

# 1

## Philippians 1:1-2 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## 3 WORDS TO HELP YOU OVERCOME

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In the opening verse of Philippians, Paul issues a three-word blessing that's more than a pleasantry or formality or cliché.

Grace and peace.

Perhaps the words have become too familiar. They've lost their punch, their edge. But they carry deep theological meaning.

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 2).*

A typical letter written in common Greek in the ancient world contained three standard parts:

Sender, Recipient, Salutation.

Paul uses this formula when he writes to the church in Philippi.

Sender: Paul

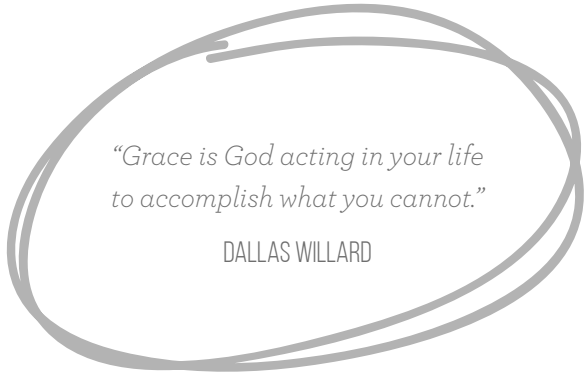
Recipient: The Saints in Rome

Salutation: Grace and Peace.

If you scan the New Testament, you'll discover "grace and peace" as Paul's standard salutation.

The Apostle felt this concept was so critical, that every one of his New Testament letters begins with this greeting and most end with it.

Grace is God's favor, and the word describes God's character and actions toward His people. This gift of God cannot be earned or deserved. Some have dubbed it "the Gospel in word."



*"Grace is God acting in your life to accomplish what you cannot."*

DALLAS WILLARD

But Paul couples grace with peace—a word that alludes to more than well-being but a satisfaction, fulfillment, and state of wholeness.

This kind of peace isn't based in the absence of something—stress, trials, or hardship—but the presence of Someone.

Peace abounds in relationship with God. This deep, transforming, holistic peace ushers us into a life abounding in peace with God, with others, and within.

Grace and peace is more than a tagline. Grace and peace provides a blessing, a benediction, an invitation, and a promise.

When you wake up in the morning, hear the holy whisper: Grace and peace.

When you find, yourself slipping into anger or spite, quickly grab hold of grace and peace.

When you wonder what to do or say next, lunge forward with grace and peace.

Never forget—you are created to be an agent of grace and peace, an ambassador of grace and peace, an overcomer through grace and peace.



### **Reflection Questions:**

1. In what area of your life do you most need to experience the grace of God?
2. In what area of your life do you most need to experience the peace of God?
3. Who is pushing your buttons most in your life? How can you respond with grace and peace?
4. Who is making you feel the most insufficient or guilty or jealous right now? How can you respond with grace and peace?
5. What is causing you to feel the most fear right now? How can you move forward with grace and peace?
6. Using the Color Method, what stood out to you most from today's reading?
7. What do you find most challenging about today's reading? What do you find most comforting about today's reading?

# 2

## *Philippians 1:3-8 (NASB)*

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, <sup>5</sup> in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

<sup>6</sup> For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

<sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

## HOW TO TELL IF YOU'RE LONELY

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Paul started many churches throughout the Roman Empire and he loved each one. Yet the special affection he felt for the church at Philippi saturates his writing. Something about this congregation tugged at the overworked, aging apostle's heartstrings.

This becomes more potent considering where Paul penned his letter. He writes from a cramped, dingy prison cell. Detained by Rome for preaching about Jesus, the darkness and depression take a heavy toll on Paul.

Ancient prisons were precarious places. Inmates depended on friends, family, and outsiders to provide their meals and supplies. If no one appeared, the prisoners starved or froze.

By the time Paul writes this letter, only one friend remains by his side: Timothy. He feels invisible and forgotten. Unexpectedly, an old friend, Epaphroditus, appears outside the cell (2:25). Flabbergasted, Paul celebrates with delight.

Paul discovers the church never knew about his hardship. As soon as they heard, they pooled resources and sent Epaphroditus. This old friend trekked 40 days or so by foot to make the visit.

Epaphroditus grounds Paul in the truth that he's neither alone nor forgotten. With a refreshed soul, Paul writes a thank you letter to the church at Philippi.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy." (1:3-4)

Paul experiences the joy of life-giving, soul-strengthening friendship. And he experiences the work of God through that friendship.

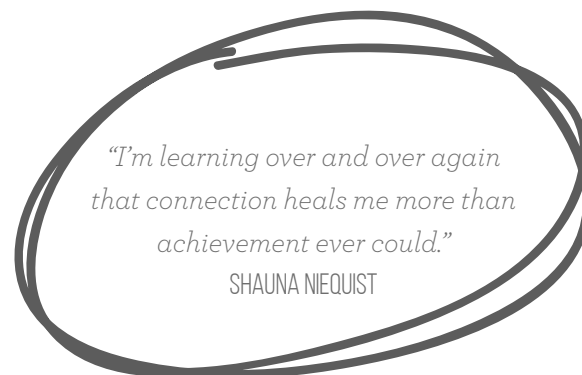
If you squint into this passage, you'll see Paul doesn't allow his disappointment, feelings of neglect, or sense of being forgotten to get the best of him. When a friend shows up, he doesn't recount the wrongs or delays or hurts, he embraces and celebrates.

When friends disappoint or wound, you may be tempted to withdraw, walk away, give up. Perhaps you've made a silent oath that you'll never do that again—make yourself that vulnerable, that open, that generous.

These responses create the illusion of feeling safer, more protected, but they're tell-tale signs that you've invited loneliness to take up residence in your life.

Paul teaches that your past relational wounds don't have to rob you of future relational wins.

If you're wounded, find healing through prayer and Scripture, talk to a trusted friend or counselor. Don't allow past pain to rob you of future fellowship. You can be an overcomer—for yourself and for those who need you.



### Reflection Questions:

1. Who in your life does God use to heal and help you?
2. Who in your life does God use to be His voice in your life?
3. How much time are you spending each week to nurture deep relationships?
4. What past wounds are holding you back from the life-giving friendships God wants to give you?
5. Philippians 1:6 says, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Do you believe this to be true for others? In what ways do you struggle to believe this to be for yourself? For your friendships?
6. Using the Color Method, what stood out to you most from today's reading?
7. What do you find most challenging about today's reading? What do you find most comforting about today's reading?