

GOD'S LOVE, GRACE AND PEACE

“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” —ROMANS 1:7

Every Christian is called by God and designated a “saint”, which is to be set apart for God to participate in His work in this world. In Paul’s salutation to the Christians in Rome, he addresses them with three divine blessings of being a saint.

The first thing Paul says is that a saint is loved by God. That raises a natural question. “Isn’t everyone loved by God?” The answer is, “Yes”.... “For God so loved the world,” and that includes everyone. There is a difference, however, from being loved and experiencing and enjoying that love. A teenage girl, for instance, might fall in love with a pop star, line her room with posters of him and play his music all day, but the pop star doesn’t know she exists. There needs to be a relationship before love can be reciprocated. A saint knows they are loved by God because they are in a relationship with Him in which love is reciprocated, and they are personally experiencing and enjoying God’s love.

A saint is also the recipient of God’s grace. ‘Grace’ is better understood if we contrast it with ‘mercy’. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. We’re let off the hook for something we’ve done wrong, like speeding for example. Instead of a ticket the police officer gives us a warning. That is mercy. Grace, on the other hand, is getting what we don’t deserve. Before we pull away, this same officer says, “Hang on a minute,” reaches into his pocket and gives us a chocolate bar. That is

grace, giving us what we don't deserve. A saint lives with the fact that every day God is treating them not by what they deserve, but by what they don't deserve.

As a result of God's love and grace, a saint is also an enjoyer of God's peace. It's when we know and experience God's love, and depend on His grace that we can face life head on with all its traumas and anxieties. We have this inner peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ, which Paul describes in Philippians 4:7 as "a peace that passes all understanding." It isn't anything we can do for ourselves, but is supernatural in its source - a peace derived from God.

To be a saint is to be someone who has discovered who they really are, and what life is about. It's living with a conscious awareness of God's love, His grace and peace, in which we are secure and equipped to be set apart for His work in this world.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, Thank You for the immense privilege of being a part of your work in this world. Keep me mindful of your love, grace and peace in everything You call me to do.

TO REFLECT UPON: As a saint set apart for God's work in this world, am I drawing upon the blessings of His love, grace and peace?