had not been permanent. Notice what happened next.

Matt 17:19-21

- 19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?
20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.
21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. KJV

Unbelief and a lack of prayer and fasting had left them without the power of God upon them to

face this demon.

We are confronted in both of these accounts with a reality that is obvious in scripture, in the history of the church, and in the lives of those who walk with God.

Mercy - which is Divine and Unmerited Favor, is constant and everlasting.

Grace - which is Divine Enablement for Service, ebbs and flows. It even did in the life of Jesus. Sometimes it is because of slackness on the part of the child of God and sometimes it is simply the way things work naturally.

We notice, however, that Grace ebbs more powerfully and consistently in the direction of those who will fast and pray. Jesus, again, is our Great Example in this matter.

Does anyone doubt that Jesus needed Grace, the enabling of God?

Luke 2:51-52

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. KJV

The word translated 'favour' here is Grace.

So, Paul, by mentioning his desire for God's Grace to be upon the Romans was expressing a very specific need that he saw (and he saw it everywhere) and desired for the Romans to see the need as well so as to pray for it. We are reminded here of the prayers he recorded for Ephesus (2) and Colossi, prayers intended to provoke those churches to pray the same things for themselves.

Here is a stark reality. ***The ENABLING GRACE of GOD is absolutely essential to Faithful Service. It is to be sought by the people of God on a daily basis.***

Without it any child of God may find himself suddenly surrounded by enemies and the power of God gone from him.

Judg 16:20

20 And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. KJV

I can affirm this as true not only from the biblical record but from history and from my own experience. A man may be enabled by God on one day to tear the walls off a city and walk away with them and then on the next day without enabling Grace and under the power of his enemies.

There are many examples we could give.

Do you remember Moses the second time coming to the Rock for water?

Num 20:10-12

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he

- said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?
- 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.
- 12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. KJV

Even Moses, second only to the Lord Jesus as Lawgiver to the people of God, the man who spoke with God face to face, found himself without the Grace of God to obey Him and glorify Him to the people. One of the prices of that was that his life would not be continued, he would not be given the Grace to live and thrive, to bring Israel into the Land of Promise.

His heart had been stirred with anger and impatience. He had not prayed and sought the face of God. Therefore Grace was withheld from him and he failed on that day.

We could think of Israel and Joshua at Ai, that little town just beyond the great walled city of Jericho. They became presumptuous and someone in the camp violated the express command of God and grace was kept back from them to gain the victory.

36 men died, the army of Israel was routed, and the God of Israel was mocked. No one sought God's face to get His enablement for the day else He would have revealed the folly of going to battle with sin in the camp.

It is a horrible thing to face the battle of any day without the Grace of God active in one's life. Defeat is the one and only possibility.

Problem is, we have institutionalized, normalized, and embrace defeat. We have redefined it to be victory but it is not.

There is a saying circulating around on the internet attributed to Abraham Lincoln. It goes like this, "how many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four, calling the tail a leg does not make it one." Likewise, calling defeat victory does not make it be so.

God does give grace, enablement, to His people.

Rom 12:3-8

- 3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
- 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:
- 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.
- 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
- 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

- 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. KJV

The word 'gifts' here is a form of the word 'grace,' which Paul also uses. Grace 'Karis' and gift is 'Karismata'. These are obviously specific enablings of God yet they only function as one seeks God and abides faithful in service to Him. It is beyond imagination to think that God would continue to enable a rebellious child to perform in His power. Notice that Paul taught careful faithfulness to those whom God had gifted in special ways. The principle remains.

Here is a passage which affirms this very thing.

1 Cor 3:10-15

- 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.
- 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
- 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.
- 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
- 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. KJV

Paul had built a foundation for the church and he had done it by the enabling of God, "according to the grace of God which is given to me." Those who follow him were warned that failing of the grace of God and laboring in their own energy they would produce nothing worthy of eternity. Even if they did not fail of Mercy and would still be saved, they could still fail of Grace and see all their efforts burned to ashes at the Great Judgment.

1 Cor 15:10

- 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and ***his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all:*** yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. KJV

Paul outstripped all of the other apostles by the ability which God bestowed upon him. He took credit for nothing because he knew that it was not his efforts but the gift of God that had prospered.

2 Cor 1:12

- 12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but ***by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*** KJV

Finally, I would have you notice one more passage.

2 Cor 8:1-4

- 1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
- 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.
- 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;
- 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. KJV

I have told this story many times but please notice it once again. The churches of Macedonia gave beyond their ability for the support of the saints in Judea. But the basis and the motivation of the giving was the outpoured Grace of God upon them. God prompted and enabled them to do more than anyone thought they could. This is the Grace of God.

It is often said in the ignorant 'Christian' world in which we live, "God will never give you more than you can handle." This is an absolute lie. God will always give you more than you can handle, expecting that you will seek Him for the enabling, the Grace, to be able to do more than you could ever imagine on your own.

For example,

1 Peter 1:15-16

- 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
- 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. KJV

Paul has just told the Romans that they were called to be holy. But the calling itself does not enable you to be holy, nor does the New Birth, nor does the Bible, nor does the Church, nor does your own self-discipline. The only thing that can enable you to be holy, to be a saint, to do that which countless episodes in your life has proven impossible, is the Grace of God.

You cannot even honestly utter the first few words of the Model Prayer unless God does something profound for you and in you.

Hallowed by Thy Name
Thy Kingdom Come
Thy Will be Done

In an of yourself you can no more hallow the name of God, hold it as holy in your mind and in your heart in the way that He would have you do it than you can sprout wings and fly home after the service. You must have the enabling grace of God even to pray this simply prayer..... rightly.

You cannot:

- Be faithful
- Be wise
- Be godly (in sincerity and truth, not in appearance)
- Truly Love

Understand God's Word (rightly)
Obey God's Word
Bear True Witness to the Gospel
etc., etc.

Unless God enables you, gives you Grace.

And, even the largest packages Hie gives all have a 24 hour expiration... "Give us this *day* our *daily bread*..."

How desperate we ought to be for that grace but we have been sold a "bill of goods," the idea and opinion that we do not really need a daily infusion of grace or that somehow it automatically comes to us. Many think that God has given us a perpetual and automatic supply of Grace at our conversion, that it is all we need and we should not seek more.

Yet our opinion of that has not manifested itself to be true. In past years, saints who knew they needed the enabling of God prayed and fasted in search of it and did so faithfully. The record of history is that God answered them and poured out His Spirit in marvelous ways that our day has never seen.

Listen to the great prayer of Paul for the Ephesians.

Eph 1:15-20

- 15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,
16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;
17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:
18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, KJV

Here is a prayer that believing people, who had already received more empowering of the Holy Spirit that any in our generation have ever known, would receive an even greater and grander visit from Him which would infuse them with ability and enabling to know in practical terms the great working of God toward and in His people.

The Hope of His Calling

The Riches of their Inheritance

The incredible enormity of His power toward those who believe

He was praying for them to have even more Grace than they had known and he was telling them what he was praying so that they would pray the same for themselves.

Remember where the missionary endeavors of Paul began?

Acts 13:1-2

- 1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. KJV

Even though called by God to be His minister to the Gentiles, he did not go until he was specifically enabled by God. Our generations have made the error in concluding that the call is the enabling in spite of the fact we have seen much evidence to the contrary.

One great obstacle to seeking and obtaining God's Grace is that the process exposes our profound weakness and neediness, a reality that is terribly uncomfortable for us and we have been trained to think that we should never be uncomfortable. We have been trained to believe in our own self-sufficiency, which itself is a terrible delusion.

Consider again the note that Jesus dictated to the pastor of the church of Laodicea near the end of the First Century.

Rev 3:14-18

- 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;
- 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
- 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
- 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
- 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. KJV

Even though he was a believer and a special servant of God, he was in serious trouble because he had lost the ability to see his own need.

Rev 1:16

- 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. KJV

Rev 1:20

- 20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. KJV

He was held in Jesus' hand, a symbol of ownership as well as protection and provision. But, he had a mis-shapen sense of himself, especially when it came to spiritual things. He was much the same as Samson after his haircut, seeing no real spiritual need in himself.

But he was extraordinarily needy, spiritually needy, yet he saw himself as "in need of nothing." Since he was himself that way, how do you suppose his prayer life was going? Much like ours?

There is a rule of spiritual decline that a person's sense of himself gets turned on its head. The worse of he is spiritually the better off he perceives himself to be and the more difficult it is for him to see his true condition.

As I said, seeing ourselves as needy is a painful experience, one that we find distasteful, unpleasant and much to be avoided. Many of us grew up poor but most of us did everything we could so as not to seem poor because we were embarrassed about it.

In the spiritual world, religious poverty is even more difficult to face than physical poverty. People will put themselves through all kinds of spiritual gyrations to avoid facing the truth.

But the seeking of Grace requires a firm grasp of reality, especially concerning ourselves.

Notice again how Jesus described the spiritual state of the pastor at Laodicea, "thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked..." Let us just take the word "wretched." Look how it is used in Rom 7.

Rom 7:24

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? KJV

Paul is speaking of the miserable condition of a believer struggling with the principle of sin in his life.

James used the same word to speak of people seeking God for help.

James 4:7-10

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. KJV

The word here translated 'be afflicted' is our same word translated 'wretched.' "Make yourselves wretched," James said as if to say "confront your own miserable spiritual state, own it, confess it, hate it and turn from it." This is the way of seeking God, of finding His enabling for the tasks that He has assigned us. It begins with an honest self-inventory.

When was the last time you made yourself miserable and wept in seeking God's Grace?

The greatest day of the year for the believing Jew was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It was a greater day than Passover or Pentecost either for it was the day when they celebrated their hope in the sacrifice provided by God to take away their sins. But whereas Passover was celebrated with a feast, this one was done quite differently.

Lev 16:29-31

- 29 And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:
- 30 For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.
- 31 It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. KJV

This afflicting of their souls was apparently a time of fasting and prayer, of seeking after God for forgiveness and restoration concerning their sins. (See Ezra 8:21)

It is in the owning of our true condition that James promised, "God will draw near to you."

So, the way to obtain Grace is to come to grips with how badly we need it, how empty and powerless we are without it, and how miserable (wretched) we will be until we obtain it.

The most essential element of Christianity on the other side of Regeneration is the continual infusion of spiritual ability into the saints by the merciful actions of God.

The prime location for that to happen is in humble prayer before Him in the frame of mind described by James. Apart from that the Laodicean experience awaits every soul.

So, when Paul wrote to the saints, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ..." He intended to remind them of their need of grace and send them to God in prayer for it lest they fail in their service to Him.

This is the missing element in Christianity in our day, the empowering Grace of God. It is that which we need and that which we are duty bound to seek.

Not seeking it may be a comfortable place and stirring ourselves may require much work and effort but I remind you of what Jesus said to the man at Laodicea, "...So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth..." I am not totally sure of all that He meant but I am sure that this is not a good thing.

Let us seek the enabling Grace that God is willing to give to His people.