

“Grace and Peace”
Galatians 1:3
(Preached at Trinity, July 15, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen, first century letters, whether Jewish or Greek, usually followed a particular formula consisting of three parts:
The name of the sender; the recipient, and some form of greeting.
 2. But while Paul often followed this formula in a general sense, he was by no means bound to it. For example, Paul uses the distinctly Christian expression, “Grace and Peace.” This greeting would have appeared quite strange to the world—it was never heard of prior to the preaching of the Gospel. These two terms belong to Christianity. They describe God’s work in our life. The words should sound sweet to our ears. They are full of joy.
 3. Commentators sometimes pass over the content of the salutation as simply a formality—like the Dear Sir or to whom it may concern in a modern letter. For Paul, however, the salutation is an important part of the letter. A few weeks ago I pointed out that Paul gives a marvelous statement of the deity of Christ in this salutation. It is hardly a formality.
 4. Paul greets them with grace and peace. Paul uses this expression in every one of his epistles except 1 & 2 Timothy but for Paul it was more than just a formality. Luther said, “These two words, *grace* and *peace*, contain in them the whole sum of Christianity. Grace releases sin, and peace makes the conscience quiet.”
 5. As a pastor, I never want to appear overly repetitive, covering the same themes and concepts over and over. On the other hand, there are many themes and concepts that appear over and over in the Bible. And so, I must preach them over and over. However, as I approach them in my study I will look at them anew each time and hopefully bring before you the fruit of fresh meditation.
While the topics may be the same, it is my prayer that each sermon will be quite different and provide you with fresh meat to feast upon.
And may the Holy Spirit move upon your hearts afresh this morning.
 6. This morning I simply want to lay these two wonderful words before you once again:
Grace and Peace.
- I. First, we must look upon the word *Grace*
- A. Too often we become content with a superficial understanding of the precious truths of Scripture.
 1. When you ask most Christians what is grace, they will quickly respond, “It is God’s unmerited favor.”
 2. And this is certainly true. And we all know how desperately we are in need of God’s grace in every aspect of our lives and the life of our church.
 - a. How dependent we are upon the grace of God. We are nothing without Him; we can do nothing without Him. As Paul told the Athenian philosophers, “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

Our families are protected God's grace. We have the means of providing for them by God's grace. Our daily bread is the constant demonstration of the richness of God's grace.

- b. Your progress in the Gospel is by God's grace. Your growth in holiness and understanding of God's Word is by God's grace.
 - c. It is also true that we need God's grace as a church. Every weakness in our church and every struggle is a reminder of our great need of God's grace. Every new family is from His hand. Every dollar towards our budget is from Him.
- B. But no place is the grace of God demonstrated more than in the salvation of sinners.
1. Human beings were created in the image of God with the wonderful capacity to know Him and fellowship with Him and reflect His holiness.
 2. We were created as free moral agents accountable for obeying God's Law.
 3. Of course we know we did not continue in this condition of holy communion with God. Adam sinned and all of humanity became corrupt. We lost communion with God and came under His just condemnation.
 4. We became corrupt in our hearts and became wholly disposed to sin and unable to approach God properly. We completely lack any ability to do anything about it. We are too much in love with our sin to give any serious contemplation of God.
 5. If God did nothing towards our deliverance every human being would spend eternity in hell and it would be absolutely just.
 6. The most glorious display of God's grace is in the salvation of sinners. So glorious is God's grace in salvation that we often refer to the doctrines surrounding God's plan of redemption as "the doctrines of grace"
- C. All of our salvation is by God's grace
1. God chose to redeem a people from the mass of fallen, sinful humanity. We call this unconditional election because God chose us completely apart from anything foreseen in us that would merit such mercy. It is all of grace.
 2. God the Father sent forth His only begotten Son to deliver His people—this was also by God's grace alone. Who would deserve such a wonderful gift from God—that God would become man?
 3. In due time the Holy Spirit worked in us effectually to receive God's wondrous gift of the Gospel. This is also by God's grace alone. He enabled us to believe imparting faith within our hearts. He enabled us to turn from our sin in repentance and to have our affections turned towards God and to have a desire to love and please Him. This is all by grace.
Ephesians 2:8-9 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."
- D. The *Cause* of anyone believing is the *will* of God
1. Many hate to hear this because it puts God firmly on the throne and puts us at the mercy of His grace.

2. This is the plain teaching of Scripture
John 6:44 – “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”
John 6:65 – “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

II. Then our attention is turned to *Peace*

Christian peace is the harmony that comes from our reconciliation with God

Romans 5:1 – “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

- A. The lost man is born into the worst of all conflicts – he is at war with God
 1. When Adam and Eve sinned God became their enemy. They despised His presence. They hid from Him. They feared Him. They mistrusted Him.
 2. They became alienated from God and His blessings
Ephesians 4:17-19 NAU - "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."
 3. Instead of being at peace with God they were in a constant state of war
 This became the condition of all humanity. The lost person is in a state of great conflict with God; he hates God; he wishes God did not exist.
 - a. The lost man delights in keeping God at bay
 Evolution, keeping God out of the public arena
 - b. This is why all false religions try to reinvent God –
 Because the one true God condemns them
 The lost man hates true Christianity
 - c. He will often pretend to be religious while perverting God’s standard
 4. As the enemies of God we fight to establish our own throne – our own dominion. We love our sin but, inwardly fear. We are filled with terror.
- B. Our consciences continually condemn us
 1. God has written His Law upon the hearts of all men and no one has been able to keep it. The Law continually exclaims, “Guilty, Guilty, Guilty!”
 2. The lost man is restless
 He worries, he is filled with fears and anxieties. He is disturbed, troubled. There is much unhappiness. He is seldom content.
 3. It is often very subtle. The lost man has this inner conflict but doesn’t understand why it is so. He loves to sin but something inside tells him it’s wrong to do so.
 4. Many vainly seek good works in an effort to silence the conscience and find peace but when have we done enough? They lie writhing on their death beds without confidence as their consciences continue to scream, “Guilty!”

5. The works of the Law cannot silence our conscience and cannot make us right before God.

Galatians 2:16 NAS - "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

6. Desperately in search of peace, the lost man can find no peace, in spite of his best efforts.

Jeremiah 6:13-14 NAU - "For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely. ¹⁴ "They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace."

Isaiah 57:20-21 NAU - "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud. ²¹ "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

- C. When God saves us we are reconciled to Him and brought into a state of peace
1. We are brought back into a right relationship with Him. God no longer looks upon us as an enemy. We are no longer under His wrath.
 2. We are granted to come into His presence – to enter into His dwelling place
 3. The redeemed man has found true peace
 - a. Peace is more than just the absence of hostility
That is the classical Greek understanding.
 - b. For the Christian peace goes beyond this. Peace for us carries the Hebrew concept of Shalom – it means the presence of God’s full and rich blessing
- D. The Christian has found rest for his soul. His conscience is at peace
1. Though our consciences are still troubled by sin, the Christian has peace in his conscience
 2. This comes by grace. We know it is well with our soul.
Jesus has paid the price for our sin. We have an absolute confidence in the efficiency of the blood of Christ.
*"My sin – Oh, the bliss of this glorious tho't
My sin not in part but the whole
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Oh my soul."*
 3. We are resolved that God will do what He said. All who trust in this sacrifice shall be saved.
- E. And the Christian can know peace in death
The righteous will find peace in death
Isaiah 57:2 – "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one walking in his uprightness.*"
Psalms 116:15 – "Precious in the sight of the LORD *is the death of his saints.*"
1. God’s saints can find peace in death – to be present with our Lord
 2. We have a blessed hope – a wonderful peace

Conclusion:

1. Have you experienced God's grace whereby you have trusted in the merits of Christ and have turned from your sin to follow Him? And do you know the peace that can only come through Him.
2. Where can you find such a peace?
Galatians 1:3-5 NAU - "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen."
3. This is the Gospel. Peace can only be found in Christ. Only Christ can bring lasting, eternal peace.
4. Without peace there can be no happiness, no joy. With peace there can be happiness in whatever else the situation might be.
Do you ever tire of hearing this? Does it fill your heart with infinite gratitude?
5. This peace can be yours. Look to Christ.