

# Wonderful Words of Life

# *Preface*

The change that occurs in a person's life who has truly accepted God's offer of salvation and eternal life is very dramatic. The change is so remarkable that they begin to develop an attitude of gratitude especially for what God did for them. There is a sincere feeling of wonder and awe as to why He would do that for such a sinner. It leads to a new understanding of who is in control and a willingness to obey Him and share with others what has happened. It is truly a new birth.

Something that I have discovered about this experience is that certain words used to describe the change and results of this new birth have a completely new meaning than they had before. Many of them are common words that are written, read and spoken every day and the same words I have used many times myself. But now their meaning is much deeper than I understood before I was saved. As a matter of fact, the depth of their meanings seems to increase as I grow older and as I grow spiritually from my study of God's Word.

What I hope to do in this series is take a few of these familiar words and try to develop a better understanding of their meaning in the context of what God has given us and what He expects. Many of these words will be familiar as fruits of the spirit and others will be words used by the writers of the scriptures but inspired by the Holy Spirit. This will be a challenging journey and I realize what I share will be from a personal perspective. However, it is my intent to make sure that it is founded on God's Word and is sound from a theological standpoint.

As I pursue this endeavor I would welcome any comments or suggestions that the reader would like to make. I know that iron sharpens iron and I can always use more sharpening.

We will begin the series by looking at the word *peace* in the next session.

# Peace

Definitions of the word peace: 1) freedom or a period of freedom from public disturbance or war; 2) a quiet and calm state of mind; 3) agreement and harmony among people; 4) an agreement to end war

Of all the wonderful words we find in the Bible one might wonder why I would choose to share my thoughts on the word *peace* before any of the other great words in the scriptures. I certainly realize that there may be a number of words that carry a greater degree of importance. I also understand that everyone has their own opinion regarding what should be the more important words. But for me, no other word really sums up the totality of the results of the salvation experience. It is a word that has become the very essence of my ability to describe what has happened in my life since I have been saved. So, let's take a look at this wonderful word of life.

Obviously, the Bible has a lot to say about peace and it is used in a number of different contexts. In the King James Version the words translated peace are used over 400 times. As we study God's Word, we find that there are different types of peace. These include peace of God, peace with God, peace with man, inner peace and false piece just to name a few. However, an in-depth study of all these would take many hours and is a matter of subject for a later time. What I would like to do is look at what peace means to me and I hope what it means to other believers.

Although I have been saved for many years, God has used many things throughout my life to teach me truths that I otherwise would probably have not discovered on my own. One of those experiences happened about 25 years ago during a critical point in my life. I had made a very difficult decision to make a career change that would have a significant effect on my financial situation and in turn create a great deal of stress in our family. But I was convinced that it was what God wanted me to do. However, after many struggles with no positive results I began to develop the feeling that God had abandoned me and my life was not counting for anything worthwhile.

During this time, the owner of the company I worked for was visiting my office and we spent all day together making calls on potential clients. We didn't have much success and it was apparent he was becoming very irritated. When we returned to the office we sat in the car and talked. Then suddenly he asked me a question I didn't expect. His question was this; "How can you remain so calm? What is it you have that I don't have?" Without thinking I said "I have a peace that goes beyond human understanding because it comes from God." There is no doubt in my mind that God gave me those words and proved that He was still there. This led to the opportunity for me to share a witness with him.

This man did not respond to the gospel, but this became a significant event in my life. For the first time, I realized that God had given me that peace and that I was totally secure in Him. This peace is a gift from Him because of His *love* for us, His *mercy* on us and His wonderful *grace*. There is no better way, in my opinion, to describe what He has done for me than to know that I have the peace of God and that I have peace with God because I have trusted in what Jesus did for me on the cross.

He is my **Peace!** Is He yours?

# Joy

Definitions of the word **joy**: 1) the emotion evoked by well-being, success or good fortune or the prospect of possessing what one desires; the expression or exhibition of such emotion 2) a state of happiness or felicity; 3) a source or cause of delight

**Joy** is another wonderful word we find in the Bible and is used in several different contexts. But generally speaking it can be summed up as "the happy state that results from knowing God and serving Him". The word **joy** appears somewhere between 150 and 200 times in the Bible depending on the translation a person uses. The Old Testament is full of passages that contain the word or refers to it by using words that are closely related. Both David and Solomon used the word countless times in their writings along with some of the Old Testament prophets. Nehemiah told the Israelites in chapter 8, verse 10 not to worry, because "the **joy** of the Lord is our strength" and therefore encouraged the people. David declares one of his most famous statements in the Psalms in chapter 30, verse 5 when he says "weeping may last for the night, but **joy** comes in the morning". We could share many scriptures where the word **joy** is used but it would take many pages and more time than I can spare. So let's look at the word in a more personal way.

Where does joy come from? Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes 2:26 "For God gives wisdom and knowledge and **joy** to a man who is good in His sight." So, it is obvious that it comes from God. But how can we be good in His sight? The answer to that question has alluded man for centuries and many have tried and failed to provide an acceptable answer. But the truth is there is only one answer. And that is it can only be found by trusting in Jesus and what He did on the cross. His imputed righteousness on us is the only thing that makes us good in God's eyes. Question answered for all time and eternity.

**Joy** is something that is planted deep within us and is not something that departs quickly or easily. Just like I have read elsewhere, when we have the **joy** of the Lord we will know it and those around us will also know we have it. It will show in everything we do and in much of what we say. We should continuously be looking for reasons to be **joyful**. As a matter of fact we need to remember that **joy** is also a fruit of the spirit and as the Holy Spirit directs our lives he will make evident the things that bring **joy** to our lives. However, if we are not abiding in God's word, talking to Him on a daily basis, fellowshiping with other believers and not trusting Him to provide what we need we will get caught up in this world's way of living and possibly lose our **joy**. Just like peace, we need to cherish the **joy** we have in Him and be forever thankful for both. May we all be able to sing the old song: **I have joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart.**

**I have that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart to stay.**

# Love

Definitions of the word *love*: 1) a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; 2) attraction based on sexual desire; 3) affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests; 4) warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion; 5) unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another

*Love* is what makes the world go around. Have you ever heard that said before? Through the years I have heard it many times. The question is 'What do people mean when they use that phrase?'. I think sometimes they mean that as long as there is *love* then everything is ok. No matter what the circumstances, *love* makes it all acceptable. Well there may be some truth in that when taken in the right context and perspective. But the thing that must be considered is 'What is real *love* and where does it come from?'. We will consider that question as we move through our discussion of *love*.

The word *love* is used very loosely in today's society. We use the word to say we are fond of things such as seasons, foods, sports, movies, etc. instead of using a word similar to like or care for. We also use the word to describe our relationship with our spouse, family members and friends but with each use comes a varying degree of the depth of the word. I *love* college football. I *love* spring and fall. I *love* pintos beans and cornbread. I *love* my wife. I *love* my children. I *love* my grandkids. These are all examples of how we use the word but obvious with somewhat different meanings for each. The strength and depth for each are not the same.

In many instances *love* is one of those words that cannot fully describe what is meant by the one who voices it. For example, when I tell my wife I *love* her it does not fully describe my innermost feelings of how I really cherish her. Just to say "I *love* you" does not include a measure of depth of what I am really trying to say. I want to say that she means so much to me that I would do anything for her even to the point of dying. Just the word *love* does not say that in human terms even though we want it too. We use the word with good intentions but often it falls short of what we are trying to say.

In spite of all that has been said in the above discussion concerning the word *love*, there is another word for *love* that comes from the original Greek language and has a verb and noun form. Agapao is the verb form of the word and agape is the noun form. This *love* is very similar to the meanings we have already seen but has a much deeper depth to it. Agape is generally the most often used word for *love* in the New Testament and carries with it a deliberate and purposeful action on the part of someone. In other words, it is not an emotional or impulsive action but is intentional in nature. The Bible tells us that *love* is an attribute of Holy God and goes further to say that God himself is *love*. 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:16 (NAS) states "God is *love*. Whoever lives in *love* lives in God, and God in them."

God *loves* us much like a parent *loves* a child. God's *love* for us is such that He made it possible for us to become one of His very own children so that we might have that father-child relationship and live with Him forever. This *love* is deliberate on His part and was proven by His actions. The Bible verse many people are the most familiar with is John 3:16. As this verse says "God so *loved* (agape) the world (everyone) that He gave (sacrificed) His only begotten Son (Jesus) that whosoever (anyone) believes in Him (Jesus) shall have everlasting life." Notice that His *love* resulted in a deliberate action and His action became the gift of salvation to us. The interesting thing is that some people return this *love* to Him and others choose not to.

This kind of *love* is what He has demonstrated to us and desires that we have that same *love* for Him. How then do we show that *love* for Him? By obedience to His commandments. Remember that agape *love* is purposeful and not impulsive or emotional. It manifests itself in our actions and our lifestyle. He also expects us to *love* others as He has *loved* us. The question again becomes "How?" First by sharing the gospel with others when we have the opportunity and by ministering to our Christian brothers with the gifts and talents that God has given us. Paul describes in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 the nature of the *love* we are to have for one another and no stone is left unturned. It truly leaves the focus on others rather than ourselves.

We must always remember that God is the source of all our *love*. As someone else has said, "Loving God and loving other people are so interrelated that we cannot have one without the other." John wrote in his first epistle the following words as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit: We *love* because He first *loved* us. Those who say "I *love* God" and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not *love* a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot *love* God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from Him is this: those who *love* God must *love* their brothers and sister also. (NRSV, 1st John 4:19-21)

May we all experience the *love* of God and in turn *love* Him and our brothers and sisters just as He has commanded. Amen and amen!

# *Mercy*

Definitions of the word *mercy*: 1) a compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or one subject to one's power; 2) lenient or compassionate treatment; 3) a blessing that is an act of divine favor or compassion; 4) a fortunate circumstance; 5) compassionate treatment of those in distress

In Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary the word *mercy* was defined as the act of sparing or the forbearance of a violent act expected. The first mention of the word *mercy* in the Bible is found in Genesis 19:16 where Lot and his family is spared from God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The book of Psalms is full of the use of the word *mercy*. Examples of *mercy* are seen throughout the Old Testament and as we see in the New Testament, God shows His ultimate *mercy* on mankind by giving His Son as a perfect sacrifice for our sin. So let's take a look at what *mercy* really means to the believer.

I once read or heard a story about a young soldier in Napoleon's army that committed an act of some kind that was not acceptable for a soldier. The punishment for that type of crime was usually death but a military trial was conducted before sentencing was pronounced. The soldier's mother had the opportunity to appear before Napoleon and while doing so she asked that he have *mercy* on her son. Napoleon considered the request then made the statement "Your son doesn't deserve *mercy*."; to which she replied "If he deserved it, it wouldn't be *mercy*." I don't know the outcome of this story but it sure sheds a light on what the meaning *mercy* really entails. I believe definition three above is probably the closest thing to the biblical definition.

We all need to stop and consider what a blessing it is that God has shown us such great *mercy*. *Mercy* is another one of those "Wonderful Words of Life" that is impossible to fully define and describe in words that can leave us with a full understanding of it. But God has chosen to show us *mercy* when we obviously don't even deserve His consideration of our condition. His desire to have a relationship with us has brought about this *mercy* and we need to be constantly reminded of what He gave when He provided His only Son as the atonement for us. It is very difficult to separate God's *mercy* from His love and His grace. To me these three words go hand in hand when we try to make sense of His gift of salvation. I'm so very thankful that He has demonstrated His love for us, shown His *mercy* towards us and by His grace has saved us because we have placed our trust in Him through faith.

**To God be the glory and honor and praise forever and ever! Amen and amen!**

# Grace

Definitions of the word **grace**: 1) unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification; 2) a virtue coming from God; 3) a state of sanctification through divine **grace**; 4) a special favor; 5) a disposition to or an act or instance of kindness, courtesy or clemency; 6) a temporary exemption; 7) a charming or attractive trait or characteristic; 8) a pleasing appearance or affect; 9) ease and suppleness of movement or bearing; 10) a short prayer at a meal asking a blessing or giving thanks

**Grace**. It's amazing! **Grace**. It's wonderful! **Grace**. It's matchless! **Grace**. It pardons! **Grace**. It cleanses! **Grace**. It's greater than all my sin! All of these words are found in songs that most of us have sung for many years. Did you ever stop to think why the writers of these old hymns penned these descriptive words for **grace**? I believe it is because they had experienced that **grace** from God and realized it was something that they didn't deserve or earn. Every time I hear those songs, the first thought I have is how could I ever deserve the unmerited favor of Almighty God. The answer is simple. I can't!

**Grace** is probably the most 'wonderful word of life' that we have looked at. Without the **grace** of God we would never have any hope of a relationship with Him. It is another one of those words that to attempt to define it we can't really do it justice. We don't fully understand why God would create man knowing he would sin and bring judgment upon himself. We don't fully understand why he would show man His favor without man having to earn it in some way. As a matter of fact, there are many things about God that I don't understand but I have put all my trust in Him. I believe what He said even if I can't make heads or tails of it. The Bible plainly states that we are saved by **grace** through faith and that not of ourselves but it is the gift of God. What is the gift? It's **grace**! When I put my faith and trust in Him I accepted His gift of **grace**. Here we could walk the Roman Road to share the supporting verses explaining the gospel message and we would see that there has only been one person in all of history to deserve God's favor. That man was Jesus! All God and all man at the same time. He did the will of His father at all times even to the cross. Through Him God's gift of **grace** has been made available to us.

God's **grace** is not just His saving **grace** but includes His sustaining **grace**. In other words, it's a complete package of all that we need for salvation and for living out our lives for Him. The Bible says that His **grace** is sufficient in all things which includes our times of sorrow and discouragement. His **grace** is our help in times of trouble and our antidote to our spiritual diseases. He is our Savior (Jesus) and our helper (Holy Spirit) and it's all because of His marvelous **grace**. Thanks be to God the Father for His **grace**! Amen and amen!

# *Conclusion; The Words Entwined*

If you have ever raised vegetables in a garden most likely you would have included some kind of beans, cucumbers, watermelons or some other type of vegetable that produced a vine in order to bear its produce. You would also have provided some means to support the vine if you didn't allow them to grow along the ground. As the vines grew they would become entwined around the support and even around itself. They might also become entwined with another vine from a different vegetable. When the growing season was over and you began to clean up the garden it was a difficult task to remove the vines because of their attachment to the other vines and the support structure. You couldn't remove one without affecting the others.

The five wonderful words of life that we have considered are much like the vines above. They are so entwined with each other that it is almost impossible to separate them. The order in which we presented them was random. But it became obvious that as we considered each one it became difficult to appropriately describe the word without relying on the others. In other words, one became an adjective for the others. All five words are so fundamental in our faith in Jesus Christ that we find them inseparable. But with that said I want to make an attempt to put them in some kind of order so that we can see the full wonderfulness of them. So here goes.

When God completed His work of creation the Bible says in Genesis that He saw that it was good. He then created man to take care of His creation and to have an intimate relationship with Him. The Bible then says He saw that it was very good. I believe that we see here for the first time that God *loved* what he had created and especially man. Therefore I believe that because of His *love* and out of His *love* all things came into being and exist today.

When man disobeyed God while in the Garden of Eden it gave birth to what we know as sin and resulted in the loss of that intimate relationship that God had intended. Man was separated from God without any hope of having that relationship restored because there was nothing he could do on his own to earn it. This is where God's *mercy* takes over. Because of His love for us and His desire to have a relationship with the creature He created He invokes His *mercy* on us and provides the means for restoration.

So enter *grace*! God knew from the beginning that man would sin and would not be able to do anything to restore himself to a relationship with Him. As we have learned, the word *grace* literally means unmerited favor and that is exactly what God provided for those of us who have said yes to His call. That call is extended to all men but all will not answer. But for those who do, His *grace* becomes the means by which salvation is given. All we have to do is place our faith and trust in Him and His promise. There are those who say that man doesn't have a choice in the matter but it is obvious to me from my study of God's Word that man had a choice in the Garden and still has a choice to make today. But it is by God's *grace* that we are saved.

One of the greatest benefits of God's grace on our lives is the *peace* that it brings. We are not only at *peace* with God but we have the *peace* of God that allows us to live a life free from fear and worry. It gives us a great sense of confidence that everything is alright between us and Him and that He will provide the grace needed for any situation we find ourselves in. It is an indescribable *peace* and goes beyond all comprehension.

Following close behind peace is *joy*. We can have *joy* in all that we do although we may not necessarily be happy. There can be great confusion between *joy* and happiness because the world teaches that happiness is the ultimate goal of success. But we know that happiness is more of an emotional feeling. *Joy*, on the other hand, is more of a spiritual matter and, according to Paul in his letter to the Galatians, is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is *joy* that others can readily see in us and therefore bears witness of a transformed life.

In conclusion, let's regard *love, mercy* and *grace* as inseparable words in our understanding of God's saving work. Let's also live in a continual state of gratitude for the *peace* and *joy* we have in Him. I hope these five "Wonderful Words of Life" have brought a new light to what it means to be a child of God.