



**SERIES: Ephesians**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**Friday, January 1, 2021**

**Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-2**

**TITLE: Embrace God's Peace in 2021**

Happy Friday and Happy New Year from Back to the Bible. Pastor Nat here - We know that 2020 was a bear, and we're all praying 2021 reverses course. The reality is we can't change what's happening out there, but we can change what's happening inside of us - so we're here to help you become all God intended you to be. And to help you in your journey, today we're going to talk about embracing peace.

I love big cities. They're fun and vibrant. They're full of culture and history. But they're also fast-paced - that is, until you hit the streets. A couple of years ago, my mother and I were visiting Chicago. Chicago is one of my favorite places. Believe it or not, I love the bumper-to-bumper traffic in downtown Chicago. I love the honking of the horns. I love the "friendly" waving of fingers. Well, while driving, my mom said, "You sure know how to navigate these streets. You're calm, and you don't get frustrated. You seem at peace."

Part of my disposition is natural. I'm a pretty calm person in the face of adversity. But beyond that, I've learned to embrace God's grace and peace - something you hear a lot from the Apostle Paul.

Listen to his introductory words in Ephesians 1:

["This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God, to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> May God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace"](#) (Eph. 1:1-2, NLT).

Paul is writing to the Ephesian church. Now, in the city of Ephesus, there wasn't just one big church; there were lots of home churches spread throughout the city and surrounding area. Paul is writing the church for various reasons, but notice how Paul ends his introduction: "May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace." Paul isn't suggesting that God's grace and peace may come. No, for the Ephesian church, it was present and available. They simply had to embrace it.

Today, God offers you His grace and His peace. God's grace is His loving-kindness to an undeserving world. His Salvation is truly a gift. It can't be bought or earned. And when we receive that initial grace, His gifts continue. One of the greatest gifts is the peace that passes all understanding.

I'm not sure what you're facing today. Maybe it's job loss. Maybe it's the health of a spouse. Maybe it's the divorce of a child. Maybe it's the faithfulness of your spouse. Maybe it's the

unending wave of virus warnings. Maybe it's all of the above. God offers you true and lasting peace - but God doesn't force it on us. We must embrace it.

My youngest son doesn't like loud noises, so he plugs his ears or runs inside. But when I know he needs some peace, I provide him with these sound-blocking headphones. A bomb could go off, and he wouldn't hear it. He can choose to put them on, or retreat inside. We do the same with God's peace.

My challenge for you today is to embrace God's peace. God promises us eternity with Him in Paradise. No amount of hardship around us compares to this gift. God also offers us peace that is unlike any other, because of His faithfulness and His control. Today, turn to God. Embrace His peace. Trust Him in the trial, and rest in His grace.