

“GRACE AND PEACE BE MULTIPLIED TO YOU.”

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Scripture Texts: II Peter 1:1-2

II Peter 1:2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

With the exception of Hebrews and James, every letter in the NT begins with an opening salutation or blessing.

This is not just some old worn out custom or formality, like “Hi, How are ya?” This is not a throwaway line to be rushed past or skipped over on our way to the important stuff. This is not even a kind wish or hope.

These blessings are a genuine prayer addresses to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. These are Spirit-inspired blessings upon the Church of Jesus Christ.

They are an expression of warm affection and love flowing out of the hearts of the apostles for the recipients of these letters. Peter really wants this for these Christians. So much so, in fact, that he doesn't just begin this way but he ends his letter with the same desire.

II Peter 3:18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The apostles have experienced the goodness of God and they want that for all God's people.

The meaning (substance) of grace and peace.

Peter is a pastor writing to Christians, to believers in churches around the Roman Empire. He is sitting there with pen in hand praying for these congregations and thinking about what to write. What do these saints need? What is most important?

The first thing that comes to mind is grace and peace. When you wish someone grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, you have wished them the best of everything.

Peace is the old covenant word, the Hebrew shalom. Grace is the new covenant word. So the two distinctive blessings of each age are combined and given to the church. This is a blessing for Jews and Gentiles, for all who are in Christ Jesus.

Grace is no mere point of theology with Peter, it's no small or casual thing, not just a formula. I wonder if every time he said or wrote the word his mind went back to that courtyard and that fire and that little servant girl and that rooster.

The turmoil in his soul was unrelenting for days, the guilt, the shame, the betrayal, the feelings of unworthiness. He hated his sin but he had no relief, no peace.

Until Jesus came to Peter and asked him if he loved Him and then restored the broken relationship. Jesus came and extended grace and peace.

He knew his need and he understood the greatness of Christ's forgiveness. He who has been forgiven much loves much. Oh, how Peter loved Jesus, oh, how Peter loved the grace of God.

Grace is the kindness of God shown to someone who doesn't deserve it at all.

Grace is the sign of our Father God's favor or good-will toward us. Picture the father running to the returning prodigal son. This is the great benefit of our faith in Jesus, God's grace poured out to us.

Grace is what makes us family, brothers and sisters, all one before the cross. If it were not for the grace of God there would be no salvation and no Christians and no churches.

He is asking that God's undeserved and unmerited freely given favor and kindness be poured out on them in the form of spiritual blessings in every circumstance of life.

Because of God's grace through what Christ has done on the cross, we can sleep at night, we can face death, we can endure the storms. We have peace.

Peace. Why peace? Well, what does grace lead to? Peace. Cause and effect.

Romans 5:1 Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is peace? There are two aspects, first **peace with God**, being reconciled with our Father in heaven through faith in Jesus at our salvation. There is no peace apart from the grace of God.

The unbeliever cannot be at peace because they are an enemy of God and are in mortal combat against God and His will. He hates God and all the things related to God. Do you have a grudge against God, or have you made peace with God through faith in Jesus?

Only Christ can turn us from enemies to friends, from adversaries to family, children of God.

But peace is not limited to just *peace with God*. There is also *the peace of God*. This peace is an internal peace that rests in and trusts in God, that He is present and in control and we need not fear whatever is happening in life around us, in our own hearts, at home, in the church and community, in the nation and the world.

If in grace He didn't spare His Son for us, then in peace we can trust Him in everything.

Isaiah 26:3-4 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

Are you enjoying the peace of God, freedom from restlessness and anxiety and worry and doubt? The peace of God that surpasses all understanding? Are you experiencing that?

As we grow in grace, we rest more and more in His peace.

Grace and peace sum up all the Gospel blessings. This is the most comprehensive thing you could ask of God for someone. These are the choicest gifts. Our true joy and happiness in this life depend on God's bountiful grace and peace.

Studying this gave me a renewed appreciation for our custom of beginning our worship service with *God's greeting*. The danger with anything we do over and over again is it can become a bit rote or stale. The temptation in this situation is to drop it. The more fruitful thing is to be renewed in our understanding and appreciation of it.

What should we do if our affections for God or our spouse grow cool or stale? Throw off faith or marriage? No, rekindle the fire, throw on fresh logs of understanding, appreciation, speaking truth to counter the lies and deceits of Satan.

But there is more to grace and peace, it is multiplied to you.

The measure (supply), multiplied to you.

I tell couples planning on getting married that this wonderful love you feel for each other right now is not enough to sustain your marriage. If your love doesn't grow, your marriage won't last.

The grace and peace you receive from God at your conversion is not enough to sustain your relationship with God and it isn't enough to keep your love for God growing. I can guarantee whatever you have you need more. None of us has arrived at enough.

Those who are spiritually wise will acknowledge their constant need and present themselves to God as empty vessels needing to be filled. We are utterly and desperately dependent on God's generous supply.

Grace and peace are not just a status or a standing we have with God, grace and peace are also a daily experience. Grace and peace fluctuate, there are seasons in which it ebbs and flows. Sometimes the seas of our lives are calm and sometimes stormy.

This is a prayer that God would pour out greater displays of His generous goodness. And that God would enlarge the feeble capacity of our souls to receive more of His blessings.

My motto of some is good, more is better and too much is just right, definitely applies here.

You can have too much of material things and earthly things and sinful pleasures, but you cannot have too much of spiritual benefits and blessings.

The storehouse of God's grace and peace has an infinite supply. His reservoir never runs out.

II Corinthians 9:8 God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

God is honored and glorified and pleased when we ask for more of what He gives. And it delights God to be generous, to give again and again and more and more.

Eternity will not be long enough for us to plumb the depths or scale the heights of God's grace and peace toward us. They are as infinite and eternal as God Himself.

Our lack is due to the smallness of our requests, not to the miserliness of God.

Jesus once asked a man, "Do you want to be healed?" Some people are complacent and content in their complacency. So it is appropriate for me to ask, "Do you desire more grace and peace?" Or are you satisfied with where you are?

It's a bad sign if we are content with a little grace and a little peace. The soul that doesn't desire to grow and increase in the gifts of God is shrinking and shriveling.

The Christian life is like a river, either you are making headway upstream or you are drifting and losing ground. You are either swimming or floating. How would you

describe your spiritual life in Christ? Which are you? Faith that is not growing is not living faith.

We should be praying for continued and increased expressions of God's grace and blessings. As recipients of God's grace, it is our responsibility to grow in that grace. Pray to this end.

Why do I say pray to that end? Why not work to that end, or strive to that end? Because God is the source and the giver. May *God* multiply grace and peace to you.

The medium (source), through knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

The channel or conduit by which the infinite supply of God's grace and peace get to us is in the knowledge of God.

Peter uses this word knowledge a lot in this letter. He doesn't mean facts or information or data. This is not natural knowledge but spiritual knowledge, experiential knowledge. He doesn't mean just knowledge about God, but knowledge of God through a relationship with Jesus. Only those who truly know Jesus can know the Father.

Did you ever have the experience as a child of receiving a gift that required batteries but there were no batteries and you had to wait to play with it. All you could do is just look at it. To have knowledge of God but no Spirit-transforming experience of God is like that. The form of godliness but no power is not good. Our heads and hearts must be engaged together.

Peter, the Galilean fisherman, knew the Prince of Peace. There is no grace and peace outside of a personal, saving knowledge of God.

Peter connects knowledge of God and Jesus and for good reason. God can only be known through Jesus. Jesus is the only channel through whom we can know God and through whom we can receive all His benefits.

John 14:6-7 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

To know God through Jesus is to have "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4).

What other knowledge or pursuit can you have that gives that kind of fruit or benefit? Everything else we know or pursue or desire or strive after or acquire results in a temporal, time-bound blessing. And all of those will burn up and pass away.

In a world filled with knowledge and where so much knowledge is at our finger tips, the knowledge of God in Jesus is the supreme knowledge, the highest and best, because it results in the greatest blessings.

Why do we ask for so much less? If this is the best blessing you could ask for, how often do you ask for it?

Implications and application.

Grace and peace flow from God to us along the channels of prayer and Scripture and letters like II Peter. This letter is God's grace and peace to us, God's wisdom and knowledge, God's opportunity to grow and learn and draw nearer to God's truth for us.

This letter is Peter's pastor's heart, his desire for grace and peace to be multiplied to us, so he writes to us to further that end and to do what he can to remove any hindrances.

Pray this for your family, pray it for your kids and grandkids, pray it for others, for our nation.

Seek to know God. Come this evening as I dig into what it means to know God.

These words are not magic, and just saying them out loud doesn't make them work or have power. But when they are spoken by faith and heard and received by faith, God honors them. They declare God's favor to those who are in Christ.

Let's come to this letter with high expectations of coming face to face with the living God and let's expect to be changed by Him.

It is my prayer that God's richest blessings of grace and peace and mercy and love and joy will be yours in abundance as we dig into His Word together in this wonderful letter of II Peter.

II Peter 1:2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Prayer: Holy Father, we have tasted your goodness but are ashamed at our lack of desire for more of you. We have wandered in the lowlands long enough; make us desire the heights you have created us for. Make us thirsty for more of you. Father, saturate our souls with the Spirit of Christ and enlarge our capacity to receive the full measure of your love. Give us grace to ask and seek and knock, to press further up and further in for your glory and our greater joy and peace, in the name of Jesus.