

Standing in Grace – I Peter 5:12

I. Introduction:

- A. **Paul**, the other apostle, tells us in **Ephesians** that God has given to His people, and His churches, a number of different kinds of ministers.
1. *“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; a. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; b. Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”*
 2. Without getting into all of them, I will just say that the ministry of the evangelist is different from that of the pastor.
 3. For example, even though there is some obvious overlap, the evangelist, the preacher of the gospel, is more concerned with the birth of new lambs, while the pastor’s responsible is with feeding those lambs.
 4. Peter, early in this chapter, says, *“You church elders, feed the flock of God, which is among you.”*
 5. And then he adds, *“I am preaching to myself in this, because I am also an elder.”*
- B. Now as Peter approaches the conclusion of his letter, he makes a summarizing statement.
1. *“I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”*
 2. In essence he says, *“I have had THIS purpose in writing... a. I wanted to urge some important instructions upon you. b. But also, I wanted to tell you that your choice to stand on the grace of God was the right thing to do. c. Like your local pastor, I have intended with this letter to feed you and to encourage you in your faith.”*
- C. I have enjoyed preaching through this epistle – for several reasons.
1. Not the least of them is that Peter has given me the means of carrying out my responsibility as your pastor.
 2. Not only have I been enabled to play the part of an evangelist with scriptures for several gospel messages;
 3. Not only have I been able to testify that *“this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand;”*
 4. But I’ve also been given ammunition for a few pertinent exhortations.
 5. And I’ve been able to fire these bullets without being too offensive, because the Holy Spirit through Peter has laid them out before us.
- D. As Peter offers a summary of his epistle, I will try to summarize his summary.

II. First, he says that he has written a brief **LETTER**.

- A. Have you ever thought about that?
1. Have you ever considered what it was like to write and send letters two thousand years ago?
 2. I have no doubt whatsoever that some people in their late teens and early twenties have never written or posted a letter to anyone.
 3. They have grown up with emails, texts and various kinds of social media.
 4. On the other hand, people older than forty have often over the years used the U.S. Postal Service to share greetings and information with their friends and loved ones.
 5. They have actually used a system which has been in place since the days of Benjamin Franklin, the first Post Master General under the Continental Congress.
 6. And most of those Americans have never given much thought to the way a letter is moved from one place to another. Believe me, it is no small feat to send a letter from here to Kentucky or Florida.
 7. But Peter and Paul didn’t have that kind of mail system when they wrote to churches and brethren in distant places.
- B. And then there is the fact that only 10% of the people of the Roman empire could read or write.
1. That the former fisherman could write a letter like this may have dependent on the skills of Silvanus.
 - a. You might not like to think about it, but Peter could have been illiterate.
 - b. I am not saying that was the case, but it is a possibility.

2. When his letter was finished, it had to be carried by some private person, probably with the sole intention of delivering it to its intended destination. It wasn't added to a bundle of five hundred other letters.
3. There was no mail system throughout the world two thousand years ago.
4. And it cost far more than \$1.40 to send that international letter.
5. It was probably considered to be a great, great privilege to get epistles from God's apostles.
6. You can be sure that, under the direction of the Spirit, the saints cherished and preserved each of these letters insuring that we might read them today.

C. Here Peter says, "*I have written BRIEFLY... by Silvanus*" – five chapters.

1. His counterpart, Paul, spoke of writing *briefly* in **Ephesians 3** – "*I wrote after in few words.*"
2. And the writer to the **Hebrews**, perhaps Paul, said again, "*I have written a letter unto you in few words.*"
3. But I point out that **Hebrews'** few words were a lot more in number than **Peter's few words**.
4. The words "*brief letters*" and "*few words*" are open to some interpretation.
5. And it may take only a few minutes to read five chapters, but it took hours to put them on papyrus.

III. Peter says, I have written briefly, **EXHORTING** you brethren.

A. Since we are coming to a conclusion, and since Peter is summarizing, I've gone back through his letter collecting his exhortations.

1. Do we need to be reminded of our Christian responsibilities?
2. The truth is: we need to be reminded over and over again.
3. "*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*
 - a. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:*
 - b. *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*
 - c. *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*
 - d. *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*"
4. There are the exhortations of **chapter 2** – "*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*"
5. "*Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles*" and... *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; for unto governors...*"
6. "*Honour all men, Love the brotherhood, Fear God, Honour the King.*"
7. And then there are specific exhortations for servants, wives and husbands.

B. **Chapter 3** says, "*Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

1. *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*
 - a. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*
 - b. *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*"
2. Skipping over some of them we come to **chapter 4** – "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.*"
3. "*And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*
 - a. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*
 - b. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.*"

C. And then he comes to exhortations about our sufferings.

1. **Chapter 4:13-16** – *“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*
 - a. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*
 - b. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.*
 - c. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”*

D. After his exhortations to the elders, in **chapter 5**, Peter says, *“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

1. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*
2. *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*
3. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*
4. Then at the very conclusion he says, *“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity.”*
5. We will come to this in another lesson.

E. Which of these exhortations are no longer pertinent to Christians today? The last one?

1. Are there any of these exhortations which we should we skip over or ignore?
 - a. Do we by nature rejoice on, or in, our sufferings?
 - b. Are there any of us as humble as the Lord would like us to be?
 - c. How many of our cares do we keep to ourselves, not casting them upon the Lord?
2. I would venture to guess there is not a single one of Peter’s exhortations at which we are very proficient.
3. We **need** this book and these exhortations. This is why they were written and this is why we study them.

IV. Peter’s second purpose in writing this epistle was to **TESTIFY**.

A. There are seven different words in the Greek Bible which are translated by our English word *“testify.”*

1. They are all slightly different, but essentially meaning *“to bear witness”* to something.
2. One of them is related to *“martyr”* which refers to witnessing unto death itself.
3. But the word that Peter uses is unique; this is the only scripture to employ it.
4. It essentially means: *“I am confirming and substantiating what has been previously taught to you.”*
5. It isn’t testifying of something new, but rather it’s the emphasizing of something already known.
6. This is the testimony of a corroborating witness.

B. Remember that those saints in Peter’s day were being treated more like today’s saints in Iran, Indonesia, and East Africa, than we are being treated.

1. In our country, when someone professes Christ, most of society collectively sighs and shrugs its shoulders.
 - a. *“Oh, here is another fool we are going to have to tolerate.*
 - b. *At least, if he’s like most ‘Christians,’ he probably won’t cause us too much trouble.”*
2. The people to whom Peter was writing – in Asia Minor, like those in Israel, Rome, and North Africa – those people were paying the price for publically professing the Lord Jesus.
3. Some, like Paul, were being stoned for witnessing to their neighbors that Jesus is the Christ.
4. This letter was being sent back to Lystra, the very place of Paul’s attempted murder.
5. In some places Christians were being crucified, as Jesus had been.
6. Rejection and persecution were real to these people, and as close as their neighbor’s house or the market where they bought their groceries.
 - a. You and I basically know nothing of the difficulties that the Christian faith brought upon these people.
 - b. We don’t experience these things to the same degree.

- C. Peter, in this letter, was confirming that they had not made a mistake in trusting Christ.
1. Their suffering may be painful, but it will be worth it all when they see Jesus.
 2. He was telling them that to continue in the service of the Lord was the right thing to do, even if it intensified the wrath of the wicked against them.
 3. *"I testify to you that this **IS** the true grace of God wherein ye stand."*
- D. It is the *"true grace of God."* What is that, Peter? What are you saying?
1. He testified in his initial greeting that the Apostle Paul's doctrine of election according to the foreknowledge of God was Biblical and true.
 2. And he corroborated what they had learned about Jesus' resurrection and the hope that His resurrection gives to the people of God.
 3. There is *"an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, & that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."*
 4. And you are graciously *"kept by the power of God."*
 - a. There is no way that God is going to lose you in all the chaos or forget about His promises to you.
 - b. So don't let your trials in this life take the true grace of God from your hearts. Stand!
 5. *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*
- E. He said, it is true what you have been told – you have been *"born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*
1. It is the truth: Christ, *"who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth... also suffered for us."*
 2. *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree..."*
 3. The Saviour did go out calling, searching, and finding His chosen sheep wherever they were going astray.
 4. *"I affirm,"* says Peter, *"Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."*
 5. *"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, (will make) you perfect, stablish, strengthen (and) settle you."*

V. He says, I COMMEND you for standing in these truths, and I ENCOURAGE you to continue.

- A. Here in our church services, we often sing the hymn: *"Standing on the Promises."*
1. *"Standing on the promises of Christ, my King, Through eternal ages let his praises ring;*
 - a. *Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, Standing on the promises of God.*
 - b. *Standing on the promises that cannot fail. When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,*
 - c. *By the living Word of God I shall prevail, Standing on the promises of God."*
 2. I am glad that at the top of page 180, where the publisher added a scripture reference, we don't find **I Peter 5:12**.
 3. Rather it is **II Corinthians 7:1** – *"Having therefore these promises... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness."*
 4. That hymn, as good as it is, refers to something entirely different from what Peter is saying.
- B. He was confirming those saints in **ALL** the things they had been taught, not just God's promises.
1. He was reaffirming what Paul said in **I Corinthians 15:1** but with a lot more.
 - a. *"Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, wherein also ye have received, and **wherein ye stand.**"*
 2. Not only do we stand upon the doctrine of Christ's atonement, the deity of the Holy Spirit and the reality of eternal punishment....
 3. In addition to **standing ON** doctrines like election, eternal security and the return of Christ, I am going to emphasize what our Bible implies here: *"we willingly stand **IN** the truths of the Word of God."*
 4. *"This is the true grace of God **WHEREIN ye stand.**"*

- C. You may think that I'm being foolish here, and perhaps I am, but isn't there a difference between standing **ON** something and standing **IN** it?
1. We can stand on an **icy PAVEMENT**, with our feet shod with leather, rubber and polyurethane, and not actually touch the ice.
 2. But when we are standing in **icy WATER**, it may be high enough to get into our shoes, and then between our toes, on top of our soles and perhaps into our souls.
- D. These people to whom Peter was writing were committed to the truths they were given.
1. These doctrines were laid **upon** them, and they were **in** them.
 2. Peter's letter was intended to confirm and encourage them in their fight for those truths.
 - a. They weren't tin soldiers, but guerilla warriors.
 - b. They weren't plastic GI Joes; they were spiritual army Rangers.
 - c. They weren't content to pray for their missionaries; they considered themselves to be missionaries.
 - d. They weren't theologians, but practical, down-to-business Christians – children of God.
 3. They not only had Biblical doctrine seeping into their shoes, but along with it there was some of their own blood, running down from the wounds they were receiving in their battle for the glory of the Lord.
- E. They need encouragement – some of them more than others.
1. Some of them needed a little push to live as Christ expected them to live.
 2. Or they needed to know they were not alone – that they were among other soldiers.
 3. They needed to realize that their battle was a part of larger war.
 4. Peter in Babylon, and Paul wherever he was at the time, were in the same army, fighting for the same God.
- F. They were probably **encouraged** by Peter's epistle. That was one of his intentions in writing.
1. And the Holy Spirit made sure that this letter was preserved for our encouragement as well.
 2. Like those people, we need to be spurred on – exhorted and fortified – with the testimony of other brethren, but even more with the testimony of the Word.
- G. I am not comparing myself with Peter, but several weeks ago, I texted the interim pastor of the church in Brandon Manitoba, trying to encourage him in the fight.
1. And I think it may have meant something to him, because Thursday, his father, my host from a year ago, called me, to encourage me.
 2. Every once in a while I get a text or a phone call from brethren I know, telling me that they are in prayer for our church. It is uplifting.
 3. I try to do the same to and for others.
- H. This, on a much higher level, because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is what Peter is doing for those saints in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.
1. And in the Lord's grace, we are receiving the blessings of Peter's ministry, today.
 2. As Paul puts it in **Ephesians**, *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."*
 3. We are in the last days. We can see the Tribulation coming.
 4. We need to be redeeming the time, because the days are evil, and they are getting worse.
 5. *"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."*
 6. *"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."*