

Grace to You and Peace from God Our Father

In many ways we have lost the art of letter writing. Think about it. When was the last time you actually put pen to paper and wrote a letter to someone?

We now communicate in text speak—LOL, J/K, M2NY, and many others. And formalities? FGDA! No one begins a text message that begins like any of Paul's letters. Because of this, we tend to skip over the salutation and prayer of thanksgiving that are customary intros in his letters.

But by doing so, we are missing a wealth of truth.

Read Colossians 1:1-8. In verse 2, what do the words grace and peace mean?

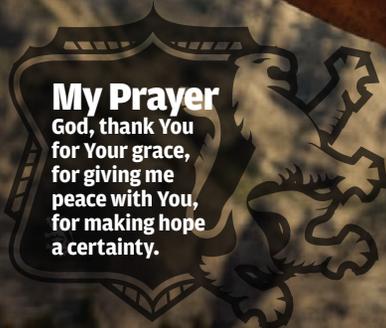
Grace is God's unconditional love for you which is most fully expressed in the saving work of Jesus Christ. In Christ, we have peace with God and one another. All that these two words convey is set forth in the rest of this incredible letter from Paul to the Colossians.

In verse 5, how do you define hope? As a wish or as something certain?

For the most part, we most often use the word hope to refer to something in the future that is uncertain. We say things like "I hope so."

The truth of the gospel, however, is that hope is not only a present reality, but also a future certainty.

The gospel tells you about the grace of God, brings you to peace with God, and gives you hope. This is the message of the gospel that is growing all over the world.



The Supremacy of Christ

Read Colossians 1:9-23.

Would you give up being paid 12 million dollars for doing nothing? This is exactly what Kansas City Royals pitcher Gil Meche did after being forced to retire because of chronic shoulder pain. According to his contract, Meche is guaranteed the money even if he cannot play a single game. But he refused to accept it. Why? In his own words, he “hasn’t earned it.”

Reread verses 13 and 14.

You have been rescued from the domain of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God. You have redemption and the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Do you deserve it? What have you done to earn it?

You don’t deserve it. You can’t earn it. And some reject it because they feel like they need to do something, anything, to earn it. Others play the game trying to earn their salvation only to end up broken.

Read verses 15-23. What are you trying to do to earn God’s favor? Why are you doing it?

Do you really think you can impress “the image of the invisible God?”

The hope of the gospel is that we are accepted by God as holy and blameless because through Jesus we have been reconciled and have peace with God through the blood shed on the cross. Nothing else. You don’t deserve it. You can’t earn it. That’s the beauty of it all.

©ISTOCKPHOTO

My Prayer
Father, thank You for Your fullness to dwell in Jesus so that I may be saved. I confess that I have been trying to earn my salvation by...

Suffering for a Cause

Read Colossians 1:24-2:5.

Rejoice in sufferings? I have to pause when I read a phrase like that in Paul's letters. Was he nuts? Maybe he had been in a prison cell for too long. Who knows. What I do know is that when I suffer, I do not do much rejoicing.

Paul said that he was completing what Christ began for the church so that its mystery could be completely revealed. In other words, Paul's goal was not to complete a certain amount of suffering, but to make the Word of God fully known (see Col. 1:25).

What are you willing to suffer for? Why?

Paul's struggle to accomplish his goal brought suffering in its wake, and he understood that suffering, in some strange way, was not his own, but Christ's. Paul was glad to bear his share of suffering for the benefit of the church.

But why such a single-minded devotion when that same devotion is the source of suffering?

Consider the high-school runner who collapsed three yards from the finish line and then crawled the rest of the way just to finish the race. She finished in 37th place. Why bother finishing in last place when running caused her so much suffering?

Reread verses 28-29. What were Paul's reasons?

Paul struggled to present others as mature in Christ. Your job is to take steps to help you move toward spiritual maturity.

My Prayer
Father, thank You for making the mystery of Your saving purposes in Christ known. I commit to struggle toward maturity by...