

1Peter 5:10-14

The True Grace in Which You Stand

We have finally reached the end of our study of First Peter. We began back in September.

The Lord has given us many practical instructions and truths to guide us during these days as we have been witnessing the stripping away of our freedoms and privileges, as an invisible, but powerful, enemy has seized control of our government and is taking over our land.

The Bible warned us about such an event and First Peter has been very helpful in preparing us for rightly understanding what is going on, and in guiding us into how we should respond.

And Peter will continue to give us practical insight right to the end of our study today.

1Peter 5:10 ESV, “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

Peter has given lots of advance warning that there is a time of suffering coming for the church. But it won't last long, it will only be for a little while.

This verse assures us however, that though there is coming some persecution for our faith, the suffering will only be for a little while, but God will use it to accomplish some really valuable things in our lives.

Like the beautiful baby that comes after the mother has suffered a little while in labor, so eternal glory will come to us after we have suffered persecution for a little while.

“The God of all grace”, is a declaration that there is no other source of grace—no other source of salvation from sin—no other source of deliverance from the power of sin and the powers of hell.

Grace also means that God does it all on our behalf.

By His grace—at His initiative, He called us. He did not wait for us to call Him—but God took the initiative and called us.

And what did He call us to? He called us to come and share with Him in His eternal glory.

That means, He called us to share with Him in the everlasting celebration after the battle is done—to live in His presence after this mission is over, where there is fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore.

Jesus didn't call us to the starting line of the Christian life and gave us a good push-off and then watch to see how far we could make it.

No, He called us to join Him at the finish line. And what God calls into being can't help but come to pass. Because, as *1Thessalonians 5:24* says, "*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*"

This means, we don't have to be fearful that we may not make it.

Like when Jesus called Lazarus to come out of the tomb, the dead man couldn't resist—it was the power of God that accomplished what Jesus called him to do.

"...the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

These four verbs describe what God, by His grace, accomplishes in us through the experience of suffering persecution. Suffering has purpose.

Like the mother who goes through the hardship of pregnancy, culminating in the pain of labor, when it is over, she has a baby. So, believers who go through the hardship of opposition and the pain of persecution, when it is over, we have something to show for it.

Suffering produces something of great value in those who have experienced it.

The first thing that comes out of suffering is God uses it to **restore** us, or to make us complete—to perfect us and make us what He intends us to be.

Like the work of a refining fire which heats and melts the gold so that all the impurities float to the surface and can be easily skimmed off and removed, leaving behind pure gold, so God uses the heat of suffering hardships for the sake of Christ to remove those things in us that are not Christ-like.

The refiner knew that the gold he was refining was pure when he could see his face clearly reflected in the metal. So those who have been refined in the fires of persecution more clearly reflect the character of Jesus in their lives.

A second result of persecution is that God uses it to **establish** us, meaning to make us firm, resilient against the attacks of the enemy, and unwavering in our faith.

Suffering hardship for the sake of Christ will deliver you from the spiritual roller coaster existence of being high for Jesus one day and struggling with sin and doubt the next.

Persecution forces you to get off the fence of compromise, keeping one foot in the world and one foot in the family of God. You must either take a stand for Jesus, or deny Him and walk away.

A third blessing of suffering is that God will use it to **strengthen**, or empower you.

Like a plant that has grown up in the shelter of the greenhouse, when it is put outside into the wind its branches will be easily broken and it will blow over.

But a plant that has grown up outside where it is exposed to the wind, is strong and resilient; it is very difficult for the wind to damage it.

In the same way, a Christian who has never suffered opposition to their faith will not be as strong in their faith as one who has learned to practice their faith in an environment where it was difficult.

The fourth benefit listed in verse 10, is that the grace of God will use hard times to *settle* you, or to secure you. He will fill you with great confidence in God that is not shaken or unsettled by a change in your circumstances.

Paul describes this settled sense of confident security in *Philippians 4:11-13 NIV*, “...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

Having walked with Christ through hard times causes you to know by experience that you have strength for all things in Christ who empowers you to face anything that the world can bring against you.

So, verse ten reminds us as we face difficult times, that when this mission is all over, and it won't be long, we have been called to participate together with Jesus and all the family of God in God's eternal glory.

And we are assured that all the hardships we must go through, while on this mission, are being used by God to make us better here, and then to increase our experience of His glory forever, afterwards in His Kingdom.

1Peter 5:11, “To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

To have dominion means to be the sovereign or supreme authority. To have the power over the lives of all people, and over all property and land, to direct them, control them, use them and dispose of them however He chooses.

This is not a prayer for such a condition to come into existence, this is a declaration of praise and rejoicing over what is already reality—all the glory and dominion over the earth belong to God and will always belong to God.

This was a pretty bold statement for Peter to make, writing from Rome in the face of Roman authority, a letter that was going to be widely circulated and publicly read throughout the empire.

As citizens of God's Kingdom, we need to never be shy about publicly demonstrating our allegiance to God as supreme.

The iron-fisted power of Roman authority did not tolerate even the suspicion of a possible threat to its glory. Rome crushed all potential rivals.

The supernatural nature of the Christian church is proven by the historical fact that for the first 300 years of its infancy, all of the might of Rome was powerless to wipe out the church.

The church of Jesus Christ continued to grow and to spread under this oppression. The Roman empire is long gone but the Lord's church continues to spread around the world.

And the global dictatorship that is seizing control today will be no more successful in crushing the church.

1Peter 5:12, "By Silvanus, [also known as Silas] our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand."

Silas was the same man who had accompanied Paul in much of his ministry. Paul and Silas had been in prison together in Philippi when the earthquake broke the prison apart. Now we see that Silas also partnered with Peter in the ministry.

The expression, "By Silvanus...I have written to you..." is believed to mean that Silas was the one who delivered this letter (he also may or may not have written it as Peter dictated). (*Jobes, p. 320*)

Those who delivered the letters written by Paul and Peter were more than just mail carriers. It is believed that at each church they would have read the letter to the church and explained its message to each church. (*Clowney, p. 222*)

Peter now summarizes his purpose for writing this letter, ***"I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand."***

Peter, testifies that everything that he has written in this letter is the true grace of God.

That means, this is what God, by His strength, will freely work out in the lives of His people who put their faith in Him.

This letter is not a, "How to live the Christian life in tough times, manual." It is more of a prayer list of things we should trust God for, and ask Him to work out in our lives.

Read the verses of this letter slowly, and prayerfully, pausing at each point that the Lord stirs in your heart, to pray and ask the Lord, by His grace, to work it out in your life.

These attitudes toward suffering for the sake of Christ, do not come natural to us.

These are describing characteristics of God's life, characteristics that only God can reproduce in us.

We are to trust Him to work all these things out in us—this is the grace of God—He does it all, as we trust in Him.

“...this is the true grace of God in which you stand.”

When the storm comes and blows and beats against us, we will stand undefeated before man and before God, not because we have a good moral code or a list of good laws. Because the law cannot save us from being a law-breaker.

We stand and will not fall, not because we have God's truth, and understand it. For mere knowledge and understanding of truth cannot change us to become what we know to be true.

But what enables us to stand is the true grace of God—that is the very life of God, coming into you and I, and the power of God working in us, as we yield to Him and invite Him to control our lives, He will enable us to stand firm against all our enemies, and to stand unashamed before our King.

The grace of God, is God working for us, freely at His expense, to accomplish everything that God requires from us. God does it all for those who trust Him to do it all, and this grace is what will enable us to stand and not fall in the day of fiery trial.

God will do it

1Peter 5:13, “She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.”

She who is in Babylon is a symbolic expression referring to the church (the bride of Christ) who is in the city of Rome. (Clowney, p. 224)

So why does Peter refer to Rome as Babylon?

This is symbolic, and he ends this letter on the same theme that he began the letter with in ***1Peter 1:1***, “...*To the pilgrims of the Dispersion...*”

He is writing to citizens of the Kingdom of God, who are dispersed—meaning they are scattered far from their homeland.

The symbolism of Babylon comes from the Old Testament time, in the days of Daniel the prophet, when the people of Israel were dispersed from their homeland and were living scattered across the Babylonian Empire, longing for the day they could return home.

Babylon was the capital city of the Babylonian empire, which was Satan's attempt to establish his kingdom and authority on earth.

Now in Peter's day, the Babylonian empire had been replaced by the Roman Empire. Babylon was at this time a deserted and barren ghost town.

And now, the Christians Peter is writing to, are scattered, living as foreigners, across this new pagan empire.

Rome is the new Babylon, it is the capital city of this pagan empire, which was Satan's latest attempt to establish his kingdom and authority on earth.

Referring to Rome as Babylon, is a symbolic reminder that just as the Babylonian Empire was temporary and fell under God's judgment, so too, Rome is temporary and will one day fall under God's judgment. (*Clowney, p. 224*)

There is one other time in scripture where both Babylon and Rome appeared in the same context.

It was in Daniel's vision, in Daniel chapter 2. Daniel saw a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron, and feet of part iron and part clay, each section of the statue representing a different world empire set up by Satan, in his attempt to rule the world.

But those empires of Satan all came to an end when a stone, representing the coming kingdom of God, was cut out without the help of human hands, which struck the statue, and it broke in pieces, bringing to an end the empires of Satan, the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold.

The interpretation of this is given in **Daniel 2:44**, *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people [it will never be taken over or be ruled by anyone else]; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."*

It is important to notice from this prophetic vision, that the God of heaven will set up this final Kingdom of God, we the church do not set up this kingdom.

Verse 34 of Daniel's vision makes it clear that this final Kingdom that destroys the kingdoms of Satan, is established without human hands.

Bible prophecy indicates that right up until the return of Christ to take us home, the church will be persecuted by the rulers and authorities of the kingdoms of this world.

We've all seen the recent arrests in our province. It is important for us to keep in mind that Jesus, in submitting to the authorities who arrested and crucified Him, is the example the church is to follow—not the example that Peter set in taking a swipe at them with his sword.

We must keep meeting in person to worship any way we can, even if only in very small groups. And we keep sharing the gospel without stop.

But when the authorities come to arrest us, like those who came to arrest Jesus, they should encounter the love of God, not name-calling. Remember that we are here to present Jesus to them that they might be rescued from Satan's control.

When they arrest us, they should experience what it is like to arrest Jesus. They should not have to drag us away with force.

They will have to stand before God, the Supreme Justice, and give an account for their actions. Let us leave it to God to punish justly. His judgment is perfect—ours is not.

So, Peter, bringing to a close this letter, that had warnings of coming persecution, but also many reminders to look with anticipation for the soon coming of Christ's glory, uses the word **Babylon** to bring to the minds of the believers the prophecies of Daniel.

He sends greetings from the believers, who are living with him as foreigners in Rome, which he refers to as, Babylon.

“She who is in Babylon ... greets you; and so does Mark my son.”

Mark is not Peter's biological son, but using the language of family, which was so common in the early church, to refer to a younger man who assisted him in the ministry.

1Peter 5:14, “Greet one another with a kiss of love [Paul called this a holy kiss]. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

To greet one another with a kiss of love was a common cultural practice among family members and relatives.

And whenever the church came together, they would demonstrate that they were family and show their bond of love for one another by greeting one another with a kiss.

In our culture a hug has replaced the kiss. Family members usually don't greet one another with a kiss, but they do hug one another.

The simple handshake is not our culture's replacement for the kiss of love, because you use a handshake to greet casual acquaintances and even strangers who you are meeting for the first time.

But most family members don't greet each other with a handshake—they hug.

Let us be careful that we don't let our fear of Covid rob us of showing expressions of brotherly love toward one another when we meet.

And the final words of this letter are a good reminder to us in our culture of fear.

“Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus.”

You are in Christ Jesus, you have been made to be one with Him, who is the Sovereign Master in control of the Universe.

If you are in Him, that means His Spirit envelops you—He surrounds you. What should you fear?

Therefore, we can live in a state of fearless peace, while the rest of the world, who are in bondage to Satan, are right to be living in fear and worry.

John 14:27, Jesus says, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*

Do you have this peace? It can be yours today. Jesus gives this peace to all who put their faith in Him.

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