



Grace, Mercy, and Peace

“. . . Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(2 Timothy 1:2)

The Apostle Paul typically opened and sometimes closed his letters with at least two of the three words in the above verse. These three words—grace, mercy, and peace—are recognized by believers in Christ but often “brushed over” when these words are read in Scripture, heard in sermons, or spoken in spiritually oriented conversations.

This overview is prayerfully presented to increase your awe and appreciation for God’s personalized care on your behalf . . . expressed through His divine grace, mercy, and peace. After all, if Paul and other writers of Scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these three words so many times, then they must convey an important message for each of us to understand and appropriate in our daily lives.

GOD’S GRACE

Grace, basically, means “gift.” With regard to God’s grace, this gift is beyond anyone’s expectations since it is the unmerited favor of God toward those who do not deserve it. Webster’s Dictionary (1975) defines grace as “unmerited divine assistance given to man for his regeneration and sanctification.”

Divine grace is a gift provided by God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:4, Romans 1:7, John 1:14, 16-17). Salvation (forgiveness of sins) and resultant justification (judged to be righteous or “just as if I’ve never sinned”) are made possible through grace (Ephesians 1:7, 2:8; Romans 3:23-24). Grace is also the sustaining empowerment that enables believers to deny ungodliness and live righteously (Titus 2:11-12), to minister to others (Romans 12:6, 1 Peter 4:10), and to persevere in every aspect of life (Acts 20:32, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10). The bountiful richness of grace, provided through God’s kindness in Christ, will be realized by believers throughout eternity (Ephesians 2:4-7).

Verses referenced are printed below.

2 Timothy 1:2, To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:4, I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

Romans 1:7, to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:14, 16-17, And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:7. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Ephesians 2:8, For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Romans 3:23-24, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Titus 2:11-12, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

Romans 12:6, Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

1 Peter 4:10, As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Acts 20:32, And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10, And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am

well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Ephesians 2:4-7, But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

A well-known acrostic for G-R-A-C-E (God's Riches At Christ's Expense) is a helpful reminder of the incredible lovingkindness of God toward us, the undeserving.

For an expanded study of "grace" in the Old and New Testaments, see [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

GOD'S MERCY

Mercy is the desire and ability to relieve the distress of others even if they are undeserving of such help. Webster defines mercy as "compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power." It is often displayed in the expression of pity. With pity as a backdrop, it can be seen how "mercy" in the Old Testament is often interchangeable with "lovingkindness" (Psalm 103:8).

Divine mercy is a compassionate gift from God and His Son, Jesus Christ (2 John 1:3). This mercy can be demonstrated in many ways according to the need, but its pinnacle application results in a person's spiritual new birth in Christ (Titus 3:5-7).

God had pity on us when we were His enemies (Romans 5:6-8), spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:4-5), and doomed to eternal death (Romans 3:23, 6:23). God's mercy was what we needed, and this was provided in our Savior, Jesus Christ... through grace. He was the perfect sacrifice, taking upon Himself the penalty for our sin so that believers could be declared righteous in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21) and no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1). There is no greater mercy than this.

Divine mercy, however, is not a one-time provision at the moment of salvation. The mercies of God enable a believer to be a living sacrifice to God in order to give on-going service (worship) to the Lord (Romans 12:1). God's mercy extends for generations to those who fear Him (Luke 1:50). God's mercy is bountifully available every day (Lamentations 3:21-23) with results that extend into eternity (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Verses referenced are printed below.

Psalm 103:8, The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness (mercy).

2 John 1:3, Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Titus 3:5-7, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Romans 5:6-8, For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:4-5, But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Romans 3:23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:21, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Romans 8:1, Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:1, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Luke 1:50, and His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.

Lamentations 3:21-23, This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

1 Peter 1:3-4, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

Luke 6:35-36, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

For an expanded study of "mercy" in the Old and New Testaments, see [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

GOD'S PEACE

Divine peace comes from God and His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:3). This peace is a tranquil harmony of heart and mind that maintains Christ-centered wellbeing regardless of circumstances or people. At its foundation, this peace is a result of being justified by faith before God Almighty through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1-2, Hebrews 10:10). Standing on peace **with** God we can have the peace **of** God. This divine peace, as exhibited by Jesus Christ, is promised to His followers (John 14:27).

The world defines peace as the absence or cessation of conflict, but peace that comes from God results in Christ-oriented tranquility even in the middle of conflict.

The fullness of peace and joy is available to those who believe in Christ (Romans 15:13). God's sphere of spiritual life for a believer is not dependent on human activity but is sustained by divine power that results in righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). This peace can be personally realized by a believer to such an extent that it becomes an observable character quality (Galatians 5:22).

Verses referenced are printed below.

1 Corinthians 1:3, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1-2, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Hebrews 10:10, By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

Romans 15:13, Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14:17, for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

An acrostic for P-E-A-C-E (**P**erplexity **E**rased **A**nd **C**hrist **E**mbraced) reminds us of the God-given peace that comes only through His Son, Jesus Christ.

For an expanded study of "peace" in the Old and New Testaments, see [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

APPROPRIATING GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FOR CHRIST-LIKE MATURITY AND EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

• GRACE

Grace is a profound gift from God to followers of Christ and is always available for their Christ-centered growth. With this truth in mind, no one should presume that grace "provides cover" for self-centered pursuits. For example:

- God's grace is not an excuse for on-going sinfulness.

Romans 6:1-2, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

- God opposes the proud but gives grace to those characterized by humility.

James 4:6, But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

- A person can belittle grace by exchanging God’s revealed plan to grow in Christ for human wisdom and self-oriented efforts. When this occurs, “good works” (keeping commandments or religious traditions) become the foundation for one to attempt to be justified and declared righteous before God instead of a person relying, by faith, solely on the sacrifice of Christ.

Galatians 2:16 & 21, nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified . . . I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

Galatians 5:1-4, It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. ²Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. ⁴You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

God’s grace is abundantly supplied to those who live according to His will.

- God’s grace is never withheld nor diminished from those who live in a manner that pleases Him.

Psalms 84:11, For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

- Since believers have a high priest (Jesus Christ) who never sinned when tempted and who always sympathizes with their weaknesses, every believer has access to the divine throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace in time of need.

Hebrews 4:15-16, For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

As we yield to the control of the Holy Spirit, we will live by grace. In Ephesians 5:18, believers are commanded not to be drunk with wine but to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” When people are drunk, they are under the influence of, or controlled by, a chemical substance. In contrast, the Apostle Paul uses this example to remind believers in Christ to be under the control of only one influence . . . the Holy Spirit. If believers are to be “full of grace” then they need to be “filled with the Spirit.”

Paul used the word “filled” which has the meaning of permeation. The Holy Spirit should permeate a believer’s every thought, word, and deed. Greek grammarians remind us that “being filled” is not only a command, but, being in the present tense, can be rendered “keep being filled” as a way of life. A believer doesn’t merely ask the Holy Spirit for a “fill up” (like a glass of water), but a believer recognizes that “being filled” (as a way of life) is the result of continually submitting one’s will to the Lord in every situation. An obvious aspect of being continually filled with the Spirit is a believer’s habit of humbly going to Jesus in any situation, asking as often as needed for grace to be applied (Hebrews 4:15-16 above).

A Spirit-filled believer is wholeheartedly committed to God, the Source of grace. Paul urged believers in Romans 12:1 (referenced and printed earlier) to present their bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God. The verb “present” means to surrender or place ourselves at the disposal of another. The Greek word tells us that it is a deliberate action involving thought, so it is a conscious act of our will to give ourselves totally to serve the Lord.

Whomever or whatever we allow to control our lives is whom or what we serve. We have a choice as believers to either serve personal desires in any given situation or to serve God (Romans 6:16). Serving God means that we will not let sin reign in our mortal bodies that we should obey its lusts (Romans 6:12). We are to control our bodies (including our thoughts and emotions) and not allow anything other than God’s Spirit to control us. By God’s grace, a believer walks by the Spirit and does not succumb to the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17) and, as a result, can present (surrender) the members of one’s body to righteousness (Romans 6:13). What are the “members” of the body? Practically speaking, Paul is talking about our eyes, ears, tongue (speech), hands, legs, feet, brain (thinking), etc.

Romans 6:16, Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Romans 6:12, Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts

Galatians 5:16-17, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Romans 6:13, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

We can observe many aspects of a Spirit-controlled, grace-filled life, but let's examine one example that deals with verbal communication. When we are tempted to share words with another that are not edifying (even if they are factual), we should submit these words (and the thoughts behind them) to Christ and evaluate them by the truths of the Bible. If the words are unwholesome, unedifying, and not applicable to a current need, they should not be spoken. If these words, however, are edifying and appropriate to the need of the moment, then they are verbal vehicles that can deliver grace to those listening (Ephesians 4:29).

Ephesians 4:29, Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

When believers are continually being filled with the Spirit in order to live for God, they will put off their unrighteous thoughts, words, and deeds and, in their place will put on righteous thoughts, words, and deeds. This is another way of saying that a believer's members, by God's grace, can be instruments of righteousness to God as a result of a believer's faithfulness in being a holy sacrifice to Him.

See [*You Can Change . . . One Step at a Time*](#)

Grace-filled, Spirit-controlled living is not a "white knuckle" process that says, "I can do it even if it kills me." We can do nothing apart from Christ (John 15:5) and can do all things through His strength (Philippians 4:13). Our adequacy is not in ourselves but rather our adequacy is from God (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). We are commanded to obey God's Word, and we are able to obey because of His power that works within us (Ephesians 3:20-21).

John 15:5, I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Ephesians 3:20-21, Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

- **MERCY**

Followers of Christ who appropriate God's grace in their lives are also aware of God's mercy, since His mercy and grace are eternally linked together. This linkage is apparent to believers as a result of their salvation (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Ephesians 2:4-5, But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

God's continual mercy is promised to those who revere and obey Him (Psalm 103:17-18). As with grace, God's mercy is always available to believers who confidently draw near to the throne of grace, often through prayer (Hebrews 4:16).

Psalm 103:17-18, But the lovingkindness (mercy) of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, To those who keep His covenant and remember His precepts to do them.

Hebrews 4:16, Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

As with grace, believers need mercy every day. Judicially, believers have been forgiven of all their sins and are seen by God as righteous (Romans 10:9-10, Philippians 3:9).

Romans 10:9-10, if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses,

resulting in salvation.

Philippians 3:9, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith

Until we see our Savior face-to-face, however, we will not actually be perfect in thought, word, and deed. All believers sin in various ways, often daily, this side of eternity. When we disobey our heavenly Father, we need to confess our sins to Him (i.e., agree with what He says about sin). When confession is made, God is faithful to show us mercy by forgiving and cleansing us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

1 John 1:8-9, If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

There are many other aspects of God's gracious mercy that are sometimes overlooked; but the following blessings promote peace, joy, hope, and Christ-like maturity in the lives of believers. For example:

God will never allow anything in a believer's life that is beyond one's ability to bear.

1 Corinthians 10:13, No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Nothing can separate believers from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39, For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Discipline from the Lord is designed to help believers grow in Christ.

Hebrews 12:10-11, For they (*our earthly fathers*) disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (*insert added*)

Trials are to be expected, but all trials are superintended by God for our benefit.

See [*Trials ... God's Pathway for Growth and Grace*](#) to review 16 divine benefits of trials.

No matter what, Jesus will never leave nor forsake believers in Him.

Matthew 28:20, ... I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Everything in the lives of believers can work together for the good of developing Christ-likeness.

Romans 8:28-29, And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.

A believer who truly appreciates God's personalized mercy will lovingly obey the Lord and be merciful to others (Luke 6:36). As a result, God continues to grant mercy to the merciful (Matthew 5:7). Some believers are graciously and supernaturally gifted in mercy and are to exercise this gift with cheerfulness (Romans 12:6 & 8).

Luke 6:36, Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Matthew 5:7, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Romans 12:6a & 8b, Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly . . . he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

An acronym for M-E-R-C-I-E-S (**M**indful **E**xpressions **R**eflecting **C**hrist **I**n **E**asing **S**uffering) reminds us that God's mercy as demonstrated in Christ is the basis for believers to help others in need.

Earlier, the necessity of a believer being continually filled with the Spirit was mentioned as a prerequisite for a believer to be "full of grace." The same is true for a believer to be "full of mercy." A believer cannot be merciful in a consistent manner apart from being continually filled with the Spirit. Not surprisingly, being continually filled with the Spirit is foundational for a believer to consistently grow in Christ in every dimension, which includes having the peace of Christ rule in one's heart and life.

- **PEACE**

Believers who experience God's peace in an on-going manner are those who continually recognize God's sovereign care and give thanks for God's abundant grace and mercy. These God-oriented believers love God's Word and, correspondingly, have great peace (Psalm 119:165). These believers set their minds on things of the Spirit instead of focusing primarily on natural aspects of everyday life (Romans 8:5-6).

Psalm 119:165, Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.

Romans 8:5-6, For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

Peace is not something that "just happens" to a believer. Peace must be pursued, which is accomplished by those growing in Christ (1 Peter 3:10-11; Romans 14:19; 2 Corinthians 13:11).

1 Peter 3:10-11, For, the one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

Romans 14:19, So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

2 Corinthians 13:11, Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Peace in the lives of believers is to be expected since they are mentally and spiritually oriented toward Christ and led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Galatians 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (*emphasis added*)

From a measurable perspective, the peace of Christ becomes a reality for believers in proportion to on-going prayer, right (biblical) thinking, and biblical obedience. The relationship between these aspects of the Christian life and the peace of Christ are presented in Philippians 4:6-9.

Philippians 4:6-9, Be 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Much of the following is excerpted from [Joyful and Worry Free](#)

When believers are at peace, they are free from anxiety and worry; and consistent prayer is integral to that result, as Philippians 4:6 indicates. The word for "anxiety" or "worry" in this verse means "to be stretched apart" or "to be distracted." The Latin root word for "worry" means "to strangle". When we worry we "strangle ourselves" which renders us unproductive and unfruitful, thus hindering our growth in Christ.

Notice that Paul does *not* say that the primary answer to worry is setting priorities and following them. There is, obviously, nothing wrong with setting priorities and following them, since that indicates personal responsibility. Before prioritizing, however, spend time in prayer.

The scriptural alternative to worry is *to pray about everything*. There are three descriptive statements about this verse:

Biblical prayer begins with God, not personal needs, so when you pray ... begin with worship.

Faith-based prayer makes a priority of taking requests to God, not simply repeating potential prayer needs to others.

Effective prayer is always accompanied by thanksgiving.

The above statements come from Paul's use of words to show that *the scriptural alternative to worry* results from a God-centered plan for prayer.

Paul uses the word for *prayer* that emphasizes adoration and worship. In others words, when you pray to the Lord in a habitual manner, you come to Him because of Who He is, for the Gift of His Son, the provision for eternal life on your

behalf, for His promises, and for His sovereign care of you in any and all situations. If you're going to ask anything at this point, ask the Lord what He wants to accomplish in and with you.

Out of this heart-to-heart encounter with the Person and character of God, then Paul says to ask for specific things—*supplication*. Someone who doesn't pray much or who doesn't know God's priorities of prayer will typically *begin* praying with "asking" instead of "worship." Obviously, asking is a necessary aspect of prayer. However, with the kind of prayer that is the biblical alternative to worry, *worship comes first, then asking follows*.

After *worship and asking* comes *thanksgiving*. You may think, "I can worship God for Who He is" and "I can ask for God's help in specific situations" but "I don't know about giving thanks in everything."

Notice Paul does not say, "Thank God for everything." He says, "In everything, give thanks." Why? You can thank Him that in spite of the circumstances, He is in control for He is sovereign. His love never fails, and His power never lessens. As was asked earlier: Can God work things out together for a believer's good in any situation? Of course He can, so thank Him for that promised benefit that is wrapped up in any challenge of life.

See [*God's Purposes in His Children's Trials*](#)

With regard to this biblical model for prayer in Philippians 4:6, more than one person has observed, "A person who comes apart in difficult situations has not made a habit of coming apart from the routine of life to meet with the Lord." Faithfully depending on the Lord helps to develop a "God consciousness" that will lead you to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Believers who do not pray in a manner similar to the prayer pattern in Philippians 4:6 will tend to respond to difficulties by simply telling others what they are going through and what they think they need. This type of communication can *temporarily* relieve emotional turmoil associated with worry, but it does not lend itself to spiritual growth in Christ.

See [*A Prayer Pattern to Help Structure Your Life*](#)

Those who pray in the manner indicated in Philippians 4:6 are promised peace that is beyond full comprehension, as the following verse indicates.

Philippians 4:7, And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This peace cannot be adequately described. You know it when you have it, and you certainly know it when you don't. It is the tranquil inner condition of a believer who knows that his sins are forgiven in Christ and, thus, fears no judgment from God. This peace also allows a believer to "rest in the Lord" in whatever difficulty that may arise, because he knows that God is in complete control. This peace is diametrically opposed to being anxious (worried).

There is a characteristic of God's peace that is markedly different from any other peace in the world. The last part of Philippians 4:6 says that God's peace guards your heart and mind. Literally, God's peace is a sentinel over your inner being (your heart), the very core of your life. God's peace also guards your mind (your thoughts and where your attention is focused). When God's peace is the sentinel over your heart and mind, you will not succumb to anxiety.

The peace of God cannot be separated from a biblical pattern of thinking. The Apostle Paul lists six specific aspects of a godly thought life in Philippians 4:8.

Philippians 4:8, Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable (*noble*), whatever is just (*right*), whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable (*admirable*), if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (*inserts added*)

The New International Commentary states the following about the above verse:

"These six items are mentioned as objects of a wholesome thought life, and each one is introduced with *whatever*. In the Greek, *whatever* is plural, which suggests that several things could be included under each heading.

"**True** things are of course the opposite of dishonest and unreliable things. **Noble** refers to what is dignified and worthy of respect. **Right** refers to conformity to God's standards. **Pure** refers to what is wholesome, not mixed with moral impurity. **Lovely** speaks of what promotes peace rather than conflict. **Admirable** relates to what is positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive. These six objects of thought are then described as excellent and praiseworthy."¹

With this practical foundation in place, believers can faithfully obey the Lord and, as a result, enjoy divine fellowship in a profound manner, which is mentioned in Philippians 4:9.

Philippians 4:9, The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

The Apostle Paul not only taught the Philippian believers about the Christian life, he lived it out before them. As a result, they had a living example of what it means to follow the Lord . . . in word and deed.

See [*What Do You Believe . . . No, Really*](#)

As you might expect, what you believe internally will never be known by others unless you tell them. What you *really* believe will never be known by others until you show them.

When your mind is focused on God and His perspective of your life instead of you and your perspective of your life, then you will live in a Christ-like manner. When that occurs, the following results will occur:

- God’s peace will be realized as you consistently rejoice.
- God’s peace will be realized when you exercise merciful love instead of unyielding justice.
- God’s peace will accompany a life of prayer that is based on worship, requests, and thanksgiving.
- God’s personal fellowship will be experienced in greater measure and, not surprisingly, joy and worry-free living will characterize your life.

All of the above benefits can be yours when you commune with the Lord as a way of life. What can you do if you are more prone to worry than to pray? Remember this first of all: The Good News (Gospel) of Christ focuses on you, not your circumstances. That does not mean that God is not concerned about your circumstances. He uses them to mature you and bring you to greater Christ-likeness. As one person went to the heart of the matter and said, “The message of the Gospel is concerned about us as people before Almighty God, not us before ‘almighty’ circumstances.”

SUMMING UP

Grace, mercy, and peace are resources the Lord has given to every believer for their initial salvation as well as for their walk through this earthly life.

Grace is the sustaining power that enables Christians to persevere and be an overwhelming conqueror in every dimension of this life. Mercy is God’s compassion that, at its pinnacle, forgives the daily sins of believers so that they can continue to grow in His grace and knowledge. Peace is the tranquility in the hearts and minds of believers that is realized by trusting the sovereign God of the universe to work all things together for the greatest good—growing in Christ—regardless of other people or circumstances.

May the reality of God’s great grace, mercy, and peace be realized by God’s children in greater measure now as believers look forward to being together in the presence of Jesus forever.

¹The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament Edition, based on the New International Version, page 664, Victor Books, 1983, Editors John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck