

IV. Romans in Biblical Perspective  
*The Gospel of God*  
“The Benediction”  
Romans 1:7  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
January 31, 2021 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is our fourth study in the book of Romans and will be leaving the first seven verses after this study. We will focus specifically on Romans 1:7 in this study.

Romans 1:1–7 says [1] *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2] which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [4] and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, [6] including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, [7] **To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There are two words I want you to think about from Romans 1:7 for a minute – grace and peace. You are probably aware of their repetition in Scripture. These are two words that the Apostle Paul invariably, relentlessly and continues to use in the opening statements of his 13 epistles. Intentional repetition and unimaginable repetition are usually there for a reason and that reason is importance. Unfortunately, repetition can actually have an opposite effect. Sometimes when we keep hearing and seeing something in the same place we start to skip over it.

I was truly astonished that many of the preachers and commentators that I studied over these past months in preparation for this study just skip over this part or they will say that ‘grace and peace’ is Paul’s usual greeting and stop at that. Maybe we need to be asking ourselves, why is it Paul’s usual greeting. Perhaps that repetition in all 13 epistles is not there as a mindless act of repetition, but it’s there for a specific, crucial reason that we must not miss. I don’t see it as Paul just needing some filler here.

This is what is known as a salutation, a greeting from the Apostle Paul. I would suggest that this is much more than a Pauline greeting and salutation. For I think it is a repetitive distillation of theological brilliance communicating to God’s people the foundation stone and capstone of the Gospel of God blessings. When this is understood it will be life-changing and transforming. One person rightly said due to its be rather challenging, ‘ubiquity of these words many times evaporates the gravitas of them.’ Basically this person is saying that when you start repeating many times people just dismiss it instead of focusing upon it.

That is a challenge for every pastor because we don’t want God’s Word to be a pretext when we preach a text but we have learned if you don’t take the text in its context, it always becomes a pretext. In other words, when you rightly divide the Word you have to put it in its context. So when you’re preaching systematically through a text of Scripture and put it in its context, you of necessity have to tell everyone what you previously said in the first couple of sermons because you want it to have its context. Yet people get rapidly bored of repetition.

The Apostle Paul not only doesn't try to hide this repetition but he makes us grapple with it. Why is that he keeps saying in every epistle 'grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'? I believe it's more than a salutation, a greeting and more than Paul at work here. I believe it is a summation of the essential two-fold blessings of the Gospel of God that Paul is going to expound on in the rest of the book of Romans – grace and peace. I want to give you three thoughts around this.

The first Gospel of God blessing number one is grace – grace to you. What is grace? The Greek word for grace is *charis*. Its antecedent, what introduces it from the Old Testament, is a word *hesed*. It actually means, God's unending, unfailing covenant love and mercy. The word for grace in Romans 1:7 is the Greek word – *charis*. Let's get beyond the etymology and look at the theology. When I use the term Gospel people usually think of Good News. The reason the Gospel is Good News is because there is a backdrop/narrative called the bad news.

To expound on this here are three words I want you to think about – justice, mercy and grace. I want to give you some good ole blue collar definitions for these three words. The Biblical concept of justice is when God gives you what you deserve. Mercy is when God withholds from you what you deserve. Grace is when God gives you what you don't deserve. Those three need to be understood redemptively and in terms of salvation to be able to understand the Gospel and for us to understand grace and peace and how they are put together for us.

In terms of justice I want to bring to your attention some verses. Romans 3:23 says *[23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. We all sin because we're sinners. We are all born sinners, with a bad heart and a bad record. What does sin deserve in terms of justice? Romans 6:23 says *[23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. There are three kinds of death – physical (separation of the soul from the body), spiritual (separation of the sinner from God because God cannot fellowship with sin so it breaks our relationship with Him), and eternal (separate from God in a place called hell). So sin brings physical death, spiritual death and the unendurable yet endured forever with no hope eternal deaths of the torments of hell in which the righteous judgment of God comes upon the impenitent sinner. I love you too much not to tell you that we are all born sinners with a one way ticket to hell and I praise God for those who told me.

We're also helpless and can't save ourselves because we're dead in our sins. We're also hopeless because man-made religion can't save us, no matter how sincere it is. And we are under the righteous judgment of God – justice. Is there any way when obviously there is no way that a holy God can be holy and just and save us from our sins? Our God because of His love and grace, not simply found a way, but made a way and that way is His Son, Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).

My favorite word in the Bible is the word but. Going back to Romans 6:23 which says *[23] For the wages of sin is death (that's justice), but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. I thank God every day that there is not a period after the word death in that verse and for what comes next. The free gift of God is God having grace and mercy. I Peter 1:3 says *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Here is the but, John 3:16 says *[16] For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*. I praise God that when the message of His justice came and showed me I was helpless, hopeless and headed to the eternal hell with no hope and no help, and even though I didn't seek salvation there

was a God who chose out of His own love and grace to save sinners.

I Timothy 1:15–16 says *[15] The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. [16] But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.* He did this because of the love of God and the grace of God. God's grace sent His Son out of God's love and then His Son gave Himself out His love for us. Romans 5:8 says *[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* God the Father, by God the Son, through God the Spirit saves us out of God's love for us.

So when I was helpless, hopeless, headed to a Christ less eternity and in my arrogance I engaged by idolatry in rebellion against God and if I had anything to do with God I invent a god in my own image where the purpose of god is to help me and my sin, instead of bring me salvation from my sin. Yet God loved sinners. This God who does not need any of us loved us and then we who didn't love Him but needed Him, this God gave His Son. In other words, God withheld the judgment for our sins in mercy on us and placed it on His Son who came to take our place. With His death He paid for our sins and removed them. No charges against God's elect. No condemnation for we have been set free from sin's guilt and shame through the death of Christ and that's not all.

The One who gives me a benediction became a malediction in my place. "My God, My God why has Thou forsaken me" – it is because He became you and me. He took our sins – thought, word and deed – on Himself and paid for all of them with His atoning death. Then we, whom He has saved from hell, He gives us His righteousness so we are accepted in the beloved as we are now on our way to heaven. In mercy God withheld from us what we do deserve for He placed it upon His Son and His Son took our place. Now this resurrected Son who triumphed in the salvation of His people gives us what we don't deserve – peace with God.

I love grace as I think of Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. Another thing I love from that song is – Your grace taught my heart to fear and then my fears relieved. I'm helpless but I have a helper. Psalm 121:1–2 says *[1] I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? [2] My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* In fact, my help is the Lord, Savior and King. I have a hope and my hope comes from the Lord. More than that, my hope is the Lord. We who were helpless and hopeless under God's justice because of God's mercy and then the gift of His Son by grace who secures our salvation, we now have help and hope and that is Jesus.

I praise God for His grace for His grace showed me and exposed to me my sin, my precarious position, where I hung over the very vacuums of eternity and the judgment seat of God, yet His Son goes to the cross and takes the judgement, the sins of all of His people, upon Himself for all of eternity so that we can be saved by His grace. Not only does grace expose us in our sin, sinfulness and precarious position as sinners but it exalts the Answer, and that is Jesus. The biggest decision you will ever make in your life is right now. The most documented reality in the world is that we are sinners, sin has consequences and God warns you of the consequences to come. God says 'I've sent My Son and if you will come to Him who came for you, you can be saved to eternal life.' Will you come to Him?

In God's grace our fears our relieved because there is a Divine exchange. God's grace comes from His love. I hear people say that God gives us unconditional love yet I do not believe that. I believe the Bible teaches God's love whereby He graciously saves people is an unmerited

love, an unsolved love, a triumphant love, a relentless love, an unstoppable love and an undeserved love. The reason it is an unsaving love is because God met the conditions. If God could love me unconditionally then tell me what Jesus is doing on the cross. It's at the cross that the grace of God, the love of God, met the holiness and justice of God and kissed in Jesus to save us from our sins by the grace of God to the glory of God. This is why Paul says 'I preach Christ and Him crucified.'

The second Gospel blessing is peace and the Greek word for peace is *eirini*. If we would have lived back in the Old Testament we would have encountered this all the time – pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Every assembling of God's people the priest would stand and quote from Numbers 6, the Aaronic blessing; The Lord bless you, the Lord keep you, the Lord make His countenance to shine upon you, the Lord be gracious to you and give you peace. In that word peace is also shalom. There would also be a regular greeting of peace, the greeting of shalom – shalom aleichem, peace be upon you.

We see this aspiration, this desire for we know there is something wrong between us and God. We need peace with God, the peace of God so now we get to the New Covenant and the greeting is not peace, but the greeting is grace that assures peace. John 14:27 says [27] *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* The world will keep saying 'peace, peace' when there is no peace. In the world you get tribulation for money, power, manipulation, lying, corruption, sin and all that we are as fallen men and women – none of this will get us that peace, but God by His grace has given us His Son and His grace secured by His Son brings peace. Jesus is the One who gives us peace.

That glorious peace is described for us in John 16:33 which says [33] *I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* That means you get a legal objective peace as a sinner who was wrong with God and now you are right with God. Romans 5:1 says [1] *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* We who were enemies, rebels, in rebellion against God, guilty of cosmic treason, now you have armistice, a peace with God. It's irrevocable and can't be lost. It has been secured by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. It has been affirmed in the resurrection of Christ. He was delivered up for our sins, was raised for our justification and we have peace with God.

We not only have a legal, objective peace with God but you also have a personal, subjective peace of God. So your peace from Christ gives you peace with God and the peace of God. I love Philippians 4:6–7 which says [6] *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* So in this broken world you not only have peace with God but the peace of God if Christ is your peace and Christ is your peace by His grace.

This brings me to the third Gospel blessing – grace and peace. Grace is the foundation and then the capstone that holds it all together is the peace, where Christ is your peace so you have peace with God and the peace of God. You can't have that peace if you're not a trophy of grace, but if you're a trophy of grace you are assured of that peace. That peace will not come in a bottle or on an illicit computer screen or through greed, covetousness or a dissipated life or trying to do better. That peace comes when you come to Jesus by grace for grace brings you to Him who brings you to Himself for that peace.

Ephesians 1:6 says [6] *to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.* Ephesians 2:14 says [14] *For He Himself (Christ) is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility.* I not only have help because Jesus is my Helper. I not only have hope because Jesus is my Hope but I have peace because Jesus is my Peace. He has come to bring me peace with God and the peace of God.

I want to point out something interesting in Romans 1:7 which says [7] *To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* He doesn't say 'to all those in Rome who love God' although they do but he goes to the root of their love for God. They love God because He first loved them. If you are loved by God what is your vocation, your calling, your business? You are called to be saints, set apart for you have been bought to be His possession – saints.

So the next time someone might say to you 'what kind of business do you do?' you can say 'I'm a saint. I'm in saint school.' 'I thought you were a sinner.' 'I am, a sinner saved by grace and that means God has called me as a saint.' I am positionally perfect in Christ and I'm personally growing in Christ. I'm up and down but I'm growing by His grace, by the means of grace unto His glory and that's my calling. That is why Christ's church is so important to me, because He my Savior, who by grace gives me peace, put that church there so I don't drive by it or work it into my schedule. I am a vital part of that church because there He has positioned His means of grace so I stay fixed on Him who is my peace, my help, my hope and He is my life. He is my all. I am His and He is mine and that means of grace whether its preaching, prayer, fellowship or the communion of the saints or whatever it is, keeps setting the nail so that I am fixed on Jesus. I have been called of Him.

I want to take a closer look at the latter part of the two words from Romans 1:7b which says [7b] *Grace to you and peace **from** God **our** Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Grace and peace from...it is not from the world or anyone or anything in the world. Grace and peace come to us from God our Father who came for us when He sent His Son who came with us to save us to be with us so we could have by grace, peace with God and the peace of God. Who gets it? Is the Triune God your Father? Is His Son your Savior and Lord? By grace you have peace, but if not you won't have peace. I can assure you of that. You may get a hardened conscious or be able to work with sin or be able to work all this out off and on but you don't have peace with God or the peace of God and absent by God's grace you don't have that blessing where God's grace shows you that without Him you can do nothing. Then God's grace shows you that you can do all things through Christ by strength. In Christ, is He yours and are you His? That is the very point of that word 'our' Father.

Here is your takeaway from this study. "Grace and peace" is not simply an habitual greeting to Christians from the Apostle Paul; in reality, it's not even from the Apostle Paul. It is a Divine benediction of the Gospel of God declaring the Christ-purchased blessings through the Apostle Paul for His people. In other words, God is giving you this word and He is using Paul as the mouthpiece and Paul can't wait to put it in every letter/epistle he writes – grace and peace. Your foundation is grace, your capstone is grace; the grace of God that you might have peace with God and the peace of God.

In the first century early church when they would get together for worship in celebration of praise to God, they would greet each other with a benediction, like, 'may the Lord be with you' and then a holy kiss. At the end of the service that pastor would go around putting his hand on each attendant and say a Bible verse to give a blessing from God to everyone there. A

benediction is not a prayer. Bene- means benefit, beneficial, good and -dicti means dictation, a word so this was a good word from God that the pastor would give to everyone.

When the churches got bigger than houses the opening salutation or greeting with a benediction the pastor would raise his hands with his palms facing up and then the people would extend the greeting to each other of grace and peace. Then at the end of the service because the pastor didn't have time to go around to everyone, he would give the benediction by raising his hands up with his palms facing the congregation as the congregation would raise their hands with their palms up to receive the benediction, as the benediction was given.

This was a word from God to the people through the pastor and so what I want you to see is that this is not Paul's salutation, but it's God's benediction through Paul's salutation. This is a distillation of the two blessings of the Gospel of God that is the foundation and capstone of your life. The bad news is we are sinners under the malediction of God, but the Good News is, in Christ by grace we have peace and a benediction from God through the Christ-purchased salvation on the cross for us. We are not helpless. We are not hopeless. Christ is our help and our hope, by God's grace and for God's glory and we have the peace of God and peace with God. He taught our heart to fear and then our fears He has relieved.

This is not simply, only a greeting and salutation from Paul but it is a benediction from God through Paul to all who are loved by God the Father and who have come out of that love to Christ. He is yours and you are His. This benediction is your assurance. You can have that assurance today – peace with God and the peace of God. You can be assured that as you go out in the world you are walking into tribulation but you can walk into that world with Christ as your peace and by His grace you come to Him. Praise His Name forever!

I John 1:9 says [9] *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* I John 5:13 says [13] *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.* In the words of the hymn *Blessed Assurance*;

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God  
I'm born of His Spirit and washed in His blood.*

Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. I ask You O God of glory and grace, who gives peace to all who put their trust in Christ that anyone reading this who doesn't know You have now found Your salvation. It's not me or man-made religion or anything else that can save you, but Jesus. By grace Jesus took my justice and now I can have peace. I can turn from my sins and put my trust in Him. You can do that now right where you are. If you need to talk with someone call me/us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to talk and pray with you about this. For those who know Christ, this day don't just walk by this grace and peace for every letter I write now since this has impacted my life, I sign them with 'grace and peace' because I know this is not mere repetition. This is majestic assurance from God that we are saved and we are His. Rejoice and praise God we are no longer in the Old Testament with an aspiration and petition for peace, for we now know in the New Covenant by grace we have peace through Christ, who is our peace, Amen.

Power Point

THE BENEDICTION

- I. Gospel of God Blessing #1 – Grace
- II. Gospel of God Blessing #2 – Peace
- III. Gospel of God Blessing #3 – Grace & Peace

LIFE TAKEAWAY

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