

Ephesians 2:11-3:2 NIV**“Do you know the grace and peace twins?”**

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached **peace** to you who were far away and **peace** to those who were near.

“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles

and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
(3:1, 2) “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s **grace** that was given to me for you . . .”

The New Testament often links grace and peace. Paul began every one of his epistles with a greeting similar to “grace and peace be to you.”

In a few of his later epistles, Paul added *mercy* to *grace* and *peace*.

Peter opened his two letters with a similar grace and peace greeting.

Early in the *Book of Revelation* (1:4), John used the grace and peace twins.

Why did they use this grace and peace combo?

Grace was the typical Greek greeting (χάρις) and most Jews greeted each other with the Hebrew word for peace, “Shalom.” שָׁלוֹם

Also, the Romans boasted of “Pax Romana” (“the peace of Rome”).

**Paul had the saluted the Ephesians (1:2):
 “Grace to you and peace from
 God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Yet, as you can see, grace and peace do not appear next to each other in our reading.

This Ephesians text tells us that God’s grace in Christ ended some long-standing feuds.

Note the expressions of exclusion:

“walls of hostility “barriers,”

“no longer strangers and foreigners.”

On the cross, Christ ended division.

Two groups became “one,”

“fellow citizens” “together”—

“peace to those far away”-- “peace to those near.”

Folks hail peace treaties and peace accords

“League of Nations” and “United Nations.”

But peace never prevails.

Peace relies on grace, but few people practice grace or even seem to know what grace is.

Jesus acted gracefully and gave examples of grace.

Let’s look at one of those cases:

“Peter came to Jesus and asked,

‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?

Up to seven times?’

Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (Matthew 18:21-22 NIV).

Have you ever had to go to court to protect yourself against a charge?

I’ve never had to defend my behavior in court.

I once had to protect the church in court.

I’ve helped defend many others.

In court one great concern is:

“What is the judge like?”



In Hollywood, a young man from Ohio named Stan got in trouble and asked our help.

His attorney told him he should cut his hair before he went to court, but Stan couldn’t afford a haircut.

Contracts for ministers’ wives used to state that they should cut the hair of guys who can’t afford barbers.

In our kitchen, Norma cut Stan’s long-hair.¹

Stan got off, went back to Ohio and we never heard from him again.

I can’t even say for sure that I ever thanked Norma.

Consider this fact.

Someday (maybe 50-60 years from now, possibly this week) you will stand before a judge.

This judge is noted for fairness and love,

but one thing especially upsets this judge.

This judge never accepts excuses or grants leniency.

No exceptions.

Zero tolerance.

No mercy!

Note what Jesus told Peter about forgiving:

¹ I’m kidding about the contract, but not about the haircut.

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.²

The Lord holds us all accountable and He will call you and me to appear before Him.

Thus in Jesus' story, the king calls all in.

“As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.”

The guy's debt would comparatively more than bankrupt most of us—maybe a \$100 million.

“Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.”

In Jesus' day, you couldn't declare bankruptcy. You and all your family were sold as slaves till the debt was fully paid. **Because slaves don't earn money, this usually meant slavery for life.**

"The servant fell on his knees before him, 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'"

He had less chance to pay off that debt than I have to be the starting quarterback for the Iowa Hawkeyes this fall.

“The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.”



**Debt paid in full; one hundred million dollars.
NO BALANCE DUE!**

So how does the servant show appreciation?
"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii."

We're talking about what it would take to buy a six-pack of beer.

“He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

“When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours (that 100 million) because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'—

That guy who owed you for the six pack of beer.

“In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.”

That's forever!

² In Matthew 18:23-34 (NIV), the narration above, Jesus expanded on forgiving.

Jesus’ purposely made some parables hard to understand.

But there’s no mistake about this one.

In that great court to which all people will appear, here’s what will happen.

That extremely fair, but knowledgeable Judge Jesus forewarns:

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat...you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

When we stand before God in the judgment, we must be prepared to answer two questions:

First, expect to hear the Lord say to you,

“Why should I allow you into my heaven?”

Jesus paid our debt and covered our failures; we tell God that we fully relied on Jesus and lived for him.

Second, “Did you forgive as I forgave you?”

If we say things like:

“I can never forgive him for that;”

“I’ll forgive her, but I’ll never forget it;”

we’d be wise to reconsider.

Do you think Jesus overstated the case about how much we God?

Suppose God charged for water at the rates your local water provider charges.

I understand that NW Iowa averages about 26 inches of rainfall per year.



What if the Lord charged you yearly for water he provides on your property?

And for the heat he supplies?

In Matthew 16:26, Jesus asked: “What could a person pay in exchange for his/her life?”

I’ve mentioned that I worked a while for one of the country’s wealthiest couples.

Both husband and wife had been married prior and lost their previous mates.

He told me that his first wife died of cancer.

He took her everywhere hoping to find a cure.

They even sailed to the Orient because they heard doctors there might be able to cure her.

This was in the 1930s and they spent \$250,000.

He spoke poignantly of the hopelessness they endured.

They could afford anything money could buy, but no amount could have bought life for his beloved.

Knowing that God gave us life, what do we owe God?

Jesus didn’t overstate what we owe the Lord.

Two compelling reasons to forgive:

We all know people who spend most waking hours hating and despising.

Not doing what’s best for them and their families, but thinking about the object of their hate.

1. Unless we forgive, we’ll never be free.

The Old Testament Book of Samuel gives a textbook example the cost of not forgiving.

King Saul was the tallest person in the country.

Saul won many battles; the citizens acclaimed him.

Young women composed songs praising Saul.

The nearby Philistines brought a bigger guy than Saul and he bullied Israel’s army and homeland.

Had King Saul remembered how God took care of Israel, and him, and simply relied on God, he could have easily dispatched Goliath.

No one today would even know about the giant.

As you know, David slew Goliath using a sling, yet David really won because he trusted God.

The pop-song girls changed their tune a little:

**“Saul has slain his thousands,
but David his ten thousands.”**

Jealousy and envy began to bug him.

Young David preoccupied Saul’s mind.

Saul forgot what God’s grace had given him.

Saul acted like the ungrateful guy in Jesus’ parable.

More than anything, King Saul wanted David dead.

Jealousy, envy, and hate never end well.

In contrast, depending on God’s grace and living gratefully bring joy and peace.

Jesus died for everyone; God’s grace extends to all.

If we want freedom, we have to forgive everyone.

2. If we don’t practice God’s grace, we can’t expect His forgiveness in the Judgment.

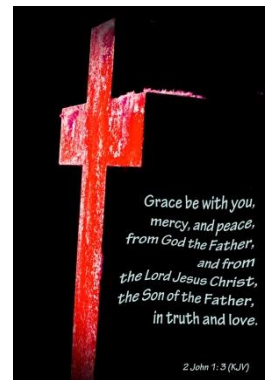
“This is how my heavenly Father will treat . . . you, unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

People spend lots of time sanitizing their hands; we’d do better to constantly sanitize our minds.

“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do... Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus... one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable...”³

“Grace to all of you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Accompanying this sermon is a page showing basis for communion remarks Bob made 7-18-21 regarding the hymn, “The Old Rugged Cross.”



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³ Philippians 4:4-8 New Living Translation

“The Old Rugged Cross”

Photos

Top:

Ridge north of Jerusalem some think is the “place of the skull,” site of Jesus’ crucifixion. Just below is the edge of an Arab bus station.

Bottom:

Just to the west; the “Garden Tomb,” Jesus’ possible burial site.

Far right:

Bob at the Garden Tomb in 1980.

An Arab Christian minister took him to the location. He gave Bob a day-tour showing him an “Arab Perspective” of the surrounding area.

Though Bob & Norma have similar pics, the two above are Microsoft ClipArt. The minister took Bob’s pic.

For biblical perspective read, Isaiah 52: 13 through chapter 54. Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24, John 18-21

Those who crucified Jesus meant to humiliate him by placing him between two thieves. They never dreamed that they were actually and unwittingly fulfilling a prophecy by Isaiah 700 years prior.

See Isaiah 53: 12

for this amazing prophecy about the servant Christ.

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