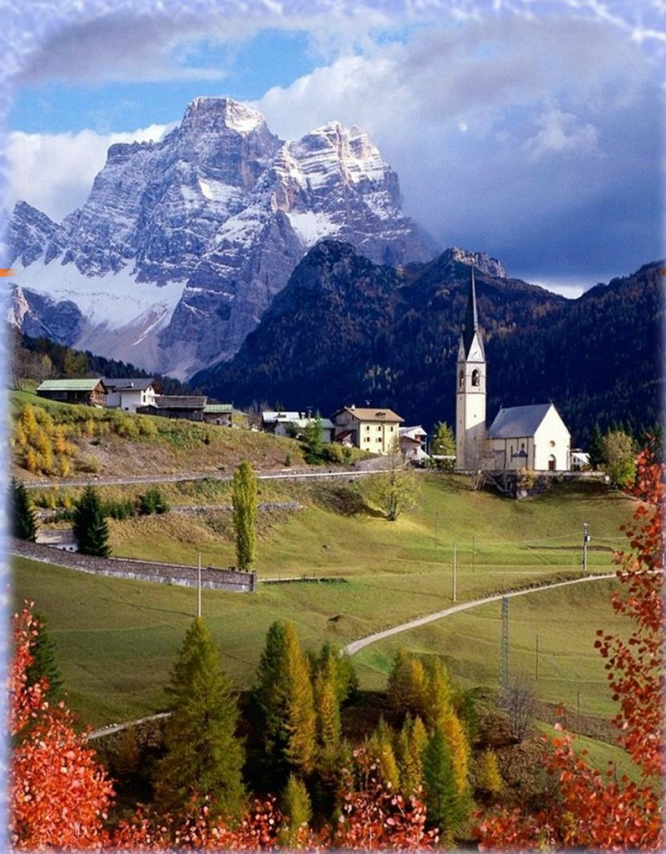


# **The Prayers of the Apostles**

**Booklet Five  
2 Peter 1:2, 3**



**A. W. Pink**



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### 2 Peter 1:2, 3

*“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” 2 Peter 1:2, 3.*

This lengthy series of articles on prayer would be lacking in completeness if we took no notice of the benedictions with which the apostles (James excepted) prefaced their epistles. Those opening salutations were very different from a mere act of politeness, as when the chief captain of the Roman soldiers at Jerusalem wrote a letter after this manner: “Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting” (Acts 23:26). Far more than a courteous formality were their introductory addresses, yea, even than the expressions of a kindly wish. Their “Grace be [to] you...and peace” (2 John 1:3) was a *prayer*, an act of worship, in which Christ was always addressed in union with the Father. It signifies that a request for these blessings had been made before the Throne. Such evinced the warm affection in which the apostle held those to whom he wrote, and breathed forth his spiritual desires in their behalf. By putting this at the forefront, it made manifest how powerfully his own heart was affected by the goodness of God unto them.

That which is now to engage our attention may be considered under the following heads: First, the *matter* of the prayer: “Grace and peace”—those were the blessings besought of God. Second, the *measure* of their bestowment: “be multiplied unto you.” Third, the *medium* of their conveyance: “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” Fourth, the *motive*

prompting the request: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:2, 3). Before filling in that outline or giving an exposition of those verses, let us point out (especially for the benefit of young preachers, *how* a verse should be pondered) what is *implied and imported* by this prayer.

In the apostle’s seeking from God such blessings as these for the saints, we are taught: First, that none can merit anything at the hands of God, for grace and merits are opposites. Second, that there can be no real peace apart from grace: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:21). Third, that even the regenerate stand in need, constant need, of grace from God. Fourth, therefore they should be vile in their own eyes. If we would receive more from God, then we must present our hearts to Him as empty vessels. When Abraham was about to make request of the Lord, he demeaned himself as “dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27), and Jacob acknowledged that he was “not worthy of the least of [His] mercies” (Gen. 32:10). Fifth, such a request as that was a tacit confession of the utter dependence of believers upon God’s bounty, that He alone could supply their need. Sixth, in asking for grace and peace to be “multiplied” unto them, acknowledgment was made that not only the beginning and continuance of them, but also their increase, proceeded from the good pleasure of God. Seventh, intimation was hereby given that we may “open [our] mouth wide” (Psa. 81:10) unto God. Yea, it is an ill sign to be contented with a little grace. “He was never good that doth not desire to grow better”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

A word needs also to be said upon the character of the book in which this particular prayer is found. Like all *second* epistles, this one treats of a state of affairs where false teaching and apostasy had a more or less prominent place. One of the principal differences between his two epistles is that whereas in his first, Peter’s main design was to strengthen and comfort his brethren amid the suffering to which they were exposed from

the profane (heathen) world (see the early part of booklet three), he now graciously warns (2 Pet. 2:1, 3:1-3) and confirms (2 Pet. 1:5, 10, 3:14) them against a worse peril from the professing world, from those *within* Christendom who menaced them. In his first epistle, Peter had represented their great “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion” (1 Pet. 5:8); but here, without directly naming him, he appears as an angel of light, but in reality, the subtle serpent: no longer persecuting, but seeking to corrupt and poison them through false teaching. In the second chapter, those false teachers are denounced as men who denied the Lord that bought them (2 Pet. 2:1), and as licentious (verses 10-14, 19), giving free play to their carnal appetites.

Those whom the apostle addressed are described as “them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1). By “faith” is here meant that act of the soul whereby the truth is savingly apprehended. Their faith is declared to be “precious,” for it is one of God’s choicest gifts and the immediate fruit of His Spirit’s regenerating power. This is emphasized in the expression “have obtained,” which is the same Greek word as in Luke 1:9: “his *lot was* to burn incense,” and again in John 19:24, “let us...*cast lots* for it.” Thus, these saints were reminded that they owed their saving faith not to any superior sagacity of theirs, but solely to the allotments of grace. It had been with them as with Peter himself: a *revelation* had been made to them, not by flesh and blood, but by the heavenly Father (Matt. 16:17). In the dispensing of God’s favours, a blessed portion had fallen to their share, even “the faith of [His] elect” (Tit. 1:1). The “them” were Gentiles, and the “us” Jews. Their faith had for its *object* the perfect righteousness of Christ their Surety, for “through the righteousness of” is literally “*in* the righteousness of” the divine Saviour.

Having thus described his readers by their spiritual standing, Peter added his apostolic benediction, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” It has not been sufficiently recognized that

there is in these salutations a beautiful *blending* of the western and eastern forms of greeting: “Peace” was the more distinctive Hebrew blessing, and “grace” the more prominent Greek one. Those who have read the Old Testament attentively will remember how frequently and how uniformly “peace be unto thee” is found: see Genesis 43:23; Judges 6:23; 18:6, etc. “Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces” (Psa. 122:7) shows it was a general term to denote *welfare*. From its use by the risen Saviour in John 20:19, we gather it was an all-inclusive summary of blessing. In contrast with the “Peace be unto you” of the Old Testament is the “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom. 16:20; and compare 1 Cor. 16:23; Gal. 6:18; Rev. 22:21), as the one commonly found in the New Testament. Hence, in this apostolic benediction, we see believing Jews and believing Gentiles are united in sharing the full blessing of God.

Having an earnest desire for their welfare, Peter sought for the saints the choicest bounties which could be conferred upon them, that they might be morally and spiritually enriched, both inwardly and outwardly. “Grace and peace” contain the sum of Gospel bestowments and the supply of our every need. Together they include all manner of blessings, and therefore, they are the most comprehensive things which can be requested of God. They are the choicest favours we can desire for ourselves, *and for our brethren!* They are to be sought by faith from God our Father, in reliance upon the mediation and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; both being communicated by the Holy Spirit—which is the reason why He is not here mentioned. “Grace and peace” are the very essence, as well as the whole of a believer’s true happiness in this life—hence the apostle’s longing that his brethren in Christ might abundantly partake of them.

“Grace” is not to be understood here in the sense of God’s favour, for these saints were already the objects thereof; nor of grace as an inward spiritual principle or “nature,” for that was imparted to them at the new birth. Rather was it a greater degree

and manifestation of it, as in 2 Corinthians 12:9. It was a request that there should be further exercises and discoveries of God's benignity unto them. Scripture distinguishes between "the grace of God, and the gift by grace" (Rom. 5:15), as it also informs us that "he giveth more grace" (Jam. 4:6). Though the fundamental meaning and reference of "grace" be to the free favour of God, the term is often used in a wider sense to include all those blessings which flow from His sovereign kindness; and it is to be so understood in the apostolic benedictions—a prayer for the continued and increased expression and manifestation of the same. "And peace." The two benefits are fitly joined together, for the one is never found without the other—without grace, there can be no solid and durable peace. The former is God's good will unto us; the latter is His grand work in us. In proportion as grace is communicated, peace is enjoyed. Grace to sanctify the heart; peace to comfort the soul.

"Peace" is one of the principal fruits of the Gospel as it is received into a believing heart, being that tranquility of mind which arises from the sense of our acceptance with God. It is not an objective but a subjective peace which is here in view. "Peace *with* God" (Rom. 5:1) is *judicial*, being what Christ made for His people (Col. 1:20), but faith conveys a reflex in the conscience of our amity with God. In proportion as faith rests upon the peace made with God by the blood of Christ and of our acceptance in Him will be our rest of soul. In and through Christ, God is at peace with believers, and the fruit or effect of this is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). But we are not in a capacity to receive and enjoy those blessings until we have surrendered to Christ's Lordship and taken His yoke upon us. It is therefore "the peace of God [ruling] in [our] hearts" (Col. 3:15) for which the apostles prayed, and *that* is the result of a Scriptural assurance of God's favour and the maintaining of communion with Him by an obedient walk. It is also peace with *ourselves*. We are at peace with ourselves when conscience ceases to accuse us and

our affections and wills submit themselves unto an enlightened mind. Furthermore, it includes concord and amity with our fellow Christians (Rom. 15:5, 6)—“The multitude of them that believed were of *one heart* and of one soul” (Acts 4:32).

“Grace and peace” are the heritage of God’s people, and of them, Peter desired that they should enjoy very much more than a mere “sip” or taste. As 2 Peter 3:18 intimates, he longed that they should “grow in grace,” and that they might be filled with peace (compare Rom. 15:13), and made request accordingly. His “be multiplied unto you” signified that larger and still more lavish displays of God’s goodness might be made unto them, both in its manifestations and in their apprehensions of the same; that an abundant supply of grace and peace should be conferred upon them. They were already the favoured partakers of those divine benefits, but request was made for a plentiful increase of them. Spiritual things (unlike material) do not cloy in the enjoyment of them, and therefore, we cannot have too much of the same. “Peace be multiplied” intimates there are degrees of assurance, and that we never cease to be dependent upon free grace. The dimensions of this request teach us that it is our privilege to ask God not only for more grace and peace, but for an amplitude thereof. God is most honoured when we make the largest demands upon His bounty. If there is straitness, it is in ourselves, and never in Him.

“Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” The careful reader, who is not too dilatory to compare passage with passage, will have observed a variation from the salutation used by Peter in his first epistle (1 Pet. 1:2). There he prayed, “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied;” the addition (“through the knowledge of God,” etc.) made here being a significant one, in keeping with his altered design, and appropriate to his present aim. The student will also have noted that “knowledge” is one of the prominent words of this epistle (see 2 Pet. 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8; 2:20, 21; 3:18). We should also consider how frequently the Saviour is designated “*our* Lord” (2 Pet. 1:11, 14, 16, etc.), in

contrast with the graceless professors who submitted not unto His sceptre. That “knowledge of God” is not a natural, but a spiritual one, not a speculative, but an experiential; nor is it simply of the God of creation and providence, but as a covenant God in Christ. This is evident from its being joined to or connected with “Jesus our Lord.” It is therefore an evangelical knowledge of God which is here in view. He cannot be savingly known except in and through Christ: “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27).

In as much as this prayer was for grace and peace to be “multiplied” unto the saints “through [or more literally *in*] the knowledge of God,” there was a tacit intimation that they would both abide and advance in that knowledge. “The more one advances in the knowledge of God, every kind of blessing increases also”—John Calvin (1509-1564) on this verse. A spiritual and experiential knowledge of God is the grand *means* by which all the influences of grace and peace are conveyed to us. God works upon us as rational creatures, agreeably to our intellectual and moral nature—knowledge preceding all else. As there is no real “peace” apart from grace, so there is no grace and peace without a saving knowledge of God, and no such knowledge of Him is possible but in and through “Jesus our Lord,” for Christ is the channel by which every blessing is transmitted to the members of His mystical body. As the more windows a house has, the more light enters it, so the greater our knowledge of God, the greater our measure of grace and peace. But the evangelical knowledge of the most mature saint is only fragmentary and feeble, and admits of continual augmentation by the divine blessing upon those means which have been appointed to that end.

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). Therein the apostle found his  *motive* for making the above request. It



was because God *had* already wrought so wondrously for these saints that he was moved to ask Him to continue dealing lavishly with them. We may also regard this third verse as being brought in to encourage *the faith* of these Christians: that, since God had done such great things for them, they should expect further liberal supplies from Him. It will be noted that the inspiring motive was a purely evangelical one, and not a legal or mercenary. God had bestowed upon them everything needful for the production and preservation of spirituality in their souls, and the apostle longed to see them maintained in a healthy and vigorous condition. Divine power is the foundation of spiritual life, grace is what supports it, and peace is the element in which it thrives. “All things that pertain unto life and godliness” may also be understood as referring to life in glory: a right unto it, a meetness for it, and an earnest of it, had already been bestowed upon them. Finally, as the contents of verse 3 may also be regarded as the *ground* of the exhortation in verses 5 to 7...so the supply asked for in verse 3 should be regarded as the necessary *equipment* for the same.

The fifth of seven booklets.

