

Jim's Notes
May 9, 2007
The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians
Ephesians 1:2

“Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Χαρις υμιν και ειρηνη απο θεου πατρος ημων και κυριου Ιησου Χριστου”

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Both grace and peace remove contention. They convey the will of God, Since therefore they were in the grip of error, grace was first sought on their behalf in order that they should know God and fully obey God and Christ, putting all trust in Christ and nothing else. . . . Then he also adds peace from God. The one who wills ungraciously creates severe discord. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.2)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

He calls God our Father because all things are created and restored in him. He calls Christ Lord because he redeems us, offering himself on our behalf. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.2)

St. Jerome (AD 347- 420):

It could be argued that both should be referred to both, that is, both grace and peace apply no less to God the Father than to our Lord Jesus Christ. Or it could be argued that each should be referred to each, so that grace is referred to God the Father and peace to Christ. It is more likely the latter, since the words immediately following are to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Thus the grace of the Father lies in his willingness to send the Son for our salvation, while the peace of the Son lies in the fact that we are reconciled to the Father through him.

(Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.2)

The Apostles assumed that those who read their letters would understand them in the context of what the people had already been taught in union with the whole Church. Very early false teachers began to appeal to the authority of Scripture outside of the context of apostolic authority of the Catholic Church. St. Vincent of Lerins addressed this very issue.

St. Vincent of Lerins (died AD 450):

The Commonitory of Vincent of Lerins, “For the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith against the Profane Novelties of All Heresies”

Someone may ask, “Do heretics also appeal to Scripture?” They do indeed, and with a vengeance; for you may see them scamper through every single book of Holy Scripture,—through the books of Moses, the books of Kings, the Psalms, the Epistles, the Gospels, the Prophets. . . hardly ever do they bring forward anything of their own which they do not endeavor to shelter under words of Scripture. Read the[ir] works . . . and you will see an infinite heap of instances, hardly a single page, which does not bristle with plausible quotations from the New Testament or the Old. But the more secretly they conceal themselves under shelter of the Divine Law, so much the more are they to be feared and guarded against (Chapter 25: 64 & 65).

It will be said, “If the words, the sentiments, the promises of Scripture, are appealed to by . . . false prophets and false teachers, and all without exception heretics, what are Catholics and the sons of Mother Church to do?” How are they to distinguish truth from falsehood in the sacred Scriptures? They must be very careful to pursue that course . . . that holy and learned men had commended to us, that is to say, they must interpret the sacred Canon [of Scripture] according to the traditions of the Universal Church and in keeping with the rules of Catholic doctrine . . . (Chapter 27: 70).

It has always been the custom of Catholics, and still is, to prove the true faith in these two ways; first by the authority of the Divine Canon [of Scripture], and next by the tradition of the Catholic Church. Not that the Canon alone does not of itself suffice for every question, but seeing that the more part, interpreting the divine words according to their own persuasion, take up various erroneous opinions, it is therefore necessary that the interpretation of divine Scripture should be ruled according to the one standard of the Church's belief, especially in those articles on which the foundations of all Catholic doctrine rest (Chapter 29:76).