

XLVIX. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“Peter’s Pastoral Takeaway”

I Peter 5:12–14

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We are in our last study of I Peter and this is God’s Word. I Peter 5:12–14 says [12] *By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. [13] She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. [14] Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever, and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I had planned to do 28 sermons in this study but we have arrived at sermon number 49 and the conclusion of the study of I Peter with the theme being that we are always to be ready to give an account of the hope that is within us. This fits into our overall theme of having a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. In this study we have also been told who we are in Christ because of Christ so that we’re also ready to give an account for Peter gives us 15 Gospel blessings in Christ. By the end of this study Peter will have also given us 15 Gospel commands. We are to defend the faith and propagate the faith, understand who we are in Christ, what we do for Christ and that a lifestyle for Christ will lead to suffering and spiritual warfare as we are faithful to Christ.

Now we get to the end of the book and we wonder why Peter ended this book this way. I have two questions that came to me as I came to this last section in I Peter 5. One is Peter, why would you write this postscript particularly in light of where we just ended in I Peter 5:10–11? I Peter 5:10–11 says [10] *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. [11] To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* This seems like he would have ended the book after this but then comes a postscript. When he refers to Babylon in this postscript he is referring to the church in Rome but what I’m really asking is since Peter is inspired by the Holy Spirit when writing this, is why doesn’t the Holy Spirit end with the doxology in verse 11 and why did He lead us into this postscript? Since it is from the Holy Spirit and Peter was a functioning person who the Holy Spirit is writing through, then my second question is what would He be saying to us in this post script?

So I want to start by answering the first question. It is very simple because that is the way you wrote a letter in the first century. Christians live in the world and any conventions of the world that are amoral we can use them. In fact, we should use them. That’s like asking why Peter used a papyrus and a quill to write this. Those are amoral instruments. The Bible was put together over a period of 1600 years with 40 plus human authors and every one of those human authors in the providence of God were the kind of men God called them to be and their education, experiences, parenting and their relationships had been sovereignly appointed by God who fashioned them for this purpose that He uses them. God tells us to do what the Prophets and the Apostles do which is to use any and all amoral conventions in the culture and if you don’t you will be dismissed.

When you read other epistles in the Bible they all start off with a salutation, then the body of the letter and they end with a post script. Why? That was the way a letter in the first century was done. The simple fact is if Peter had not used these amoral conventions then people would have probably dismissed him. So that's what is happening here. Now that we know why he used a post script here the next thing is what is he saying in this post script? This post script is rich. I am going to give you three ways to look at this post script that I think will be helpful.

The first thing about this post script is he gives us the Apostolic identification and commendation of the letter carrier. I Peter 5:12a says *[12a] By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you...* Silvanus is the letter carrier. Now who is Silvanus? When you wrote a letter in the first century you had to find a way to get it to who you were writing to. Also you always have a way to affirm the credentials of the one who is delivering/bringing the letters so that you know who actually wrote the letter and that this is authentic.

Silvanus is Silas. In the epistles you will hear his formal name because he is usually given in the context of his credentials. In the book of Acts you will hear him called Silas and that's his nickname. We tend to shorten people's name. Like Robert becomes Rob or Jennifer becomes Jen. People in the churches know Silvanus by the name of Silas but when he is given letters to carry and needs to be identified by the one writing the letters they will use his formal name. Paul and Peter both do this. I have two daughters – Jennifer and Abigail – and it seems like I am the only one besides my son who calls them by their names. Their friends tend to call them Jen and Abby. My wife's name is Cynthia and she is called Cindy.

There is something more. When Luke gives us insight on him we find Silas first appearing in Luke 15 and Luke gives us two things about him. One Silas is a leader who is effective and he is a preacher who is effective. This is why he had been chosen for this sacred task of carrying the recommendations to all the churches. When Paul and Barnabas are getting ready to go on a second missionary journey and they discuss who is going to go with them. Paul takes Silas because of the reputation he has and Barnabas takes John Mark even though John Mark didn't follow through on their first missionary journey.

Now Silas shows up with Peter as Peter writes this letter from the church at Rome. Silas is there doing ministry with Peter. Peter asks Silas to take this letter to all the churches in Galatia which today we know as Turkey. Why? Peter says two more things about Silas. One is he calls him his brother so he regards him. Then Peter says Silas is faithful. We see the humility of Peter when he calls him his brother rather than using his title plus he doesn't see him as his servant.

So what is the commendation Peter makes about Silas? It is that he is faithful. If on your tombstone they are only allowed to write one word, what would be the word you would want written? It is hard for me to think of one more important, more profound or more desired than faithful – to be faithful in all your relationships and roles. Next year our ministry theme will be lifestyle stewardship and the one word according to Jesus that's required of a steward is faithful. So when Peter tells us Silas is a brother that means he is forgiven and he is faithful. Luke tells us Silas is fruitful. Now let's go to the second thing the post script tells us.

Secondly, we move to the summation and distillation of the letter contents. The next thing Peter says in I Peter 5:12 is *I have written briefly to you...* After reading these past five chapters one might say 'what? Briefly?' Back in my day when I wrote letters this wouldn't be seen as a brief letter and in today's technology things have gotten even shorter with email, texting, Instagram, twitter, etc. Peter is not saying it is brief because of the number of words that he used, he is saying it's brief in light of the subject he was addressing. Peter could have put

more than 15 Gospel blessings of who we are in Christ and more than 15 Gospel commands of what we do for Christ and in Christ. He has had to leave a lot of stuff on the cutting room floor. Do you know how much more Peter could have covered on the subject of suffering for Christ?

Remember when I said I initial had 28 sermons on this book and I ended up with 49 sermons? You have no idea what I have left on the cutting room floor when it came to my sermons just as we have no idea what Peter left on the cutting room floor when he wrote I Peter. We are talking about the Gospel of grace which is who God is and who I am apart from Him. That's who Jesus is and why He came to save me. That's who the Holy Spirit is which is who comes to bring me to Him. That's what the Gospel is which makes me who I am in Christ and then tells me now what I can do for Christ. This is how saving faith unites you to the finishing work of Christ and then is evident by the work you do for Christ. There is so much more Peter could have written yet he has written briefly to us.

I do have some speculation here. Since Silas was someone who was known as an effective leader and preacher, when I get to heaven I'm going to ask Silas this; when you arrived and read the letter, did you do any preaching? I would say the first series of sermons done on I Peter was done by Silas when he arrived there, read it and started expounding God's Word. Again it's speculation on my part but then I'm going to ask him how many sermons it took him to get through that book. One of my mentors took 112 sermons to get through the book of I Peter. Saying this was a brief letter this was not all Peter said about this letter.

Peter said this was a brief letter that contained two things. He goes onto say in I Peter 5:12, *I have written briefly to you, **exhorting and declaring** that this is the true grace of God.* When he talks to us about the grace of God he declares doctrine and then he applies doctrine with exhortation. Paul says the same thing in II Timothy 3:16–17 which says *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching (doctrine), for reproof (exhortation), for correction (exhortation), and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, **equipped** for every good work.*

No preacher has a right to exhort your conscious without first going to the sacred text and developing faithfully the doctrine from that text but no preacher has preached until after he has given the teaching from that text, he applies it so we put off the old man and put on the new, but you don't exhort until you identify the teaching in the sacred text. Then you polish the sword (the Word) and put it where it belongs. That is what you're called to do.

Peter declared to us the Gospel blessings in Christ and we are not saved by works. You are saved by the works of God in Christ. Then if you have saving faith, saving faith works and then he gives us the Gospel commands of what we do for Christ. Peter could have given us so much more but he gave us doctrine and exhortation and it is the true Gospel of grace. If there is something called the true Gospel of grace then that means there are some false gospels parading this grace.

There are some gospels that say you can be saved without killing sin in your life where you can sin like you want and think you still have remission. That's a false gospel. There's another gospel that says you can't be saved unless you attain a certain level of righteousness in your own righteousness which is false. Our own righteousness is like filthy rags. So there are many false gospels and many false gospel teachers but there is only one true Gospel. Some of those teaching false gospels are wolves in sheep's clothing. Some of them are sheep in wolves' clothing, like Peter. Did Peter get the Gospel wrong according to Galatians? He was but he wasn't telling him he wasn't saved. Peter just got off track and he was teaching another gospel.

Here's another problem we have. Jesus says false teachers and false gospels are going to increase as we move toward His coming. I also think the venues available to them are also going to increase in number and effectiveness. Technology is just like post scripts for it's amoral. There is nothing sinful about iPhones, computers any more than there was anything sinful about quills and papyrus, but you can use them sinfully or you can use them rightly. False teachers have just as much available to them as we do and many times they have more money than we do. They do things better technologically than we do but not that we should ever settle for that. You used to have to go hear a false teacher but now they are coming to you through Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube, radio, computer, etc. and they come with false credentials and false teaching with a false gospel that promises a false grace. So Peter finishes this post script by giving us exhortations and admonitions of the letter's commitment.

This gives my heart great joy for I'm going to give to you a concluding outline and focus in the last overview of this series but for now Peter concludes this book by giving two more Gospel commands. He ends I Peter 5:12 by saying, *Stand firm in it*. This is in the imperative. He is saying this because you can't stand firm for it if you don't stand firm in it. If you don't know who you are because of Jesus you will never stand firm for it. If you don't know what you do because of Jesus then you'll never stand firm for it.

You have to know you are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone before you're able to identify with Christ, to be consistent with Christ, stay the course in suffering, engage in spiritual warfare, and tell others to always be ready to give an account of the hope that is within them – you won't stand firm for it unless you know who you are because of it. You have to stand firm in it. That is why I love to sing the hymn 'Tell me the old, old story' because I need to know who I am in Christ in order to know what I do for Christ which is why I do what I do for Christ and why I'm willing to suffer for Christ.

He then gives another command and all you introverts better hang on for this will be tough. Peter ends the book by saying in I Peter 5:13–14, *[13] She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. [14] Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ*. By the way, Babylon is a New Testament way to refer to Rome. Babylon was the capital of paganism and in the days of the Apostles Rome was the capital of paganism. Everything Peter has said in this letter is true to them, for they likewise are the elect of God.

About five or six times a year I'm away preaching at another church and the first thing I tell them is the membership and leadership of Briarwood sends you greetings. Then I always say 'come and visit us.' I say this for two reasons. One is that we will explain to you football but secondly come to Birmingham, Alabama and it won't be a culture shock when you get to heaven. I love to extend your greetings to them and then to be able to share their greetings with you. We love to encourage one another in the body of Christ, churches that are confessionally united in and through Christ.

The Mark, Peter is referring to here is the cousin of Barnabas. Mark went on the first missionary journey. He also flunked out for he was the guy Paul wouldn't take with him on the second missionary journey and ended up going with Barnabas. Mark is now no longer with Barnabas and is with Peter. Then at the end of three of Paul's epistles he would say 'send me Mark for he is useful in the ministry.' Peter refers to Mark as his son. Look at the migration of Mark – Barnabas, Paul and Barnabas, Peter, and back to Paul. Look at the maturation of Mark for now he is referred to as a son. He is now a man who is able to send greetings and is noteworthy within the church in the first century of the Gospel going into Europe and will go

with Paul when he dies for the faith in Rome and be there with him according to II Timothy. To migrate in maturation as a man or woman, you need models, mentors and motivators.

Then Peter gives us the second Gospel command and that is to give an observable and demonstrable love for one another. He says to greet one another with a kiss of love. That means a phileo kiss not an eros kiss. The introverts now are shaking. If you do kiss on each other when you greet just make it sanctified. I did a wedding yesterday and I always tell the couple that when I say 'you may now kiss the bride' this is the last kiss of the courtship not the first kiss of the honeymoon. God's people are to express and demonstrate observable love to the world. It ought to be evident that we love one another.

Finally, Peter has a benediction for us called peace. Benedictions are not prayers we make to God. A benediction is God's Word promised to you. Bene – beneficial, good. Dicti – word for you. In Jerusalem they had 3,000 so if you went around to each person giving them a verse they would never get out church. So the pastor in the invocation would call for the Holy Spirit and in the benediction he would raise his hand up and out toward the people as the people would raise their hands to receive the good Word from the Lord he was going to give. Peter's benediction to us is that may peace be to all of you who are in Christ. Do you see the flow? The true Gospel of grace – then peace. Grace brings peace. I always start my letters 'grace and peace' because it's grace that gets you the peace and true grace always gets you to the peace of Christ.

Here are some takeaways from this study. Takeaway number one is contextualized Christians. We are to live in the world but not be of the world. We ought not to be distinctive because we're odd, but we ought to be distinctive because of what God is doing in us. We live in the same world the world lives in but we live differently. It's not when we live like the world that we draw them to Christ but when we live differently yet our difference is not to be odd. Now some Christians because they don't want to be of the world take themselves out of the world but then you're useless. Some Christians because they want to be useful think they're useful when they are so much like the world yet they are undistinguishable from the world and now they have no witness verbally or vision wise.

The best illustration is about a man who had a boat. He didn't want the boat to sink so he put it up on dry dock. Sure enough it won't sink on dry dock but you will also never enjoy it because it's out of the lake. You have to put it in the lake to enjoy the boat but if the boat gets a hole in it while on the lake then you have the lake in the boat and that's called sinking. You don't want the lake in the boat and you don't want the boat out of the lake. We don't want Christians out of the world but we want the world out of them. We want to be in the world but not of the world therefore we enter into houses, jobs, technology use and all of that, not like the world but for Christ. Our difference is not by oddity but by the work of the Holy Spirit from the inside out as we live in the world but not of the world.

The second takeaway is you are to embrace the privilege of Christian commendations. Peter says that Silas is faithful. Peter also says he is brother, he's forgiven. Luke tells us he was fruitful as a preacher and a leader. This made me think of my granddaddy who toward the end of his life was recognized for his teaching ministry in the Methodist church. Somehow recently I came across a recording of his John 17 sermon. It brought back the memory of the time he came to me and said 'Son I'm getting close to heaven so I want you to get ready to do my funeral.' I told him I didn't think I could do for he had this unbelievable effect on my life. He was the first person I told when I became a Christian outside of my wife.

My granddaddy then said ‘I don’t care if you’re going to be comfortable or not you are going to do my funeral so get ready. I had a great church I grew up in and I’ve come back to it at the end of my life but this church where I’m at hasn’t preached the Gospel for 20 years and if I have to die to get it preached one more time then I’m going to do it. So the number one thing I want you to say when you get in that pulpit is to forget me and tell them about Jesus. I’m dead and I had to do this to get you that hearing so don’t waste it.’ I said ‘yes sir.’ Then he said ‘Secondly, on that tombstone don’t let them put anything but one word – forgiven.’

So if you only had one word forgiven is a great one. Fruitful – praise the Lord but I don’t think you can beat the word faithful, not perfect but faithful to the end. God, help every member of Briarwood no matter what happens in the world, with no angst and no anger of men, to be faithful to Him who is our life all the way home and faithful to Him with our life.

The third takeaway is commended commendations. The commended commendation is to be faithful but learn first of all to give commendations. God did not call you to keep someone humble. He said to humble yourself but you are called to encourage one another while it is today. I’m not talking about flattery or things you can say to manipulate people to like you. What is a virtue of God’s grace that I see in a person’s life and then commend them on it. They are suffering for Christ so let me encourage them. They are in spiritual warfare for Christ so let me encourage them.

The fourth takeaway is that there is the true Gospel of grace that you are to embrace in life and not the false gospel. Frank and Ruth Graham and his crusade went to London for a glorious crusade in the 1950s. Ruth writes about this moment where they sat at a formal dinner with political officials. She sat across from the Minister of Finance and she was just making conversation with him. The conversation turned to the minister wanting to get rid of counterfeits with everything that he has. She said ‘there must be a lot of counterfeits’ and he said ‘oh yes there are a lot of them.’ She said ‘how can you possibly know all those counterfeits?’ and he said ‘I can’t and I don’t even try. The way I know the counterfeits is I just know the real thing.’

Even though we’re imperfect and uneven, God, help us hold to the true Gospel of grace. This is a grace that takes you where you are and never leaves you where you are. It’s a grace that makes you who you are because of what Jesus did on the cross and then fashions you to be like Jesus from the cross all the way to glory. It is a grace that is true and declares doctrinal truth and Biblical exhortation. It is a grace that encourage people as they suffer for Christ and are at war to uphold Christ. It is a grace that can understand through teaching, discipleship, Gospel preaching, and expositional preaching so that when the false gospels come they can spot them. They know the false teacher and the false gospel and are able to stand firm for Christ.

The fifth takeaway is the Gospel of grace brings you to the promise of peace, to a glorious promise of peace. Peter says all who are in Christ, peace be to you. It’s the peace of Romans 5:1 which says *[1] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Before we know Christ we didn’t have peace because we were enemies. We not only get the peace with God objectively and legally but we get the peace of God experientially and personally when we are saved by the blood of Christ, even as we suffer for Him in the spiritual warfare of the day. Philippians 4:6–7 says *[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

You also have the peace from God that comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. John 16:33 says *[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will*

have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. We have the peace with God and what a glorious benediction – a good Word. We have the peace of God because we have a peace from God through Christ.

At the wedding I did yesterday we sang this hymn titled *How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord* of true grace, the benediction of peace and here are a few verses from this hymn that goes along with this study;

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.*

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!*

God's grace is true and His peace is forever. All my sins are forgiven. All of my life is His. Please come to Him, I plead with you. Do not play the world's games for there is no peace. Come to Christ. If you know Christ you will know peace but I warn you that if there is no Christ then there is no peace. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Grace – peace. Peace from Christ gives you peace with God and gives you the peace of God. Peace be to all who are in Christ by the grace of God. As that amazing hymn *Amazing Grace* says;

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved; (Peace, peace)
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares, (concerning suffering and spiritual warfare)
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home. (Forever) Amen.*