

# Rev. 1:4-5. the Grace and Peace of the Three-One God

by Horatius Bonar

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*The sermon emphasizes the grace and peace of the Three-One God, highlighting the eternal nature of God's love and the fullness of the Holy Spirit's gifts.*

**Scripture:** Revelation 1:4

**Topics:** "Grace", "The Triune God"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound grace and peace that flows from the Triune God as expressed in Revelation 1:4-5. He explains that despite the perilous times, God's grace abounds even more, offering eternal grace and peace to the Church and the world. Bonar highlights the significance of the seven churches as representative of the universal Church, each reflecting different states of spiritual condition. He underscores the eternal nature of God's grace and peace, which is dispensed through the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness and ruler of the earth. The sermon calls believers to recognize their identity within the Church and the continuous need for God's grace in their lives.

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## Transcript

The Grace And Peace Of The Three-One God

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia--Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth."--Revelation 1:4-5.

'In the last days perilous times shall come;' yet in those days, where 'sin shall abound, grace shall much more abound.' It shall be the grace of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the manifold and perfect fullness of the grace of Godhead; 'exceeding riches of grace.' Then shall be the greatest of all the manifestations of grace--both to the Church and to the world. It shall be grace to the uttermost, patience to the uttermost, love to the uttermost, from the Three-one Jehovah to the chief of sinners. Before judgment comes grace; and not until that large fullness of grace has been rejected shall the wrath descend.

Verse 4--John to the seven churches which are in Asia.

Here is the apostolic salutation; very like Paul's (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2), only shorter. It is Jesus who writes; it is the Holy Spirit who writes--yet also John--John the servant of Christ, and His witness-bearer. He addresses the seven Asian Churches. There were many others--Colosse, Tralles, Magnesia--but seven are chosen as representative Churches, selected because of certain peculiar characteristics and conditions which were found in them, that, in speaking to these seven co-existing peculiarities, he might speak to all Churches in all ages; so that each Church, in every age, might find, in some one of these seven, a picture of itself, and, in the words of warning or of cheer, something exactly suited for admonition to itself.

To speak 'symbolically'--no one of these Churches has passed away. Ephesus has always existed and still exists in some of the many Churches throughout the world. So with Smyrna and Pergamos and the rest. They are not representatives of successive stages or conditions, spiritual or ecclesiastical; they are not prophetic or consecutive, as if Ephesus pictured the primitive Church, Smyrna that of the third and fourth century, down to Laodicea, the representative of the Church of the last days. They picture 'seven states in which the Church will always be found', and in regard to which each should put the question--Is it I? Lord, is it I?

Why they are selected from Asia Minor is hard to say. Certainly it is Gentile ground; and it is to the Churches of the Gentiles that the book is written. Israel had been cast off and had gone out of sight. Jerusalem had fallen; and the apostles, rejected by the Jew, had turned to the Gentile. But why these representative Gentile Churches were selected from Asia, and not from Greece or any Gentile region, we cannot say, further than that John preached at Ephesus and superintended the neighboring Churches. Seven is the number of completeness--manifold completeness; fullness in variety; covenant-certainty. The portrait is one; of the one Church of God on earth. But of this one portrait there are seven different views, each bringing out something special, while preserving the common outline and features; all combined giving the complete enumeration or record both of the evil and the good belonging to the universal Church below, in this the day of her imperfection and continual declension.

Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come. GRACE--'Free favor' (or free love) is the first note of blessing--apostolic blessing, as in Paul's epistles; and then 'PEACE,' as the stream flowing from the heavenly fountainhead of grace. 'Peace' simply as the master's blessing (John 14:27), as if the 'grace' were not needed to be expressed, He Himself being the visible grace or love. 'Grace and peace,' or sometimes 'grace, mercy, and peace,' we find to be the blessing of His servants, full and large, containing all they needed. 'From Him which is, and who was, and who is to come.' This is the inspired interpretation of the name Jehovah, 'who is, and was, and shall be.' Here it is given to the Father, as elsewhere to Christ. 'Yesterday, today, and forever,' 'from everlasting to everlasting God.' The Father's grace and peace must be, like Himself, eternal. Eternal grace, eternal peace--this is the Church's portion--this is the heritage of each saint.

And from the seven Spirits who are before His throne. This must mean the Holy Spirit in His sevenfold completeness and fullness--this sevenfold fullness corresponding with the seven Churches, and intimidating the manifold abundance of the gifts which flow out of Him to the whole Church of God.

From this storehouse are dispensed the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit,' which Christ has received for men. These seven Spirits are 'before the throne of God;' and from that throne they issue forth like 'the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God, and of the Lamb.' The Holy Spirit is 'the promise of the Father;' and He comes in His fullness, from His throne, the seat of all authority and power.

Verse. 5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness. It is not merely the Father's grace that is prayed for, but the grace of the Son, the grace of Him whose name is Jesus--Jesus the Christ; and it is the peace of Him who said--Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, that is here dispensed. And this Jesus is the 'faithful Witness,' who has come to us from God with a true testimony--a testimony concerning the Father and the Father's purpose; a testimony to the church and to the world; a testimony which, on being received, enables us to say, "We know;" for if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.

The first-begotten of the dead. The word 'first-begotten' in the Old Testament is almost always used in its literal sense, the eldest of the family, or the first of the heard and flock. So in the New Testament (Matthew 1:25). But in one or two places it is used symbolically--in reference to majesty or excellency, to power, to possession of the inheritance or birthright (Psalm 89:27; Jeremiah 31:9); and in the New Testament the allusions to Christ are symbolical of these, referring not so much to priority in time as to the birthright. These allusions are the following--(1) "First-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29); (2) 'First-

born of every creature' (Colossians 1:15; lit., 'first-born of the whole creation'); (3) 'First-born from the dead' (Colossians 1:18; same as in Revelation 1:5); (4) "the first-born; or 'first-begotten' (Hebrews 1:6, where the word stands alone, like 'only-begotten'); (5) Church of the first-born' (Hebrews 12:23).

Christ then has the resurrection-birthright; whether actually He was or was not the first that rose, as to time, He has the primogeniture of resurrection. All of excellency, and power, and glory, and inheritance that belongs to the first-born is His. He is, moreover, 'the first-fruits of those who slept' (I Corinthians 15:20); the pledge, the model and type of resurrection. He is the resurrection and the life. He stands at the head of the long procession of the risen saints, the Church of the first-born, who are in their turn 'a kind of first-fruits of His creatures' (James 1. 18).

And the Prince of the kings of the earth. The word 'prince' is simply 'ruler' or 'president,' as 'ruler of the synagogue' (Luke 8:41); 'Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews' (John 3:1). As, then, the ruler presided over the synagogue, or the head of the Sanhedrin presided in that court of the elders, so does Christ preside in the assembly of the kings of the earth. The expression is not exactly the same as 'King of kings and Lord of lords;' it rather refers to presidency and power, such as is described in the 82nd Psalm--'God stands' (or 'has taken His stand,' a solemn act, for the solemn purpose, immediately declared) 'in the congregation of God' (Numbers 27:17, 31:16, Joshua 22:16-17, 'the congregation of Jehovah'); 'in the midst of the gods He judges;' showing Himself president of earth's kings, and as such taking His place among them (for judgment upon them), even as they do in their court or cabinet; and they are called 'gods,' not simply as having authority or worthy of an honorable name, but as His vice-regents, 'God's ministers' (Romans 13:4), to whom their subjects are to look for the embodiment of all that is divine, and in whose laws and actings they expect to find exemplified and represented the laws and actings of God Himself.

Christ is thus declared God; and as such He presides over the assembled potentates of earth as their Ruler and Lord, by whom they reign, to whom they are responsible, and for whose glory they are to make use of all that they possess of power, and honor, and wealth. 'Worthy is the Lamb of to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength!' (ch. 5:12). The gold and silver of earth, the thrones and kingdoms of the world, all belong to him, and are to be employed for His glory, in all ages, present and to come!

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