

Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (1) Paul's Greeting (Col. 1:1, 2)

Let us begin this morning with the reading of Colossians 1:1-14.

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

³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Today we begin a series of messages based upon this epistle of the apostle Paul written to the church in the city of Colossae. We will discover in our study that there are a number of ideas and themes that are the same or quite similar to Paul's other epistles as well as to other portions of God's written Word. Therefore, we desire not only to set forth what this epistle directly teaches us, but also we will address matters that are suggested by our text, as they relate to other portions of Holy Scripture.

As with the beginning of a study of any book of the Bible, it is important to understand some preliminary matters that will enhance our understanding and appreciation of the text as it unfolds before us. This is what is commonly referred to as matters of "introduction." In the arena of biblical studies, the "introduction" of a book has a technical meaning. We should not view an introduction as a few brief chosen words to set the stage of our study; rather, an introduction has to do with specific information about a book. Normally an introduction addresses matters of authorship, the date in which a book is written, the place where the book was written, the identification of the original readers including the place to which the book was sent, the canonicity of the book, and usually the major themes of the book are identified. A book entitled, "An Introduction to the New Testament" would contain information such as we identified with every book within our New Testament. Let us now consider some of these questions.

I. "Introduction" to the Epistle

A. Origin of the Church

The city of Colossae was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus, which was located on the coast of the Aegean Sea, what is now western Turkey. The city of Colossae was in the valley of the Lycus River, which is a tributary of the Meander River. In is near, even at the foot of mountains, in a lush well-watered, temperate region. Colossae was not a large city in the first century. And although it had been more prominent in an earlier time, its size and influence had diminished due to the larger and more influential cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, which were only about 12 miles to the west of Colossae.

Although these cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis were nearby, they were quite different in some respects from Colossae. Hierapolis was noted for its mineral hot springs, which was a resort even then for the Romans. It remains so today under the name of Pamukkale. Laodicea was more of a commercial center. It also was situated in the area of the valley, which was rather barren. By the time the cool fresh waters of the river that flowed through Colossae arrived in Laodicea, the waters were generally tepid and not as pure.

At the time of writing this epistle, Paul had not visited this church. This is understood by Paul's comments in Colossians 1:3 and 4 which read, "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since *we heard of your faith* in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints." We also read Paul's words in Colossians 2:1, "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh...*"

How, then, was the church begun? The church was probably founded by **Epaphras**, an acquaintance of the apostle Paul, who may have been converted to Christ through Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Epaphras then returned to his hometown of Colossae, evangelizing and forming the church of new disciples of Jesus Christ. Paul mentioned Epaphras in 1:5b-8,

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

Later in the epistle Paul refers to Epaphras as "one of them", a citizen of Colossae and a member of the church located there.

Epaphras, *who is one of you*, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. (Col. 4:12f)

Again, both Laodicea and Hierapolis were not far from Colossae.

The church may have met in the house of Philemon, the same man to whom Paul addressed his short epistle. We read these words in the opening of that letter:

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, ²To the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: ³(Philemon 1:1f)

B. Authorship and occasion for the epistle

There is no valid questioning that the apostle Paul was the author of this epistle.¹ And although he had not visited the church prior to his writing this epistle, he wrote with the authority of his apostleship. Paul was confident that the church had been well instructed in the faith. Colossians 2:6 and 7 read, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, *as you have been taught*, abounding in it with thanksgiving." Apparently Epaphras had learned well from Paul and the church had learned well from Epaphras. Again, Paul had described Epaphras as having been a "faithful minister" (Col. 1:7).

But false teachers had troubled the church. Later when Paul was in prison in Rome, Epaphras came to see him. At one point Paul even described Epaphras as a "fellow prisoner" (Philemon 23). Epaphras had come to Paul in Rome to inform him about the church in Colossae. He did so in order to encourage Paul, but also to solicit advice from Paul about a problem in his church back home. There was a terrible heresy that was

¹ It is true that there were letters written by others that had been falsely attributed to Paul (Cf. 2 Thess. 2:2). Some "scholars" have been prone to question Paul's authorship of some of his epistles in the New Testament. "Though many modern scholars have doubts about Paul's authorship of this letter, compelling grounds for questioning its authenticity are lacking" [R. C. Sproul, gen. ed. *The Reformation Study Bible* (Reformation Trust, 2015), p. 2117.

threatening the wellbeing of the church. Paul wrote this epistle to address and correct this errant teaching and to affirm these believers in Jesus Christ.

C. Date of the writing

Although there is some disagreement about this, most conservative scholars regard Paul as having written this epistle from His Roman prison cell in AD 60 to 62. This would have been during his first imprisonment there, after having traveled under guard from Palestine, as recorded in Acts 27 and 28. Paul wrote this epistle at the same time he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians and his personal epistle to Philemon.

D. The heresy that threatened the church

There was a specific kind of heresy that threatened the church at Colossae, but identification of the precise heresy is not possible.² Paul did not identify specifically the content of the heresy, but he did set forth doctrines of the Christian faith that countered and corrected the errors to which the church was subjected by that heresy. But when considering some of the apostle's clear instruction, the general nature of the heresy may be somewhat reconstructed. And so, what are some of these doctrinal emphases of this epistle?

1. The Christology of the epistle

Paul gave great detail and emphasis to the Person of Christ, particularly in the first chapter (1:15-19). The manner in which Paul depicts Christ seems to suggest that he was correcting some of the teachings of Gnosticism that had its beginnings in the first century but became a great challenge to the Christian churches of the second century.

2. The philosophical nature of the heresy

In chapter two the apostle warns against being corrupted by philosophy. He warned the church,

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Col. 2:8).

Some of the Greek words that Paul used, such as those translated as "fullness" (πλήρωμα), "knowledge" (γνώσεως) and "neglect of the body" (ἀφειδίχα σώματος), were words that were commonly used by the Gnostic heretics of the second century.

3. Its Jewish associations

The references and allusions to Jewish traditions and practices complicate the identification of the heresy. Paul addresses the matter of Jewish circumcision. We read in Colossians 2:11, "Him (Christ) you were also *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." And in 3:9-11 we read,

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, *circumcised nor uncircumcised*, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

² I had read a journal article in seminary that had culled the different proposals as to the identity of the heresy at Colossae. The writer had listed 33 different proposals. The point is that the specific heresy cannot be identified with certainty.

And then where Paul warned the church against emphasizing matters of “food or in drink”, “festival” or “a new moon or sabbaths”, allude to Jewish traditions (cf. Col 2:16). It is apparent that the heresy that Paul was correcting contained Jewish elements.

4. Angel worship

Paul addressed the error of elevating angels to an errant stature.

Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility *and worship of angels*, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. (Col. 2:18f)

This too, may suggest Jewish background. However, the later Gnostics had developed a very elaborate angealogy, believing that they were intermediaries who could bridge the gap between fallen, physical man and God who was holy and spiritual. Paul teaches them that Jesus Christ is the only true Mediator between God and mankind.

And so, although the identification of the specific heresy is not possible, some information is available. But actually it is not the knowledge of the heresy that we need, but the remedy that Paul set forth is what is valuable and beneficial for Christians. The answer to all that threatened the orthodoxy of this church was met with the full realization of the person of Jesus Christ and what benefits being in union with Him bring to Christians. Colossians is a Christ-rich, Christ-centered epistle, that is able to confirm and establish His people in any place and in any age. One set forth the substance of Colossians in this way:

The Epistle contains a high Christology. Christ is pre-eminent over all other creatures and over creation itself. In fact, all things were not only created by Him but for Him. He is seen in the centre of the universe, sovereign over all principalities and powers, over all agencies, that is to say, which might challenge His authority. Not only so, He is the Image of God and the Possessor of the fullness of God, and these statements could not fail to exalt Him to an equality with God. He is further described as the Head of the Church, which is conceived of as His body. The Christological passage (Col. 1:15-19) in which all of these ideas are expressed is followed immediately by a statement regarding Christ’s redemptive work (1:20ff) and this work is supported by the further statement of 2:14 that in the cross Christ triumphed over all His enemies. Clearly Paul’s purpose is to demonstrate the immeasurable superiority of Christ, as contrasted with the inadequate presentation of Him being advocated by the Colossian false teachers.³

E. Organization and order of the Epistle

There are several outlines that might be helpful for us to consider. Here is one analysis⁴:

- I. Salutation (1:1, 2)
- II. The Person and Work of Christ (Chs. 1:3-2:7)
 1. Paul’s thanksgiving for the Colossians’ faith (1:3-8)
 2. Paul’s prayer that the Colossians may increase in the knowledge and love of God revealed in Christ (1:9-23)
 3. Paul’s stewardship of the revelation of God (1:24-29)
 4. Paul’s concern for the Christians of the Lycus Valley
 5. Go on as you have begun (2:6-7)
- III. False teaching and its antidote (2:8-3:4)

³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Intervarsity Press, 1970), p. 551.

⁴ This outline was that of F.F. Bruce. [E. K. Simpson, F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (William B. Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 174f.]

1. Christ is all--and all you need (2:8-15)
 2. Guard your freedom (2:16-19)
 3. You died with Christ, therefore... (2:20-23)
 4. You rose with Christ, therefore... (3:1-4)
- IV. The Christian life (3:5-4:6)
1. "Put off" (3:5-11)
 2. "Put on" (3:12-17)
 3. "Be subject" (3:18-4:1)
 4. "Watch and pray" (4:2-6)
- V. Personal notes (4:7-17)
1. Paul's messengers (4:7-9)
 2. Greetings from Paul's companions (4:10-14)
 3. Greetings to various friends (4:15-17)
- VI. Final greetings and blessing (4:18)

Here is another⁵:

Theme: Christ, the Pre-eminent One, the Only and All-Sufficient Savior

- I. This Only and All-Sufficient Savior is the object of the believers' faith (chs. 1 & 2)
 - A. This truth expounded positively (ch. 1)
 - B. This truth expounded not only positively but now both positively and negatively (ch. 2)
- II. This Only and All-Sufficient Savior is the source of the believer's life and thus the real answer to the perils by which they are confronted (chs. 3 & 4)
 - A. This truth applied to all believers (3:1-17)
 - B. This truth applied to special groups (3:18-4:1)
 - C. Closing admonitions (4:2-18)

Here is one more for your consideration. It is more of a popular outline⁶:

Christ, the Fullness of God to Us

- Introductory thanksgiving (1:1-8)
- Opening prayer for "fullness" and "worthy walk" (1:9-14)
- I. Doctrinal -- "That ye may be filled" (chs. 1 & 2)
 1. Christ the fullness of God in creation (1:15-18)
 2. Christ the fullness of God in redemption (1:19-23)
 3. Christ the fullness of God in the Church (1:24-2:7)
 4. Christ the fullness of God versus heresy (2:8-23)
 - II. Practical -- "That ye may walk worthy" (chs. 3 & 4)
 1. The new life -- and believers individually (3:1-11)
 2. The new life -- and believers reciprocally (3:12-17)
 3. The new life -- and domestic relationships (3:18-21)
 4. The new life -- and employment obligations (3:22-4:1)
 5. The new life -- and "them that are without" (4:1-6)
- Personal addenda (4:7-18)

II. Consideration of the contents of the Epistle

⁵ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary; Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 40f.

⁶ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book* (six volumes in one) (Zondervan Publishing, 1960), vol. p. 203.

A. Paul's Greeting (1:1, 2)

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

Paul begins his epistle in the typical fashion of an epistle of that day. He first identified himself and Timothy. In doing so Paul gave his apostolic credentials. He then identified his recipients, "to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae." He then gave a customary greeting, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father." Let us consider the details of this greeting.

In Paul's greeting he identified himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." Apostles were special emissaries for Jesus Christ in the early decades of the Christian era. The Lord Jesus individually called and equipped each one of His own apostles and sent them forth to represent Him, going forth with His authority to speak the truth on His behalf. There are no other apostles than what are identified for us in the New Testament.

Our Lord gave His apostles abilities that were unique to the apostolic office. In order for their witness and message to be authenticated, they were given the ability to perform miracles. They possessed what the Bible refers to as "signs of the apostles" (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). You nor I nor anyone else in this world either need or have the apostolic signs. Jesus Christ's apostles were authenticated and their message has been substantiated as true. There is no further need of miracles. The witness of the apostles has been substantiated by the Lord working through them. Now the case is true that "A sinful and adulterous generation seeks for a sign" (Matt. 12:39).

Paul did not always assert his apostleship before his readers in his epistles. But since this church had not known him directly or personally, and since he would be bringing correction to the church in matters of error, it was important that he assert his apostolic authority at the onset of his epistle. And so, when Paul identified himself as an "apostle", he claimed for himself to have the authority of Jesus Christ, who had called him and commissioned him to his office. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ "**by the will of God.**" God had conferred authority upon him and with that authority came responsibility for him to care for the churches of Jesus Christ.

The word "apostle" means one who is sent. When an apostle spoke or wrote, he did so as an authoritative representative of Jesus Christ. Paul claimed to be an apostle, one on which the foundation of the church was being built (cf. Eph. 2:20). Here in his opening words to this epistle he was asserting his apostolic authority as having been called by Jesus Christ, to the office of apostle of Jesus Christ. In this first verse of this epistle, Paul commended himself before this church that he had never visited, as one who had written an authoritative epistle to them. He was adding authoritative weight to the substance of his letter to his readers of Colossae by asserting his apostleship.

Paul included Timothy in his greeting. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, **and Timothy our brother...**" Now it could be that Timothy was helping Paul write this letter, having been with Paul at Rome when Paul was first imprisoned. But Paul may have had more in mind than conveying that Timothy had co-authored this epistle to the church at Colossae. It was during this time that Paul had written the first epistle to Timothy. In that epistle he was seeking to instruct and commission Timothy to the work of pastoring the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was a predominant church in the region. With Timothy leading the church at Ephesus, he would be in a unique position to continue to exert influence upon the church at Colossae that was some distance to the east. Paul was enhancing the reputation and the faithfulness of Timothy before this congregation at Colossae.

Paul identified to whom he was writing. He wrote "**to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.**" This should not be seen to be two groups but one group only, that is, true Christians in the church at Colossae. They were both "saints" and "faithful brothers." He assumed that everyone in the church was a true believer. This is not to say that everyone was absolutely, for it is possible that there are some tares among

the wheat. But here we see evidence that a local church should be comprised of people who give evidence of having been genuinely converted to Jesus Christ. This is a distinctive of Baptist churches. We believe that Bible teaches that only regenerate people, those who have true life in Jesus Christ, should be admitted to formal church membership. Only those whom we may rightly regard as “faithful brothers (or sisters)” should be candidates for church membership.

Paul wrote his epistle “to the *saints*.” There is much confusion among many people as to what group of people this term signifies. We should define our terms and religious language by God’s Word. Obviously, Paul was not writing to dead people who had been declared by some to have been super Christians in their former, earthly life. Paul was writing simply to Christians. The term “saint” should not be used to describe only those who do exceptional acts of righteousness. The Bible uses this term to describe Christians. “Saints” are true believers.

We are never instructed or commanded to worship saints or angels, but rather we are to worship God only. To reverence or worship departed Christians, because they have been designated to be saints, is wrong. We read in the book of Revelation what occurred when the apostle John attempted to do so. In Revelation 19 we read that he attempted to worship an angel. John wrote,

And I fell at his feet to worship him (the angel speaking to him). But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!” (Rev. 19:10)

Some people think that they are doing right by doing homage to Christians who have died. God says to them, “See that you do not do that!” He has said in His Word:

I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. (Isa. 42:8)

Worship belongs to God alone. He is not pleased with them who would give to others the honor that is due Him.

No, “saints” is not a term for super Christians who have died, but it is a term for every true Christian. What does the word, saint, mean or suggest? It describes both the Christian’s *position* before God and his character as one of His people. The Greek word for “saints” simply means “holy ones.” Christians are both holy respecting their position and their character.

First, let us consider Christians as being *positionally holy*. The root idea of being holy is to be *set apart for the service of God*. Under the Old Testament economy, when articles of furniture or utensils were to be used in the service of God, they underwent a ceremonial cleansing and recognition that they were to be used for this purpose. They were no longer to be regarded or used in ordinary or “profane” ways. Priests also were cleansed and set apart for the service of God. They were thereby rendered “holy” or set apart for the service of God. Every true Christian is set apart by God in this way. If you are a Christian, God has called you out from among all sinners and have purposed and has regarded you as His to be employed in His service. We see this in **Romans 1:1-7**:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated to the gospel of God*, which He promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, through whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, *among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ*; to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, *called to be saints*.

This is also seen in **1 Corinthians 1:1f**.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, **to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints**, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

If you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, you are a “saint.” You are not a saint because a church leader or a religious assembly has declared you to be. God has called you and has set you apart for himself. That is what makes you a saint. You are more genuinely a saint than many who have been declared as such by men. God has called you to be His saint. God has called every true believer to this lofty and honored position.

But not only are we “saints” in our **position**. Our title as saints is to describe our **character**. We should indeed be “holy ones” in our behavior. Christians were called such first at Antioch because they were “Christ-like.” So we are called “saints” or holy ones, because we are characterized by holiness. Holiness, or moral purity and spiritual mindedness are characteristic of every Christian. We are not perfect, but we desire and strive to be so. We lament that we fall far short of our desire. Yet this is our desire.

Moreover, it must be characteristic of us if we are true Christians. We read in **Hebrews 12:12ff**:

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. **Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord**: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

We must pursue holiness, for if we are not holy, we cannot be saved. We dare not be as Esau. He was not holy, but profane. He only concerned himself with this life and the things of this life. He easily and readily set aside the things of God for his own immediate and temporary satisfaction. We dare not be like him.

Now, we are “saints” positionally, but it describes the work to which we are to give ourselves our whole lives, to be increasingly set apart for Him. We strive against sin and struggle to live before Him in holiness. This is characteristic of every true Christian. If there is no desire or struggle to be holy, you are no Christian. Paul wrote in another place:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Romans 8:12-14)

True Christians are led by the Holy Spirit. How does He lead them? He leads them “to put to death the deeds of the body.” Only in this way may we truly “live.”

After identifying himself and his recipients, Paul gives a customary greeting. **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”** This was a customary greeting of Christians in letters of the 1st century. We find Paul having used this same or very similar greeting in a number of his epistles. But simply because this reflects a customary greeting, we should not read over it too quickly, and thereby dismiss its significance. Actually, if the early Christian writers (and God Himself) were so moved to use these words in a customary greeting, then we can conclude that these words express very important, even vital and fundamental needs for Christians. And so it is, if God would desire us to have grace and peace, then we must be in very much need of these two graces.

Now it is true that each Christian has already encountered these things upon initially receiving Christ as Lord and Savior. **We were saved by God’s grace** – God’s favor toward us, working powerfully in us and on our behalf. And certainly, upon our initial faith in Christ we experienced **peace**.

Actually, when we speak of God's peace, we are speaking of two aspects of peace. (1) There is an **objective peace**, which describes our state before God. Whereas before we came to Christ we were at war with God and He with us, when we repented of sins and believed on the Lord Jesus, the hostility ceased between God and ourselves. We have since that day enjoyed a state of peace with our God. (2) But there is also a **subjective peace**. We are able to sense peace, or a tranquillity of soul, a settling of our guilty conscience respecting sin. Most of us probably did so when we were first converted, when we sensed our free and full pardon of sin through faith in the crucified and risen Savior. But this subjective peace may be experienced by the true Christian at any time in his or her life if Scriptural principle and teaching is understood and followed. Paul wrote of this peace in Philippians 4:6 and 7:

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This subjective peace is available for the child of God regardless of external happenings or circumstances. This peace "surpasses all understanding." The child of God may enjoy peace in the most terrible of situations who are enduring the most terrible of circumstances. And so, whereas the objective peace that we have with God, the state of peace between the believer and God, is always the same and is unchangeable for every true child of God, the subjective feeling of peace and well-being varies greatly between us. It varies for any number of reasons. Some trouble themselves because they have refused or failed to order their lives according to the means by which God gives grace to His people. As a result their sense of peace has been shaken, even removed for a time. May the Lord restore a sense of peace to any troubled Christian here. May we each use the means God has appointed so that we might be in a position in which He will bless us with this grace of peace.

By the way, the order of the words is always the same in the greetings of the New Testament letters: "**Grace** to you and **peace** from God." I believe that the order is important. One must first encounter God's saving grace and then only afterwards is there God's peace. Does not the Scripture say at the announcement of the Savior's birth: "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor (grace) rests" (Luke 2:14). First there comes grace from God. Then afterwards His peace follows.

But the need for the "grace and peace" of God was not just a *past* need, when we came to Christ; it is a *present* need as well; so much so that God here, and as other New Testament writers to their readers, greeted the saints with this desire: "**Grace to you, and peace.**" We are in continual need of God's *grace* to *strengthen* us, for the Christian life is full of challenges. We are in continual need of God's *peace* to *comfort* us, for the Christian life is full of disappointments.

Paul declares that grace and peace come to the believer "**from God our Father.**" We are in continual need of God's blessing of His grace and peace to us. These are essential to living before God. Here Paul declares that God the Father is the Dispenser of grace and peace.

Let us close by asking God the Father to grant us, His people, both grace and peace.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. (2 Thess. 2:16f)