

Grace and Peace

1 Peter 5:8-14

Introduction

In these final verses of his letter to the Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, Peter states the sum of his letter (5:12). Peter has preached to these believers the incorruptible saving grace of God (1:1-5). He has called them to live holy lives as God's elect, holy people (1:13-16, 2:9). He has given particular exhortations of how to abstain from the lusts that war against their souls and how to engage with the unbelievers that taunt and persecute them (2:11-12, 3:15-16, 4:1-2). He has called these Christians above everything to love one another fervently, even in the midst of the sufferings that torment and scare them (1:22, 2:17, 4:8). In all things, they must look to Christ as their example, who entrusted Himself to the Father (2:21-25, 3:18, 4:1). Like Him, they too must in humility commit their souls to their faithful Creator, casting all their care upon Him, trusting in His care (4:19, 5:7). What drives the last verses of the letter is still the call to "*humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*" (5:6).

Some Final Notes

Peter closes his letter in common fashion by identifying various other believers important to the audience he is writing to (vs. 12-13). Silvanus was likely the same Silvanus (a.k.a., Silas) that accompanied Paul (Acts 15:36-41, 1 Cor. 1:19), and either was a sort of scribe for Peter and/or the bearer of this letter to the saints. Peter sends greetings from "*she who is in Babylon*" as well as Mark, who is probably John Mark, the author of the gospel under his name. The identity of church in Babylon is much disputed, but the most likely explanations are either a church in the area of Babylon proper or the church in Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 17). In this latter view, Jerusalem has become Babylon.

The Roaring Lion

Casting your care on the Lord does not result in a lax attitude toward the world, the flesh, and the devil. Rather, having entrusted your care to God, having delivered to Him your burden, you are now able to be sober and vigilant against these enemies (note, this is the third time Peter has called these saints to be alert as they stand in the faith; see 1:13 and 4:7). Peter highlights here our enemy, the devil. He is our adversary (Gr., *antidikos*), and a slanderer and deceiver (from Gr. verb, *diaballo*). He has been defeated (3:22, Heb. 2:14), but in God's providence he is still about and dangerous. Satan seeks to rattle the faith of believers through persecutions, through temptations, through sufferings, through doubts, through accusations, through their own sins.

Peter also calls on these saints to resist the devil, not merely to be watchful. James uses very similar language after quoting the same Proverb Peter does in verse 5 (cf. James 4:7). Fundamentally, you resist the devil by humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God. Again from James, "*Therefore submit to God.*" Arm yourself against him, putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-11, 13). Humbly submit yourself to God. How? "*Above all take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one*" (Eph. 6:16). Resist him, not in your own might or strength, but steadfast in the faith, in the armor God has given, in the grace He bestows.

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Not Alone

Your fight against the devil and his wiles may be personal, but it is not autonomous. The saints' resistance is bolstered knowing that you are not alone in your struggle (cf., 1 Cor. 10:13). Not only has Jesus gone before you (Heb. 12:1-2), but the battle is engaged throughout the world. We are often tempted to be proud in our successes, but in a twisted way we also become proud in our failings and struggles, thinking we alone must know what sorrow this is. But it is pride. Instead, be encouraged that your brothers and sisters around the world have experienced the same sufferings. This should stir you up to get back in the fight.

The God of All Grace

So, if you stand against the devil and all his temptations, what then? Again, on your own, in your own might, in your pride, you will fall. If you stand humbly by faith, though, the God of all grace will pour out that grace upon you. He has called you and elected you, and He who has begun a good work in you will complete it (Phil. 1:6). You are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation (1:5). In fact, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39).

Like in James 4 (esp. vs. 7-10), Peter is not turning away from the subject of pride and humility. Casting yourself upon the God of all grace, humbling yourself before Him, *is* resisting the devil. "*Lament and mourn and weep*" because of your sin, because of your pride. But when the Lord brings you up, your mouth will be full of laughter and your tongue with singing. "*Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy*" (Ps. 126). The God of all grace has called you. You will suffer for a while, but He will bring you through it to perfect you. He will establish you on the sure foundation, Christ, the cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:4-6). He will strengthen and settle you (Is. 40:27-31). If God will do this, what response is there but to render him glory and dominion forever and ever, with a hearty "Amen"?

The True Grace of God

Peter knows this grace. He denied Jesus, and yet Jesus poured out forgiveness and grace upon Peter. He called on Peter to feed His sheep, and so Peter exhorts his readers to stand in the grace of God and remain steadfast in it. Live holy lives by standing in the grace of God. Resist the devil by standing in faith, leaning on the grace of God. Peter has made clear throughout the letter that part of this grace is the love of the saints. He reminds them of this one last time by exhorting them to greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peter opens his epistle, saying, "*Grace and peace be multiplied to you.*" Now, at the end of his letter, he emphasizes to his readers that what he has written to them is the true grace of God. Peter then bestows on them, having received this grace, the peace of Christ. "*Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus.*" The summation of all Peter has said is grace, and his final word is peace. This is what is offered to you in Christ. Christ promises to His people that they will suffer a while. But if you are in Christ, your story will not end there. Rest in Him, cast your cares upon Him, knowing that He will perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you, and bring you peace.