



Grace, Mercy, and Peace: The Greeting That Changed the World

1 Timothy 1:2 (NKJV)

"To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

Introduction: When a Greeting becomes a Gospel!

Ancient letters opened with a formula as rigid as a legal contract: **From [Sender] to [Recipient], and greetings.**

This was convention as predictable and perfunctory as a modern email signature.

But **Paul transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary.** He takes the common greeting and transforms every element into a proclamation of the Gospel.

His salutation in **V 2** is not small talk, but a theological manifesto compressed into a single sentence.

Three words stand at the centre: **grace, mercy, peace.**

Together they form the foundation of Christian experience and the summary of everything God has done for sinners in Jesus Christ.

- **Grace** describes what God gives that we do not deserve.
- **Mercy** describes what God withholds that we fully deserve.
- **Peace** describes the result when grace is received and mercy is applied, a restored relationship between a holy God and guilty sinners.

But before we reach those three extraordinary words, Paul does something equally significant.

He addresses Timothy not as a church officer, not as an assistant, not as a protégé, but calls him 'a true son in the faith.'

These words carry more weight than any title. They describe a relationship built over fifteen years of shared mission, suffering, and service.

A relationship that is the New Testament's most complete model of Christian discipleship.

I. Timothy — Who was he?

A. The Background of Timothy

Timothy first appears in **Acts 16:1–3**, *Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his*

father was Greek. ²He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. ³Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

When Paul arrives at **Lystra** during his **second missionary journey**. He was the son of a **Jewish mother named Eunice** and a **Greek father**, making him what was called a 'half-Gentile' by strict Jewish standards.

His mother had not circumcised him an oversight that Paul, remarkably, corrected before taking him on the journey, not for theological reasons but for strategic ones, so that Timothy would have credibility in Jewish synagogues.

His spiritual formation had been extraordinarily rich.

2 Timothy 3:15, *and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

His **grandmother Lois** and his **mother Eunice** had saturated him in the Old Testament from infancy.

2 Timothy 1:5, *"When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."*

When Paul arrived in Lystra on his first missionary journey and likely led the family to Christ, Timothy had a prepared heart. The Word had been planted.

- The Gospel watered it.
- The Spirit caused it to grow.

By the time Paul met him in **Acts 16**, Timothy was already well-spoken of '*by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium*' (**Acts 16:2**).

The **local churches had already affirmed his character and gifts**. This is significant. The call to ministry was not Paul's unilateral decision. It was **confirmed by the community**. The body of believers had already identified in Timothy the marks of genuine calling before Paul arrived.

B. Timothy's Character — Strengths and Vulnerabilities.

Timothy was deeply loyal. He travelled with Paul through some of the most dangerous missionary journeys in history.

Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus.

He was sent on missions that required courage:

To **Corinth** when the church there was in open rebellion against Paul.

1 Corinthians 4:17, *For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*

To **Thessalonica** to strengthen believers under persecution.

1 Thessalonians 3:2, *and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,*

To **Philippi** to carry news and represent Paul.

Philippians 2:19, *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.*

Paul's description of Timothy in **Philippians 2:20–22** is one of the most moving in all his letters.

Philippians 2:20–22, *For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²²But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.*

In a world of self-seeking ministers, Timothy was genuinely other-centred. Paul says he had no one else like him.

But Timothy also had **vulnerabilities**.

He was **young**.

1 Timothy 4:12, *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

He appears to have had a **naturally shy or timid disposition**.

2 Timothy 1:7, *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

He had recurring **physical ailments**.

1 Timothy 5:23, *No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.*

Timothy was in Ephesus, one of the most spiritually complex and hostile environments in the ancient world largely on his own, facing false teachers who were older, more confident, and more established than he was.

Paul's letter to Timothy is written with this portrait in mind.

Every instruction, every encouragement, every warning is calibrated to the specific challenges of this specific man in this specific place.

Understanding Timothy's character is essential to understanding why Paul writes what he writes.

I. A True Son in the Faith.

A. The Word 'True' — Gnesios

The Greek word translated 'true' meaning legitimate, genuine, born of the right stock. It was a legal term used to distinguish a legitimate heir from an illegitimate one.

- A **gnesios** son had all the rights and inheritance of the father.
- A counterfeit could not make the same claim.

Paul uses this word with tremendous intentionality.

Timothy was not Paul's biological son. ***He was his son 'in the faith'*** spiritually born through the same Gospel, shaped by the same convictions, formed by the same theological commitments.

The legitimacy was not genetic but spiritual. Timothy did not merely know Paul's doctrines, but he shared Paul's **character, passion, method, and purpose.**

In an age when false teachers were claiming spiritual credentials they did not possess, when leaders were arising who had not been properly trained or tested, Paul's designation of Timothy as a **gnesios** son carried a powerful implicit message. Timothy is the real thing.

His faith is not inherited religion or performed piety.

- It is genuine.
- It has been tested.
- It has been proven.

When Timothy stands before the Ephesian congregation, he stands as Paul's legitimate spiritual heir.

"Genuine faith is not the absence of doubt but the presence of a trust that has been tested and has held."

B. Paul as Spiritual Father — The Discipleship Model.

Paul's relationship with Timothy is the New Testament's most complete model of intentional discipleship.

Consider what it involved.

Paul invested his life, not merely his lessons.

Timothy did not attend Paul's Bible classes from a safe distance. He travelled with Paul, sharing his hardships, **watching him in private and in public**, learning through **proximity what could never be learned from a curriculum.**

Paul exposed Timothy to suffering.

Timothy witnessed Paul's imprisonment at Philippi,

- his stoning at Lystra (**Acts 14:19** — the city where Timothy grew up, which means he likely saw the unconscious Paul dragged out of the city and left for dead),
- his humiliation at Corinth,
- his dramatic confrontations with Judaizers.

No classroom can teach what suffering teaches. Paul knew this, which is why he kept Timothy close.

Paul delegated real responsibility to Timothy.

He did not keep Timothy in the role of a passive observer. He sent him on missions where the stakes were high and the pressure was real.

This is how apprenticeship works, not by protecting the learner from difficulty, but by giving them progressive responsibility under the mentor's oversight and prayer.

Paul prayed for Timothy consistently.

2 Timothy 1:3-4, *I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,*

This is not a formality.

Paul's prayers for Timothy were part of his discipleship investment the spiritual dimension that undergirded every practical lesson.

What Paul modelled with Timothy is what the church in every generation desperately needs:

multigenerational, intentional, life-on-life discipleship.

- Not programmes.
- Not conferences.
- Not celebrity Christianity.

A Paul investing in a Timothy, who will invest in faithful men, who will invest in others.

2 Timothy 2:2, *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

This chain of discipleship is the engine of church health.

C. The Crisis of Fatherless Ministry

One of the most sobering realities in the contemporary church is the number of young leaders who have never had a 'Paul' in their lives.

- They enter ministry educated but unformed,
- theologically informed but pastorally untested,
- possessing knowledge without wisdom,
- skills without character.

The result is predictable: they are taken apart by the pressures of ministry that a spiritual father could have prepared them for.

Paul tells the Corinthians the problem.

1 Corinthians 4:15, *For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

- Instructors are plentiful, but fathers are rare.
- Instructors transfer information, but fathers transfer life.

The church today has an abundance of instructors and a scarcity of fathers. The fatherlessness is visible in the moral failures, the theological drift, and the burnout of young leaders everywhere.

The remedy is not a new programme.

It is obedience to the pattern Paul demonstrates with Timothy.

Older, tested, proven ministers must invest themselves in younger, called, gifted leaders.

The church must create the structures mentoring relationships, apprenticeships, elder oversight that make this investment possible.

III. Grace — The Foundation of Everything

A. The Transformation of the Greeting.

The standard Hellenistic letter began with the word **Chairein**, greetings, rejoice.

Paul transforms this to **Charis** — grace.

The words are related etymologically, but theologically they are worlds apart.

- **Chairein** is a social courtesy.
- **Charis** is the heart of the Gospel.

By making this substitution, Paul signals from the very first word of his greeting that what I am about to say comes from the grace of God, not from human religion.

Grace (charis) in Paul's theology is not merely God's kindness or benevolence though it includes these.

- It is the specific, undeserved, sovereign favour of God shown to guilty sinners in the gift of His Son.
- It is the giving of what is not merited and cannot be earned.

The Reformers captured it in the acrostic: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense.**

Grace is costly.

It cost God His Son, but it is free, in the sense that it cannot be purchased, earned, or deserved by those who receive it.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

B. The Five faces of Grace in Paul's Theology

- i) **Saving Grace:** In **Ephesians 2:8–9**, grace is the source of salvation free, sovereign, and unconditional.

Before we were born, before we were good or bad, God determined to lavish His grace on those He chose in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4–6, *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*

This is not grace as a reward for the spiritually promising, but it is grace as the rescue of the spiritually dead.

ii) Sustaining Grace:

Paul begged God to remove his thorn in the flesh for which God replied.

2 Corinthians 12:9, *'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'*

Grace is not just the doorway into salvation, but it is the daily provision that keeps the believer walking. Every step of the Christian life is a step taken in grace.

iii) Transforming Grace:

1 Corinthians 15:10, *'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'*

Grace does not leave its recipients unchanged. It transforms character, redirects ambition, and replaces pride with gratitude.

iv) Gifting Grace:

Romans 12:6, *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;*

Every spiritual gift in the body of Christ is a grace-gift (charisma, from the same root as Charis). No believer's gifts are self-

generated or merit based. They are sovereignly distributed expressions of divine grace.

v) Future Grace:

1 Peter 1:13, *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

Grace is not only past and present, it is future. The return of Christ will bring the final, fullest expression of grace will be seen in the glorification of the saints and the restoration of all things.

C. Grace as the Distinctive Mark of the Gospel

Every religion in human history has, in one form or another, a **system of earning divine favour karma, merit, penance, sacrifice, moral performance.**

The Gospel alone offers grace!

The unilateral, unearned, unconditional love of a holy God toward guilty sinners. This is what **makes Christianity not merely a superior religion but a different kind of thing altogether.**

The false teachers in Ephesus were, in their own way, departing from grace. Their myths and genealogies and law-misuse were all attempts to build systems of spiritual achievement.

This is the perennial temptation of fallen humanity to contribute something, to earn something, to maintain something in our relationship with God.

Paul's greeting cuts through all of this with a single word: **Grace**.

- You cannot earn it.
- You can only receive it.

"The entire Christian life can be summed up in one word: grace. Received freely, lived gratefully, shared generously."

IV. Mercy — The Ongoing Covering.

A. The Distinction Between Grace and Mercy.

Theologians have long noted the distinction between grace and mercy in Paul's greeting.

- Both flow from God's character.
- Both are undeserved.

But they address different dimensions of the human condition.

- ✓ **Grace** gives what is not deserved, the positive gift of righteousness, of sonship, of eternal life.
- ✓ **Mercy** withholds what is deserved, the punishment, the condemnation, the judgment that sin requires.

Thomas Aquinas expressed it this way:

- *'Mercy is the compassion of God toward misery.*
- *Grace is the favour of God toward the undeserving.'*

The distinction matters because it means that both the positive need (needing righteousness we do not have) and the negative need (deserving punishment we cannot escape) are addressed in the Gospel.

Christ gives us His righteousness (grace) and absorbs our condemnation (mercy).

Both transactions happen at the cross.

B. Mercy in the Old Testament

The **Hebrew word** behind mercy in the Old Testament is ***Hesed*** one of the richest words in the entire biblical vocabulary, translated variously as ***mercy, lovingkindness, steadfast love, covenant loyalty.***

Hesed is not a sentiment, but a **covenant commitment**.

It is the love that God pledged to Israel in His covenant with Abraham, and which He maintained faithfully even when Israel broke faith repeatedly.

Lamentations 3:22-23, *Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. ²³ They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

This was written in the context of Jerusalem's destruction, the burning of the temple, and the Babylonian exile.

Jeremiah is sitting in the rubble of everything God's people had trusted in. And his conclusion is not despair but mercy.

- ❖ The city is gone.
- ❖ The temple is ash.
- ❖ But ***the Hese***d of God endures.

This is the quality of mercy that Paul blesses Timothy with.

Not a temporary reprieve.

Not a cautious divine tolerance.

The steadfast, covenant-loyal, new-every-morning mercy of the God who promised and cannot break His promise.

For a young leader facing the darkness of Ephesian spiritual warfare, this mercy was not a theological abstraction, but the daily air he breathed.

C. The Significance of 'Mercy' Added to Paul's Greeting.

Scholars have noted that Paul's standard greeting to churches is 'grace and peace'.

(Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2).

But to Timothy and Titus, his sons, he adds mercy.

'Grace, mercy, and peace'

(1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4).

Why the addition for his pastoral letters?

The answer may lie in the unique vulnerability of ministry.

Those who serve in pastoral leadership carry burdens that others do not!

The weight of souls, the pain of congregational conflict, the spiritual responsibility for the health of the body, and the constant exposure to human brokenness.

Paul adds mercy to his greeting for Timothy because he knows, from his own experience, that mercy is what sustains a minister through the particular sorrows of leadership.

- Grace gets you in.
- Mercy keeps you going.

V. Peace — The Fruit of the Gospel.

A. Shalom — The Hebrew Background

The **Greek** word for peace **Eirene** translates the **Hebrew shalom**. **Shalom** is one of the most comprehensive words in the Hebrew language. It does not mean simply the absence of conflict or noise.

- Shalom means **wholeness, completeness, everything in its right order.**
 - The shalom of a city meant its **prosperity, health, security, and harmony.**
 - The shalom of a person meant the integration of every dimension of life **physical, social, and spiritual** under the blessing of God.
- When God created Eden, shalom reigned.
 - When Adam sinned, shalom shattered.

The entire redemptive story of the Bible is the restoration of shalom. God working through history, through covenants, through the law and prophets, and ultimately through His Son, to bring everything back into right relationship **God with humanity, humanity with one another, humanity with the created world.**

The Gospel is the announcement that shalom has been re-established at infinite cost through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1, 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

The war between God and the sinner is over. The treaty has been signed in blood.

B. Peace WITH God before Peace FROM God.

An essential theological distinction must be made here. Before a person can experience the peace of God the interior tranquillity, the '*peace that passes all understanding*' (**Philippians 4:7**) they must first receive peace WITH God.

These are not the same thing.

Peace with God is an objective, legal reality established by justification. It means the hostility between a holy God and a guilty sinner has been removed through the atoning work of Christ. This is not an experience, but a status. It is true of every genuine believer whether they feel it or not. It was established at the cross and received through faith.

Peace from God, interior peace, the calm of conscience, the assurance of God's presence is the experiential dimension.

This peace can fluctuate with circumstances. Paul experienced it in prison.

Philippians 4:11–13, *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Timothy needed to be reminded to pursue it amidst the turbulence of Ephesus. It is maintained through prayer, through trusting God in every situation, and through keeping one's mind fixed on what is true, noble, just, and pure.

Philippians 4:8, *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

Paul blesses Timothy with both.

His greeting is not merely psychological comfort, but the declaration of a legal and spiritual reality.

- Timothy, you stand before God in peace.
- Christ has accomplished it.
- Now walk in it.

C. The Peace Christ gives versus the Peace the World Gives.

Jesus made an explicit contrast.

John 14:27, *'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'*

The world offers counterfeit peace. The peace of anaesthesia (numbing the pain), of accommodation (reducing your demands until disappointment disappears), and of avoidance (not thinking about what is true about your condition).

Christ's peace is different in kind, not merely in degree. It is grounded in His accomplished work, not in favourable circumstances. It persists under pressure because its source is external to the circumstances.

Paul wrote 'grace, mercy, and peace' from a Roman prison. Timothy was commanded to maintain peace in a hostile city.

The peace of Christ is not weather-dependent. It is the settled confidence of a soul anchored in the unchanging promises of a faithful God.

VI. From God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

A. The Trinitarian Structure

The source of grace, mercy, and peace is given with deliberate precision: *'from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.'*

The Father and the Son are presented as co-equal, co-eternal sources of the same divine blessings. This is not subordinationism (the view that the Son is less than the Father) it is the Trinitarian

theology that would be formally articulated at **Nicaea in 325 AD** but is here already present in its full substance.

The **Nicene Creed's affirmation** that the Son is 'of the same substance as the Father' (Homoousios) is implicit in verses like this, where the Father and the Son are listed as joint sources of divine grace without any suggestion of distinction in their ability to give.

Nicaean Creed was brought in to counter the false gospel proclaimed during the **3rd century**.

- First part is affirming the Father God
- Second part is affirming Co-equal of Lord Jesus Christ.
- Third part is about the Lord Holy Spirit.
- Fourthly to affirm the salvation.

1. We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
2. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He

will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
4. We believe in one holy universal(catholic) and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

What the Father gives, the Son gives. They give together, from a single divine source.

B. God Our Father — The Relational Revolution

In the ancient world, gods were not fathers. They were powers **to be appeased, forces to be feared**, capricious beings whose favour was uncertain and whose anger was devastating.

The notion of addressing the God of the universe as 'Father' with all that implies of intimacy, relationship, accessibility, and unconditional love was alien to paganism and radical even within Judaism.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray Our Father (**Matthew 6:9**) using the **Aramaic Abba**, a word of familial intimacy that shocked many contemporaries.

Paul picks up this language in **Romans 8:15**, *You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out Abba, Father.*

The Spirit enables believers to address the Creator with the intimate address of a child calling to a loving parent.

For Timothy, serving far from home in a hostile city, this designation 'God our Father' was not a theological abstraction. It was a personal anchor.

He had a Father who was watching.

A Father who had commissioned him.

A Father whose grace, mercy, and peace were not conditional on Timothy's performance but flowed from an eternal, covenantal relationship.

C. Jesus Christ Our Lord — The Exclusive Claim.

In a city where the dominant religious system centred on **Artemis** and where the imperial cult demanded worship of **Caesar as Kyrios** (Lord), Paul's declaration that Jesus Christ is 'our Lord' was a confrontational political-theological statement.

Kyrios was the title given to the **Roman Emperor in official inscriptions**. To call Jesus Lord was, in that context, to dethrone Caesar at least in the believer's ultimate allegiance.

The earliest Christian confession one of the oldest recorded in the New Testament was simply 'Jesus is Lord'.

Romans 10:9, *"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

1 Corinthians 12:3, *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

This was not a private religious opinion, but a public declaration of ultimate loyalty.

For Timothy, living in the shadow of the great temple of **Artemis**, preaching to people whose entire social and economic world was built around the goddess, this confession was simultaneously liberating and dangerous.

VII. The Threefold Blessing in Historical Perspective.

The triad of grace, mercy, and peace has roots that run through both Testaments.

Numbers 6:24–26, *"The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;*

²⁶The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”

Here is grace (be gracious to you) and peace the essential elements of Paul's greeting, now expanded with mercy in the full light of the Gospel.

The prophet Micah, in one of the most memorable summaries of covenant faithfulness.

Micah 7:18, *'Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy'.*

Mercy is not a New Testament innovation, but the Old Testament character of God now fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

What is new in Paul's greeting is not the substance grace, mercy, and peace have always been God's gifts to His covenant people.

What is new?

The source.

These gifts now flow specifically *'from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.'*

The Christ-event has transformed the mode of delivery. What was anticipated in shadow through the law and prophets is now given in substance through the person of the Son.

CONCLUSION: A Story for the Heart

In 1971, a young British theologian named John Stott was preparing to preach at a small conference in Uganda. The country was in the early stages of Idi Amin's brutal regime. The night before the conference, word reached the organizers that Amin had ordered the arrest of several prominent Christian leaders. Two of the pastors scheduled to attend were taken from their homes. Fear settled over the remaining participants like a fog.

On the morning of the conference, Stott stood before the gathered leaders, men and women who had every reason to be terrified and opened 1 Timothy. He spent his entire first session on verse 2 alone. He read it slowly: 'Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.' Then he said: 'Brothers and sisters, there is nothing I can say about your political situation. I cannot protect you. I cannot predict what will happen.

But I can tell you this: the God who is your Father sent His Son so that you would have grace, His unearned favour upon your lives.

And mercy, His withholding of the punishment you and I deserve.

And peace, not as the world gives, but the peace of Christ that no government edict and no military regime can take from you.

That peace is yours. It is yours right now. And it will be yours when this is over. Whatever happens, you stand in grace.'

A pastor in the front row, whose brother had been arrested the previous night, began to weep. Then he began to sing — quietly, in his tribal language. One by one, the others joined

him. Stott, who did not know the language, said afterward that the experience of watching those persecuted believers receive grace, mercy, and peace in the middle of their crisis was the most vivid illustration of 1 Timothy 1:2 he had ever witnessed.

The conference continued. **Several of the leaders were later imprisoned. Some were martyred.** But in that room, on that morning, the greeting of an apostle written two thousand years earlier had reached across the centuries and done exactly what it was designed to do: it had declared the grace, mercy, and peace of God to people who desperately needed it and had nowhere else to look for it.

This is what the church exists to do. Not to offer security, prosperity, or political protection.

But to declare, with confidence and precision, the grace, mercy, and peace that flow from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. Whatever you are facing today, hear the greeting: Grace to you. Mercy upon you. Peace be with you. It is from the Father. It is through the Son. It is real. It is yours.

APPLICATION FOR DAILY LIFE

1. Take time this week to identify your own spiritual 'Timothy' Someone younger in faith whom you could invest in. If you do not have one, pray specifically for God to send you such a person.
2. Write a letter or send a message to someone who has been a 'Paul' to you — a mentor, a teacher, a parent in the faith.

Express what their investment has meant to your spiritual life.

3. Memorise the triad:

- Grace gives what we do not deserve.
- Mercy withholds what we do deserve.
- Peace is the result when both are received.

Use these definitions in your personal devotions and in conversations about the Gospel.

4. Practise the discipline of receiving grace. Many Christians are better at performing for God than resting in His grace. This week, spend at least ten minutes each day simply thanking God for His grace — not asking for anything, just receiving.

5. Romans 5:1 says we 'have peace WITH God.' Not peace FROM God — that comes after.

Examine whether you are living as one who has been declared at peace with the Creator of the universe. If anxiety or guilt still drives your service, return to the doctrine of justification.

6. Share the Gospel with one person this week using the three words of Paul's greeting as your framework:

'God offers grace — what you don't deserve.

God offers mercy — withholding what you do deserve.

The result is peace with God. This is what Jesus made possible.'