

“GRACE AND PEACE”

Philemon 1-4

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

J. B. Lightfoot introduces his notes on Philemon with “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” (II Cor. 3:17) and “who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?” (II Cor. 11:29). He thus beautifully catches the spirit of this short epistle. Paul has concern for the “weak” brother Philemon who must properly respond to this slavery issue and for the “weak” Onesimus who must return and properly relate to his master. He wants neither to fall into sin but to glorify God. He desires liberty for the slave. Then Lightfoot quotes: Such ever was love’s way: to rise, it stoops.” Paul was a great apostle, but he stoops to deal with such a mundane issue as this one.

This epistle is surrounded by the grace of God—“grace and peace” in v. 3 and “grace” in v. 25. The entire Christian life is about **grace**; and the result of grace in the life of the believer is “peace.” Sometimes we make life too complicated, and we forget what is essential, what really matters, what makes all of the difference. Without the **grace** of God there would be no salvation, no apostles, no Christian workers, no churches, and no Christian master or servant. Without the resulting peace life would be absolutely miserable and not worth living.

YOU MUST EXPERIENCE GOD’S GRACE AND PEACE

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF GRACE AND PEACE

A. Grace is God’s unmerited favor through the completed work of atonement of Jesus Christ, or:

God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. No human merit is involved.

B. Peace is the general blessing and state of well-being resulting for a believer as the outcome of Grace.

1. Peace with God—reconciliation through blood atonement.
2. Inner peace and tranquility through forgiveness and cleansing.
3. Peace with others—reconciliation with other genuine believers.
4. Peace and harmony with even those who are formerly our enemies.

II. THE RECIPIENTS OF GRACE AND PEACE (1-2)

1. Paul—here calling himself a “prisoner” of Jesus Christ Doesn’t use the title “apostle” here.

2. “Prisoner” conveys the following ideas:

- Emphasis upon personal humility of Paul and evidence of suffering for Christ—to touch Philemon’s heart—or even his conscience; every believer is bound to obey Christ.
- “Prisoner” shows Paul’s “pride” of service for Christ—even when chained to a guard—Paul is not Caesar’s prisoner; he is Christ’s prisoner.
- If Paul can handle his difficult circumstances, cannot Philemon handle his problems with his runaway servant?
- Paul also identifies himself with the weak and powerless Onesimus.

3. “Of Jesus Christ can mean the following:

- a. The cause of my imprisonment is the gospel of Jesus Christ—because I am serving Him.
- b. The purpose of my imprisonment is that I might do right and serve Christ.
- c. The ownership of my imprisonment is Jesus Christ.

Christ control every detail of Paul’s imprisonment, and also will determine its outcome; **if He controls the entire universe, he surely has Paul’s circumstances in His control.**

A. Timothy—“our brother” [though also Paul’s “child” in the faith]

1. God’s children through the new birth; therefore brothers.
2. Timothy was with Paul in his work in Ephesus and was well-known to Philemon who likely had met Paul in Ephesus and was saved there.

B. Philemon

Philemon was a man of some means, for he not only hosted a church in his home, he was “a patron to others” (vv. 5-7), had a servant Onesimus [and likely numerous others as indicated by the house church], and also able to entertain guests like Paul (v. 22).

1. “Beloved” [“brother” could be implied]—loved by Paul, by other believers, and of course by God. Such love is reciprocated by Philemon as we see in vv. 5, 7.
2. “Fellow-worker”—what an honorable title! [cf. v. 24 for more]

C. Apphia (v. 2)

1. Likely Philemon’s wife—who would have a natural involvement in household matters in regard to servants and an interest in what Paul says in this epistle.
2. She also may have had some important functions in the assembly meeting in their home.

D. Archippus—cf. Col. 4:17

1. Had received a ministry in Colossae and must take heed to it; likely filled in for Epaphras who was currently with Paul (v. 23).
2. Is likely the son of Philemon
3. Is a “co-soldier” with Paul—only elsewhere used of Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:25, minister in Philippi.

E. “The church that meets in your house”

1. The “house church” was not simply his family and servants, but broader like other NT “house-churches.”
2. See Mary’s house—Acts 12:12; Aquila and Priscilla in Rom. 16:3-5—Rome; I Cor. 16:19—Ephesus; Lydia’s house—Acts 16:15, 40; Gaius in Corinth—Rom. 16:23; and Col. 4:15—church in Nympha’s house in Laodicea.
3. The church would have an interest in what happened with Philemon’s servant. It is likely that this letter would have been read before the congregation as well.
4. The corporate nature of Christianity helps explain why this issue is valuable to the church.
5. Such helps explain the continuing place in Scripture and continuing interest in this book.
6. We have no clear evidence of non-house church buildings until the 3rd century A. D.; even then generally former houses were modified and used.

III. THE SOURCE OF GRACE AND PEACE (3)

- A. God our Father [again, note the family relationship]
- B. The Lord Jesus Christ—equally the source along with the Father; indicates His full deity.
 1. Compare II Cor. 12:9—“My grace”
 2. See Jn. 14:27—“My peace”
 3. Jesus—“Savior”; Christ—Messiah; Lord—sovereign.

IV. THE GRATITUDE FOR GRACE AND PEACE (4)

- A. Connection of Thanksgiving and Gratitude with Prayer.
- B. The continual nature of thanksgiving.
- C. The importance of intercessory prayer.
- D. “Remembrance” involves interest and involvement in helping the person--considering the facts with a view toward changing one’s attitude. In the case of God it is His action on behalf of His people—not as though He were prone to forget.
- E. The personal relationship with the God to whom we pray—“**My God.**”

CONCLUSION

Without the Grace of God you are lost and hopeless.

Without the peace of God your life is empty and miserable.

As a believer you have both God’s Grace and Peace.

YOU MUST EXPERIENCE GOD’S GRACE AND PEACE.