



Standing Fast in the True Grace of God

Series: Pursuing Christ in a Pagan World

1 Peter 5:12-14

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This morning we are coming to a close of our study in the book of 1 Peter. As he closes his letter this morning, Peter is concerned that his readers would, as James instructs, **be doers of the word, and not hearers only (Jas 1:22)** That is the concern of any preacher's heart, the concern that his hearers will receive the Word of God with their hearts and minds and souls, that it would bear true fruit in the lives of those who hear it. He wants them to live free in this world. He wants to know the fullness of God's grace, to live in it, to live by it, to live through it. Peter's hope is that every one of his readers would be established firmly in grace – that each one would be assured of his or her salvation, that each one would be resting entirely on the merits of Christ, convinced of the truth of the gospel. For that reason, we see in these verses this morning, in the midst of some personal greetings and details a statement by Peter that is intended to cause his readers to consider fully all that Peter has written to them, it is a statement that is meant to serve as a summary of this letter, a statement that declares the theme of this letter: **I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. (1 Peter 5:12a-b)** Before we look at these words, let's glance briefly at the personal details of the letter.

1) Personal Details (v 12a, 13) First, Peter commends Silvanus to the recipients of this letter. Peter had sent this letter by way of this faithful brother in Christ. Another name for Silvanus is Silas. Acts 15 describes Silas as a prophet, as one himself who encouraged and strengthened his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in Antioch. For this letter, apparently Silvanus, or Silas, was Peter's amanuensis. He was the one who wrote Peter's words down and then delivered this letter to the elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Peter refers to him as a "faithful brother" as one who is model of faithfulness to the Lord, to His truth, and to the church and apparently also to Peter. So, as is customary, Peter commends Silvanus to the churches that would receive this letter from his hand.

He also greets them in the name of Mark, his son. This is the same Mark that Paul had a falling out over with Barnabas over because Mark had failed them on that first missionary journey, and now Peter is calling him, "my son Mark." This younger man had become like a son to Peter as they served Christ together. Mark, once afraid of persecution, had grown

now into a faithful man, ready to endure hardship for the gospel. But even more interesting is this. In a show of solidarity we also see Peter extending greetings from **“she who is in Babylon, who is likewise chosen.”** Now it is my understanding that Peter is speaking in code here. By the time of Peter’s writing, Babylon, once mighty and glorious, was a ghost town. It has ceased to be a significant city at all, but the memory of Babylon the Great was still there. Babylon at its height had been the epitome of worldliness and sin and of course was the central location of the exile of God’s people in the OT when God judged Israel for their rejection and rebellion against Him. While Babylon was at this point a mere memory, Peter is using the name of Babylon as a code for Rome, the new center of worldliness and sin and wickedness. Peter is reminding them that he knows what they are facing. He and the church in Rome are no strangers to the persecution of the people of God. He lives in Rome, the center of the great persecution that is to come and it is for this reason Peter is so concerned that his readers understand the fullness of the true grace of God. He wants them to know and to live life in light of the

2) The True Grace of God (v. 12b) Peter writes: **I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. (1 Peter 5:12a-b)** You can hear Peter’s heart for the churches and the message that he is writing to them. He says. I have written to you briefly. I wish I could have written to you more but the purpose of my writing has been to exhort you – to come alongside you, to encourage you and strengthen you, to give you aid, to support you. I have written this letter to exhort you by declaring – by testifying to you, by affirming and authenticating to you the character and nature of the true grace of God. He has written declaring the true grace of God, meaning that there is false version of God’s grace, being peddled in the world, a false message that does not bring life but death, a false gospel. Jude for example warns us that there are false teachers who have crept into the church unnoticed, **ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jud 1:4)** They twist Christian liberty into license and pervert freedom to love and serve and follow Christ into freedom to sin. This is licentiousness. Licentiousness is simply living as if freedom in Christ means freedom from the moral law of God and living in a careless manner, using grace as a cloak for sin. The thought goes – grace allows me to live as I like, no matter how careless and Christless, and still claim Christ as my Savior. That’s a false grace.

So too, is legalism. Legalism treats Christ’s sacrifice as the doorway in to God’s presence, but makes it up to you to earn his favor and keep yourself saved and it is a subtly false gospel. Legalism is essentially any attempt to improve on what God has done for us by trying to earn approval and blessing from God with our imperfect actions, rather than receiving with thanksgiving the approval that He freely offers us because Jesus has earned it for us with his perfect sacrifice. Legalism believes that certain actions can earn favor and

merit and affection from God. It is holiness by rule-following. It is a cesspool of pride that says, “I do this and therefore I am more spiritual.” Legalism is a joyless yoke that we place around our necks, trying to prove ourselves worthy and radically committed by baseless and extra-biblical restrictions. Paul had to deal with this with the Colossian believers. Paul writes, **(Col 2:20-23)**

Paul is talking here about extra-biblical commands and extra-biblical injunctions and expected standards of spirituality that go beyond the clear instruction of Scripture, a withdrawal even from the good gifts of God, a withdrawal from the world in any way, not from worldliness but from living life, a sort of legalism that on the surface seems deeply spiritual and life-giving, but in reality is empty of virtue and of the power to defeat fleshliness and leads to misery and joylessness. What may seem more spiritual is in reality a false appearance of true wisdom, the appearance, the reputation of godliness, of holiness, of spirituality. This again is not true grace, it is not the true gospel. And that again is why Peter says, **“I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God.”** Beloved, we must know what true grace looks like. We must be reminded of what true grace produces in the lives of those who have received it. We must understand the nature of true grace. And so as we come to the close of this letter, I want to remind you of what we have seen by making eleven statements about the nature of true grace that we have seen revealed to us by Peter in this letter. What has Peter taught us about true grace? Paul has taught us first that

1. True grace is a gift of the sovereign God. (1 Peter 1:3-5) True-grace, the grace that brings salvation is not a work of our hands but the work of the gift of God. The God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true God, the Almighty God, the true and living God, the only God, the I AM, the God who said there's no other God beside Me, the God who is revealed in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of our eternal life. Out of God's great mercy, His goodness and love, shown to us who were pitiable and in desperate need, in deep distress, who deserved nothing but judgment... out of His great mercy, God has caused us to be born again. God gave us life. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, God has given life, not only to Christ but to all who were chosen in Him in eternity past. When Christ arose, He secured our salvation. God has caused us to be born again to a living hope, a living hope, grounded in the living word, laid hold of by a living faith in Christ Jesus, which He gives, a faith that gives life and hope and strength and that looks forward to a great promise, to **an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading**, the fullness of eternal salvation in God with Christ, beholding and worshipping and enjoying His glory forever. We are saved entirely by grace through faith in Christ and the promise of God is that faith borne of true grace cannot ever fail. The grand and glorious promise of God is that not one of His people will ever be lost. Not one of God's people can finally and fatally fall

away or be lost. We cannot because we are held by the power of God through faith. Those who are born of God "are protected by the power of God through faith--through God's sustaining their faith--for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. The omnipotent God of the universe is guarding our faith. The unrestrained King of glory is preserving us in faith. Oh beloved, true saving grace is entirely a work of God and it ought to bring forth from our hearts deep worship and adoration and praise. **We must praise God and rejoice because our salvation is secure since from start to finish it is the work of sovereign God, a work of mercy and grace and not of human merit.** Peter has taught us that true grace is a gift of the sovereign God. Peter has taught us

2. True grace is marked by a tested faith and inexpressible joy. (1 Peter 1:6-9) The true grace of God is marked by a tested and therefore growing faith, by a tested and refined faith. True grace is not synonymous with ease and no difficulty. True grace does not remove us from trials and difficulty. It makes trial and difficulty purposeful. God's purpose in affliction and trial is to prove the genuineness of our faith, to purify and strengthen our faith. True faith stands the trial – where there is a real work of grace in the heart, no tribulation, or persecution, no trial, no suffering, no power of this world, will ever be able to drive out true faith from the heart of God's elect. Instead, it will drive out impurity. True grace is marked by a tested faith, but also an inexpressible joy.

Christianity is supremely the religion of joy – the joy of pardon, the joy of forgiveness, the joy of life, the joy of communion with God, the joy of adoption into his family, the joy of Christ's substitutionary atonement for our sins, the joy of peace with God, the joy of Holy Spirit. We should be the most joyous of all people. Our joy, true joy, unending joy is cultivated and grows as we contemplate, as we consider the glories of the grace of God in Christ. God has made us for joy. Grimness, gloominess, joylessness is not a Christian virtue, it is not a sign of deep spirituality. If God in Christ really is the center of one's life and being, joy is inevitable. If we have no joy, we have missed the heart of the gospel. We of all people ought to be most joyous. We ought to be able to live in this world as those who shine with the joy of the gospel, who can be satisfied in much or in little, who enjoy the good gifts of God without being enslaved by them, who delight to be used of God as His ambassadors of grace, who joyfully endure persecution for the sake of the gospel, living as salt and light wherever we are for the glory of God and who do it with joy. William Barclay said: "A gloomy Christian is a contradiction of terms, and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more harm than its connection with black clothes and long faces." Peter has taught us that **true grace is marked by a tested faith and inexpressible joy.** Peter has taught us that

3. True grace results in true hope and true holiness and a proper fear of the Lord. (1 Peter 1:13-17) True grace leads to hoping in God, not to despair. True grace leads to trusting in God

now and for the future. We are to believe in His character, we are to stake the entirety of our lives on Him and on His character, to trust in Him for future grace in light of the fact that He has already been so gracious to us in this present, to trust His providential care, to trust in the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. True grace results in true hope and true grace leads to true holiness.

Do you see the progression here – God calls us. He calls out of the *world*, that we should be no longer conformed to it—out of *sin*, that we should no longer serve it—of *self*, that we should no longer please and indulge it—out of *darkness*, that we should no longer walk in it—out of *evil* in every shape and form, that we should be no longer under its power and influence. True grace results in true holiness whereby our lives are set apart for God’s purpose and pleasure, where we reflect the life of Christ that is in us. Holiness is not something that we work up within ourselves; it is the outworking of the grace of God in Christ that has saved us. It is the outworking of the Spirit of God residing in us. True grace results in true hope and in true holiness and in the proper fear of the Lord.

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, (1Pe 1:17) True grace creates in our hearts a godly fear: a mingling of dread, honor, praise, love, awe, fearful reverence, when we behold the greatness of God. Peter has taught us that true grace results in true hope and true holiness and a proper fear of the Lord. Peter has taught us

4. True grace values its cost: the priceless blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:24-25; 3:18a)

Throughout this letter, Peter has emphasized the cost of true grace – the blood of Christ. He did it in chapter 1: **(1Pe 1:18-19)** We have been ransomed, we have been purchased, we have been redeemed and set free from the just wrath of God upon us by the blood purchase of His own dear Son. By the death of the precious Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, our condemnation and just punishment and death have been forever taken away. The sacrificial, substitutionary, atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross has redeemed us from sin, from empty religious tradition, from the futile ways of life, the vain, empty, useless, dead, fruitless, life that we have inherited from our fathers and our fathers’ fathers, all the way back to Adam, the wickedness that required the just wrath of God. Peter means for us to see that we were not redeemed by earthly means, by corruptible junk like silver and gold that we think is precious, but by something infinitely precious, the blood of Jesus. True grace makes us to see: **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1Pe 2:24)** True grace makes us to see that **Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. (1Pe 3:18a)** True grace makes us to see that Jesus has made sure that we will be at home safe with God. He has brought us to God. The

separation has been removed. That is the message of true grace. Peter has taught us that **true grace values its cost: the priceless blood of Christ.** Peter has taught us

5. True grace is received by faith in the Word of God and leads to a hunger for God. (1 Peter 1:22-25; 2:2-3) True grace come by the Word of God, the written and the creative powerful word by which God calls us to life. **And this word is the good news that was preached to you** -- the good news of Jesus Christ's person as God and Son, his incarnation and manifestation, His purity and His law-fulfilling, righteousness-performing, perfection-providing, obedience, His truth-exalting, God-pleasing preaching and ministry, His bloody, substitutionary, life-purchasing, wrath-bearing, justice-satisfying, sin-atonement, cross enduring death, His death-defeating, devil-destroying, heaven-opening resurrection of Jesus, and His glorious reign in heaven at the right hand of the Father and His return to come. True, life-giving grace comes by way of the gospel and it leads to a hunger for God. Remember what Peter wrote to us: **(1Pe 2:2-3)** What is the craving for pure spiritual milk that true grace creates? It is a craving to drink up the Word of God -- in all its forms. To crave the Word of God means not to be satisfied with watered down, Christ obscuring, cross hiding, sharing of spiritual principles but to desire the preaching of the pure Word of God. To crave the pure spiritual milk is craving for the nourishment of prayer and personal communion with God. It is a craving for corporate worship. It is a craving to fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a craving for Christ. True grace creates this in our souls; that are what Peter has told us. Peter has taught us that **true grace is received by faith in the Word of God and leads to a hunger for God.** And that is because Peter taught us

6. True grace creates a new people of God with a new purpose. (1 Peter 2:9) True grace has made us a **chosen race** -- a new race of people who are defined not by color or by culture, but by our chosenness of God. We are a **royal priesthood** --priests before the King of heaven, offering up spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. We are a **holy nation** -- We are nation set apart unto God. We are a **people for God's own possession** -- we have been purchased with a price, and because we have been we are God's treasure. True grace creates a new people of God who live to proclaim God's excellencies. Gathered as the church, we worship our great God by proclaiming His excellencies to one another and we build up one another. Scattered into the world, we proclaim God's mercy and light to those who are still in the darkness. Peter teaches us **true grace creates a new people of God with a new purpose.** And Peter teaches us that

7. True grace will be evidenced in every relational context. (1 Peter 2:13-3:7; 4:8-10)

That purpose of proclaiming God's excellencies will be evident in every context of our lives. True grace transforms our relationships. According to Peter true grace will cause us to **be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution...** (1Pe 2:13-14) True grace will cause

us to be subject to our masters as we would be to Christ. True grace will be reflected in our homes... wives who honor their husbands are submitted to them, who pursue femininity and true beauty of the soul, **the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.** True grace will be reflected in the way that men **live with (their) wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with (them) of the grace of life, so that (their) prayers may not be hindered.** (1Pe 3:7) True grace will be shown in the way that men love their wives and care for them and invest in them, in the way that they lead their families. True grace will be evidenced in everyday living with the people of God. (1Pe 4:8-10)

Sometimes people have the idea that the only people who truly understand and value the greatness of God's grace are those who accomplish great exploits for God, who are attempting great feats for God, who are doing big things for God, who are on the "front lines" for God, who are pursuing grand adventures for God. It isn't so. Some are called to great exploits for God, no doubt, but the truth is this. The vast majority of Christians are called to be faithful to God, to give witness for God, to display the worth of Christ right where they are, right in the midst of everyday living in the everyday world – at school, in your home, at work, on your sports team, in your neighborhood, at a football game, baseball game, wrestling match or piano recital, while eating a meal, working in your yard, shoveling snow, taking food to someone in need, talking with your neighbors, going to the pool – in every relational context, **in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1Pe 3:15).** And if true grace is evidenced in every relational context in your life, they will. Peter has taught us that

8. True grace will be sufficient in all suffering. (1 Peter 4:12-16) Peter has taught us that whether it is the suffering that is common to all men as a consequence of the fall, or suffering for the sake of Christ, true grace is sufficient for them both. It is sufficient for the suffering common to all men because it lifts our eyes to the eternal inheritance that awaits us imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. And it sufficient for suffering for the name of Christ that we may... (1Pe 4:12-16) Peter taught us

9. True grace engenders humility in the body of Christ and before the Lord. (1 Peter 5:1-7) We have talked about this over the last several weeks, but true grace will create elders who shepherd the flock of God willingly, eagerly, as examples to the flock, lovingly caring for the flock of God. It will create a flock of God that will humbly submit to faithful godly leadership. True grace will result in the church of God being an oasis of grace because of the humility of one toward another. True grace results in a people who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God who bow to God's wisdom, to His discipline, to His providence and His

purposes, believing that He is governing everything in our lives with His glory and our good in mind. Peter has taught us **true grace engenders humility in the body of Christ and before the Lord**. And Peter has taught us:

10. True grace builds endurance and fights for joy. (1 Peter 5:8-9) True grace builds warriors who resist the devil, who stand against his lies and fight against his schemes standing firm in the armor of God, standing in solidarity with the brotherhood throughout the world who are enduring the same attacks, who are made steadfast and strong who stand in the power of God and fight for joy. True grace makes us to fight for joy. Peter has taught us that true grace builds endurance and fights for joy. In all of this Peter has shown us

11. True grace is the source of all that is truly called life. Beloved this is life. Not the worthlessness of licentious living and cheap grace, nor the yoke of slavery that is legalism. The gospel of grace, true grace is life. It is a grace that calls our hearts to fix all of our hope unalterably, unshakably, whole-heartedly, decisively, fully and finally on God and on His Christ and to live accordingly – to live as one whose first love is Jesus Christ. It is in light of all that true grace really is, that Peter exhorts us: **Stand firm in it**. Hold your ground. Take your stand in grace, in true grace. Cling to the grace of God; not what we have done for God, but what God has done for us and given to us in Christ. In light of the study of this wonderful epistle of Peter I have only

3) One application question: Are you standing firm in the true grace of God? Are you licentious, legalistic, or standing firmly in the grace of God? Without a doubt there are those in the church today who swing toward licentiousness, toward antinomianism, toward the thought that you can name the name of Christ and live in open rebellion to the clear teaching of Scripture and still claim to be a Christian, despite the fact that Scripture teaches that without holiness no-one will see the Lord. Licentiousness is living as if freedom in Christ means freedom from the moral law of God and living in a careless manner, using grace as a cloak for sin. That tendency is certainly present in this church and every other church on the face of the earth that preaches salvation by grace through faith.

But I would suspect that the greater issue lies with legalism. Even amongst those of us who would proclaim that salvation is by grace through faith, there is the great tendency toward holiness through rule making as if external compliance to a set of “Holy Principles” in any way translates to true holiness. We have a tendency to make up extra-biblical laws that appeal to us and which stoke our sense of holiness, place ourselves under their yoke, and then apply them across the board so as to evaluate the commitment of others. With Paul I would simply ask you to consider this question: **(Gal 3:1-3)** How far do we go with this beloved? Paul regarding the legalism and legalists that afflicted the Galatians: **(Gal 5:6-12)**

The truth is that even our legalism is selective and hypocritical. How far should we go? If you are truly holy you must get rid of cable – what about your computer and cell phone and other electronic gadgets? Get rid of your car and walk everywhere. Have one shirt, one pair of pants, and one pair of shoes. Never go to the movies, never eat out. Eat only bread and water. Live in a shack with no running water, no heat, and no stove. Never read anything but the Bible. Where does it end?

One of the reasons that we swing so often between legalism and licentiousness is that we believe falsely that the answer for licentiousness is better rules and the answer for legalism is more carelessness when answer fro both is heart change – a heart change rooted in true grace.

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