

Grace & Peace

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, **2**To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. Colossians 1:1-2



GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE
FROM GOD OUR FATHER.
COLOSSIANS 1:2

Introductions give a sneak peek into how we see ourselves, our audience and the posture of the conversation to come. It plays a role in setting the tone.

Three things can be gleaned from Paul's opening salutation:

1. **Who we are is by the will of God.**

Paul introduces himself as an **apostle of Christ Jesus**, and follows with "**by the will of God.**" Jesus had many observers and followers. He had hundreds of disciples. But a select few were called to be apostles.

Where a disciple is a student learner, or pupil (we are called to be disciples and make disciples!), an apostle was given a unique and set apart calling. The Greek meaning is delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders. Jesus set twelve disciples apart as apostles. These twelve in essence represent what the twelve tribes of Israel were in the Old Testament to this new Kingdom ushered in by Jesus.

Paul begins the letter introducing himself as an apostle. One set apart like the Twelve. **And it is so because of the will of God.** He was a persecutor of the church and found himself blinded by God and face to face with Jesus. God says of Paul, "...he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15

Paul is fully aware that where he is now is ONLY by the will and power and grace of God. In his own strength and understanding, he rejected Jesus and sought to persecute His followers. But by God's will and direction, his life dramatically changed and he intends to spend it telling others of Jesus and the gospel story.

Despite our best and worst efforts, God's will prevails. He created us for a unique purpose with a unique calling too. We can fight it or lean into it. We can miss out on it by trying to go our own headstrong way chasing after other people's callings, or we can join Him in the incredible things He created us to be part of.

2. Grace comes before peace.

Unique to Paul's greetings (and included in all of his letters) are the combination of grace and peace. In this letter, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father." This too sets the tone for the teachings Paul is about to share with them in his letter.

Grace represents the unmerited or unearned favor...in this case the gift freely given by God of Jesus, and by His death and resurrection, replacing all our sins with His righteousness. It is never received by merit for works performed or good behavior. It is a free gift, complete when Jesus breathed His last breath on the cross.

Jesus is the manifestation of God's grace, and grace is the foundation of Christian faith.

Grace precedes peace. The freedom and peace come as a result of recognizing the grace given to us. Without grace, there is no peace. There is only working, striving, trying harder to no avail. An exhausting cycle that never satisfies or saves us.

The **combination of grace and peace is significant** in another way as well. William Barclay writes, "When Paul took and put together these two great words, *grace and peace*, *charis and eirene*, he was doing something very wonderful. He was **taking the normal greeting phrases of two great nations and molding them into one.**"

It is a continuity and recognition of two different cultural greeting norms – Greek (grace) and Hebrew (peace/shalom) – combining into a **new identity**, Christ followers. Today there is still division both inside and outside of the church. But because of grace, we should strive for peace and unity. **Our common identity as one in Christ should transcend our differences.** Both to experience peace and to live out our call to make disciples.

3. We can't do life alone.

It can't be overlooked that Paul mentions being with Timothy. His mentee, adopted son, and brother in this new Christian life. Paul never seeks any glory for himself. **He always points to Jesus, acknowledges others in ministry, and invests in training others.**

And we aren't meant to do life alone either. Life is so very hard. God models community in His very existence – in the Father, Son, Holy Spirit relationship present from the beginning of time. Jesus models community in the hundreds of disciples He taught, the twelve apostles He further invested in, and the small inner circle of three He often took further with Him.

Yes, like Jesus we need quiet, alone time with God. But when it is time to move, **we need community.**

Paul, with Timothy by his side, sets the stage for the truths he is about to share. He does so with the authority from God as an apostle, recognizing God's sovereign will, reminding us of God's grace and the peace that comes from accepting it, while encouraging oneness and unity among believers.



Your Turn...

What were your big takeaways?

Where do you see God's will evident in your life?

Have you experienced God's grace and peace, or are you still stuck on the striving cycle?

Do you have a Timothy on your spiritual journey?