

# THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD

1 Peter 5:12-14

## INTRODUCTION

- When it comes to the words of men, whether in speech or writing, there will always be words that are unnecessary and superfluous
- But in the Scriptures, which is the word of God, there is not a single word or letter that is unnecessary or without significance because every word is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16)
- It is by these divine words:
  - ✓ We have a knowledge of God, his character and works
  - ✓ We know his requirements of man
  - ✓ We know our sin
  - ✓ We know the way of salvation through Christ
  - ✓ We are regenerated
  - ✓ We are sanctified
  - ✓ We are transformed to the image of Christ
- In essence, we live by the word of God (Matthew 4:4)
- God can take even just one word of Scripture to completely transform a sinner's life
- The Bible is like no other book – its words are quick (living) and powerful (Hebrews 4:12)
- As the apostle Peter wrote this epistle of encouragement to persecuted Christians, the Holy Spirit moved and directed him so that each of the 1726 words were inspired by God, precisely as he intended
- Peter says “I have written briefly” (v.12; cf. Hebrews 13:22), as if to say that the importance of the subject matter could have taken up considerably more length
- The essence of the entire letter is summarised in one sentence: “this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand”

- So from beginning to end, all the Peter has written to these persecuted pilgrims comes back to God's grace:
  - ✓ We are elected by grace (1:2)
  - ✓ We have an incorruptible inheritance by grace (1:4)
  - ✓ We are kept by God's gracious power (1:5)
  - ✓ We are tried by his grace (1:7)
  - ✓ We are made holy by grace (1:15)
  - ✓ We are redeemed by his grace in Christ (1:19)
  - ✓ We love one another by grace (1:22)
  - ✓ We are born again by grace (1:23)
  - ✓ We grow by grace (2:2)
  - ✓ We are built up into a spiritual house by grace (2:5)
  - ✓ We are called from darkness to light by grace (2:9)
  - ✓ We abstain from fleshly lusts by grace (2:11)
  - ✓ We submit to authority by grace (2:13-20)
  - ✓ We follow Christ's steps by grace (2:21)
  - ✓ We fulfil our duties as wives and husbands by grace (3:1-7)
  - ✓ We love the brethren by grace (3:8)
  - ✓ We joyfully suffer by grace (3:14)
  - ✓ We live to God's will by grace (4:2)
  - ✓ We have fervent charity to the brethren by grace (4:8)
  - ✓ We suffer according to God's will by grace (4:19)
  - ✓ Elders oversee the flock by God's grace (5:1-5)
  - ✓ We submit to each other by grace (5:6)
  - ✓ We cast our care on him by grace (5:7)
  - ✓ We resist the devil by grace (5:8-9)
  - ✓ God will perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us by grace (5:10)
  
- In these final three verses Peter concludes, summarises, greets, exhorts and blesses his readers

In closing his epistle, Peter sets forth three parting truths:

## **I. THE BELIEVER'S PLANTING IN GRACE (12)**

### **A. Exhorting**

1. The heart of the apostle towards the saints here is "exhortation"
2. To exhort (*parakaleo*) is literally to "call alongside" and therefore to urge, encourage and comfort

3. We are all in need of such exhortation, and especially during times of fierce hostility towards the church

## B. Testifying

1. This word (*epimarturon*) is to “bear witness”, to give evidence of something that one has direct knowledge of

## C. The true grace of God

1. “Divine grace is the free and undeserved love and favour of God towards man as a sinner, especially as exhibited in the plan of redemption through Jesus Christ” (American Tract Society Dictionary)
2. The word grace (*charis*) is used in every chapter of 1 Peter (1:2,10,13; 2:19-20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5,10,12)
3. In opposition to this “true grace” Satan has many counterfeit, false graces whereby he deceives many
  - a. Legalists teach that God’s grace can be earned or merited (Romans 11:6)
  - b. Antinomians teach that grace is a license to sin (Jude 4)
  - c. Romanists teach that there is a “treasury of merit” wherein the excess good works done by the saints are stored and can be accessed by Catholics to make them accepted with God and lessen their time in purgatory

## D. Wherein ye stand

1. This word for “stand” (*hestekate*) indicates established, fixed, abiding
2. Note the Critical Text underlying the modern versions has this verb in the *imperative mood* (command), so that Peter telling his readers: “You must stand in this grace”
3. The Received Text however has this verb in the *indicative mood* which is a statement of fact: “You stand in this grace” (cf. Romans 5:2)

4. Only the person who stands in grace will be able to stand against:
  - ✓ The condemnation of the law
  - ✓ The lusts of the flesh
  - ✓ The attacks of satan
  - ✓ The temptations of the world
  - ✓ The fear of death
  - ✓ The day of judgment (See Matthew 7:24-27)
  
5. As Noah and his family, sealed in the ark, were secure from the violence of the flood that destroyed all those outside, so too the believer, secure in God's grace, cannot be moved from his standing by all the combined forces of Satan and the world

## **II. THE BRETHERN'S PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL (12-13)**

### **A. Silvanus, the faithful brother**

1. This is thought to be the same as Silas in the book of Acts
  - a. He first appears as prominent among the brethren at Jerusalem (Acts 15:22)
  - b. He was a prophet (Acts 15:32)
  - c. Silas and Judas were sent by the Jerusalem church with Paul to Antioch, and Silas stayed there (Acts 15:32-34)
  - d. He was chosen by Paul to travel on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:40)
  - e. He was imprisoned with Paul at Philippi (Acts 16:25)
  - f. He is mentioned in connection with Timothy at Berea (Acts 17:14) and Corinth (Acts 18:5)
  - g. Silvanus is also mentioned with Timothy in the introductions of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, as well as in 2 Corinthians 1:19
  
2. Silvanus may have been employed by Peter to write the epistle (as an amanuensis), and/or carried it to the Christians it was written to

3. He was faithful

a. “As I suppose” does not indicate any doubt, but rather Peter concluded or reckoned with certainty that Silvanus was faithful

b. He was trustworthy and reliable

4. Silas/Silvanus sets an example to all of us to faithfully carry the word of God, bringing its light and life to those who need it

B. Marcus, Peter’s son

1. This is John Mark (Acts 12:12; 15:37), who was the nephew of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10)

a. When Peter was released from prison, he went to Mark’s mother’s house (Acts 12:12)

b. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 12:25), travelling with them on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but he turned back near the beginning of that journey (Acts 13:13)

c. Paul refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey, so Barnabas took him to Cyprus (Acts 15:37-40)

d. Later Mark ministered again with Paul (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24)

2. Peter calling Mark his “son” may mean that Peter was instrumental in his conversion, in a similar way to Paul and Timothy, or was simply a term of endearment

3. Mark’s account of the Gospel is thought to have been written primarily from Peter’s eye-witness testimony

4. Mark (as also Peter) is an example of one who stumbled and failed the Lord yet was restored and again used by God

C. The church that is at Babylon

1. Note that the word “church” is not in the Greek – there is a feminine pronoun which literally reads, “She that is in Babylon”

2. Some suggest that Peter might have been referring to his wife, but why would he not simply name her?
3. It seems more likely that he is indeed referring to the church
4. “Babylon” is thought by many to be a cryptic name for Rome, but seems more probable to be the literal city of Babylon
  - a. John would use Babylon for Rome in Revelation, but that was decades later
  - b. There is no reason why Peter would not simply have said “Rome” if that is what he meant, just as he listed the names of other places in 1:1
  - c. There is no indication that Peter ever went to Rome
  - d. When Paul wrote to the Roman church, he saluted 27 saints by name, but did not mention Peter
  - e. While Babylon had been destroyed and was no longer a great city, there remained a colony of people there
  - f. At Pentecost there were Jews from Mesopotamia (Acts 2:9) who heard the gospel and were converted; these may have formed the church at Babylon to which Peter ministered
5. “Elected together with you” – Peter began the epistle with God’s election of his people (1:2), and closes with the same
6. Though they were “strangers scattered” in a hostile world, they could be encouraged to know that they are not alone, that there believers in churches in other lands suffering the same afflictions
7. In a spiritual sense, Babylon represents the satanic, antichrist system that controls this world
8. Yet there is a church in Babylon – a light in the midst of darkness; good in the midst of evil; Christ’s lambs in the midst of Satan’s wolves
9. Christ’s promise still holds – “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18)

### III. THE BENEDICTION TO THE PEACE OF GOD (14)

#### A. Greet with a kiss of charity

1. This is the final imperative (command) of the epistle
2. It was the customary form of greeting in the early church – men with men, women with women
3. Some think that this is a command that the brethren must be kissed when we greet each other
4. It is important to distinguish between the *essence* of a command and its *circumstances*
  - a. The essence is the principle God wants for man to understand and apply in life
  - b. The circumstance is like a vessel in which the principle is conveyed
5. In John 13:1-20, Christ commanded his disciples to follow his example of washing their feet
  - a. The essence of the command was to serve one another
  - b. The circumstance of the command was washing feet
6. In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul commanded “men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”
  - a. The essence of the command was holy prayer, without wrath and doubting
  - b. The circumstance of the command was lifting hands
7. So in this case, the essence of the command is to greet the brethren in love, while the circumstance of the command is the kiss
8. As brethren we are to greet one another with brotherly warmth, expressing love in our countenance and words, and in such physical ways that are appropriate, such as handshake

## B. Peace

1. Peter began with “grace and peace”, and ends with “peace”
2. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21)
3. This peace comes only to those who are justified by faith in Christ (Romans 5:1)
4. Christ gives us his peace which the world has no knowledge of (John 14:27)
5. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7)
6. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3)
7. “Peace comes not from the absence of trouble, but from the presence of God.” (Alexander MacLaren)

## CONCLUSION

1. As our society becomes more hostile and hateful towards Christ and his people, the truths of this epistle become more and more vital to us
2. Have you received the true grace of God by humbling yourself as a vile, helpless, condemned sinner and casting yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ, trusting in his atoning blood as your only hope of salvation?
3. Are like Silvanus, faithfully carrying forth the words of God to convict the lost and comfort the saints?
4. Are you like Marcus, putting past failures behind you and pressing on in the service of Christ?
5. Is your life characterised by worries, anxiety, stress and fears, like the rest of the world?
6. Or is your life characterised by God’s perfect peace, whatever the circumstances?