

Grace & Peace

Lenten Devotions 2024

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Note: Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the English Standard Version.

Ash Wednesday, February 14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:1-2

Grace, Mercy, and Peace

As a child, I learned in my Lutheran day school that mercy is not getting what you deserve (eternal death) and that grace is getting what you don't deserve (forgiveness and eternal life). How true that is, and how grateful it makes us for the gift of grace!

The heart of the apostle Paul must have been full of such gratitude because he was always reminding the early Christians of God's grace. He began most of his letters by saying, "Grace to you and peace." When he wrote to Timothy, he said, "Grace, mercy, and peace."

In these troubling times, wouldn't you love for someone to say that to you? Wouldn't you love to be reassured that grace, mercy, and peace can be yours?

As we begin our Lenten journey, we can start with confidence that it is so. Grace, mercy, and peace are ours. Because of what Jesus has done for us, we don't get what we deserve, instead we get what we most decidedly do not deserve: total forgiveness, a robe of righteousness, all our sin and shame and guilt gone forever!

Let the wonder of this sink deep into your heart today.

"By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God." Romans 5:1

Dear Jesus, Thank You for the grace and peace that You pour into my life. Amen.

Thursday, February 15

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:3

Every Spiritual Blessing

Did you ever love someone so much you wanted to give them a special gift... and then give them something more... and then even more? That is what Paul is describing here. Not only has God given us grace, mercy, and peace (enough to keep our hearts rejoicing forever), He also has given us *every spiritual blessing*.

What might some of these blessings be? As we continue through the book of Ephesians, we will see many. Now, at the beginning of our Lenten journey, we can start a list.

We have been blessed with:

- Redemption and adoption as God's sons and daughters
- Lavish grace and forgiveness
- Eyes and hearts enlightened to know our Savior
- His great power working in us
- A heavenly inheritance guaranteed by the Holy Spirit
- A sure and certain hope

What a generous and loving heavenly Father we have! He pours all this out on us who, by faith, are in Christ. That is the key. These blessings do not come through our own merit. They cannot be earned or deserved. They are a gift, a free gift. They come to us in Christ.

Right now, would be a good time to pause for a moment, to reflect on the spiritual blessings we've begun to list as well as others that come to your mind. Offer a prayer of thanks to the One who loves you enough to bless you in such an amazing way!

Dear Father, Thank You for these blessings...

Friday, February 16

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Ephesians 1:4

Chosen By Grace

I don't understand it. I can't wrap my head around it. I could never explain it. But somehow it is true.

Before anything existed, before even time began, our God was there—majestic, resplendent in glory, enjoying fellowship as three persons within the divine Trinity. And before God created the world we now see, before He created plants and animals, birds, and sea creatures, before He breathed life into man and woman, He planned our redemption!

He knew in advance that the human beings He made and loved so dearly would rebel against Him. He knew we would turn our backs on Him and foolishly follow gods of our own making. But rather than this dissuading Him from creating humans in the first place, He decided how He would remedy the situation: *“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world”* (Ephesians 1:4a).

My friend, you have been chosen by grace! Way, way, way before you were born, God birthed a plan to redeem you through the sacrifice of His Son. Is it hard to understand, to comprehend, to explain? Yes. But you can believe it, because what began in the mind of God actually happened at a fixed point in history. *“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons”* (Galatians 4:4-5).

What you may not be able to fathom, you can believe. Simply put your trust in Him, the Savior of your soul.

Precious Savior, Thank You for grace that I can't even understand but can receive by faith in You. Amen.