

1 Peter 5:12-14 | “Grace, Peace, and Love”
Preached on August 15, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown

Good morning, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 5, verses 12 through 14. *[pause]*

Once we finish this morning, we will have made it all the way through the book of 1 Peter.

And it's been an extremely relevant study for our time.

As we face increasing hostility from the culture around us, we need a book like 1 Peter to help us to persevere through it all.

It had a good combination of doctrinal truth, as well as practical application for our lives.

I hope that it was helpful as you thought about suffering for Jesus and living for Him. *[pause]*

So now as we look at the final words of Peter, let's see what he says, as I READ IT. *[pauseeee]*

How do you end speaking to someone?

Sometimes ending a conversation can be the hardest part to figure out.

So how do you typically end a conversation?

We often say things like, “Well it was nice talking to you.”

Or we end on a joke.

Or maybe we end by saying, “I need to get going, but it was great talking to you.”

How do you end? *[pause]*

Nowadays, writing a letter isn't as common as it used to be.

Now we do emails, texts, or phone calls, and sending a hand-written letter is now called sending, “snail mail”. *[pause]*

But if you were writing a letter to someone far away, who was another Christian, how would you end the letter?

We might say, “I'm glad that I was able to write to you, I hope all goes well with you and your family.”

Or we might say, “May God bless.”

Well for our text this morning, we find out how Peter ends his letter, and he doesn't give any shallow sentiments, and he doesn't waste his last words...

...But all the way to the end, he encourages and challenges his readers with deep, ever-needed realities of grace, peace, and love. *[pause]*

So as we consider these the last verses of 1 Peter, what does Peter want to leave us with?...First, he says...

I. Stand firm in the true grace of God. (12)

Peter begins by saying, “By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you.”

This “Silvanus” is most likely the person who we know as Silas in the New Testament.

He’s the one who traveled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys.

He is often talked about in association with Timothy, and he played a part in helping Paul write some of his letters. *[pause]*

He was a well-respected leader in the early church.

And so now we see that Silvanus played a part in Peter’s letter. [pause]

Now some people believe that Silvanus was Peter’s secretary, writing down what Peter said.

Yet it seems most likely that he was the carrier of the letter, who delivered the letter to its recipients. [pause]

Either way, Peter considers Silvanus a faithful brother.

He was one of those guys that you could count on, and was faithful to the Lord.

It made me think, ‘Do people consider you faithful?’ *[pauseeee]*

After Peter brings up Silvanus, he states that he has written briefly, and he gives his purpose in writing.

His purpose was to exhort and declare the true grace of God. *[pause]*

The word that the ESV translates as “declaring” is actually more so “testifying” or “bearing witness” to the true grace of God. *[pause]*

So in his letter, Peter has witnessed to the truth, and as an apostle of Jesus, he could do this.

And he exhorted his readers, that is, he encouraged and instructed them in how to live their Christian lives. [pause]

So here you have both the declaratives truths of the gospel, which Peter testified about, and you have the exhortation of how to live in light of those truths.

That's exactly what Peter has done throughout his letter for us.

He has told us about what Christ has done, who we are in Him, and how we are to live out these truths in everyday life.

That's typically what's found in most New Testament letters. [pauseeee]

Now the part that I want to camp out on for a little bit is how he says, "This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." [pause]

Peter is saying that the contents found in the whole letter are the grace of God. [pause]

Grace is undeserved kindness and can entail many things, which God has done or that which he gives.

It is kindness, a gift, favor shown to us, blessings, and strength or help given - all undeserved from God to us. [pause]

So Peter is saying that all that he has talked about contains undeserved kindness from God to us. [pause]

It was God's grace that saved us and caused us to be born again.

And this grace wasn't just past grace in salvation....

...But he will give us future grace, for he has promised us an inheritance in Heaven, so that we have a living hope even today.¹ [pauseeee]

Peter demonstrates in his letter that God is so full of grace, that he can be called "the God of all grace,"² and he even gives *present grace*. [pause]

He shows his kindness and gives us blessings and help even now as we go through life.

Since we have been born again, have received mercy, and are now his people, we are empowered to put away sin and to strive after holiness.³

He gives us the "pure spiritual milk" of His Word, whereby we grow in our walk with him.⁴

Because of Christ's example in his suffering and death, we can follow in his footsteps, and endure suffering like him.⁵

And even in suffering for Christ's name, it only shows that we are His, we are blessed, and have glory to come.

¹ See 1 Peter 1:3-4.

² See 1 Peter 5:10.

³ This teaching is found all throughout the letter of 1 Peter.

⁴ See 1 Peter 2:2.

⁵ See 1 Peter 2:18-23.

In this way, even in suffering, we can experience the grace of God, glorify Him through it, and entrust our souls to his care.⁶ *[pauseeee]*

All of these examples show why Peter can say that what he has written is the true grace of God.

God's grace saved us, grows us to be more like Jesus, helps us to persevere in suffering, and it is his grace that we look forward to in Heaven.

Our entire lives as Christians is all of grace - pure undeserved kindness of God in the past, present, and future.

And this is the *true* grace of God. *[pause]*

There may be teachings out there claiming to be the grace of God, but they are merely counterfeits.

Instead, you find the true grace of God in Scripture, so don't look anywhere else. *[pauseeee]*

Peter says, "Stand firm in it."

This means to stand firm in what God has done for you in Christ, how his truth helps you now, and what he has promised.

Essentially it means to stand firm in the faith, persevere, and don't give up, but rest in his kindness for you. *[pauseeee]*

"Author Irving Stone spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelized biographies of famous men.

Stone was once asked if he had found a thread that runs through the lives of all these exceptional people.

He said, 'They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified...But every time they're knocked down they stand up. You cannot destroy these people.'"⁷ *[pause]*

That's how we as Christians should be, but in an even deeper way.

Not because we trust in ourselves, but because we simply stand firm in the grace of God.

We cling to and never forget the undeserved kindness of our God which saved us, helps us to persevere, and promises great things to us. *[pause]*

⁶ See 1 Peter 4:13-14, 16, 19.

⁷ Original from: *Crossroads*, Issue No. 7, p. 18. Found at: <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/p/perseverance.htm>.

Let's say you are going through a trial, remember that you have a good, loving Father who still loves you, promises you great things, and is refining you through whatever you are going through.

That's standing firm in the grace of God in a trial. *[pause]*

So Christian, stand firm in this grace.

Remember what he did, trust him, let these truths empower you to live for him, and look with eyes of faith to the grace he has promised you in Heaven. *[pauseeeee]*

Clearly grace is a big deal in our lives, but Peter doesn't stop there, for he talks next about love, and he says to...

II. Show affectionate love to one another. (13-14a)

The Christian life is to be a life full of love, and as we see in Peter's concluding statements, we are to show affectionate love to one another. *[pause]*

Where do I get that? Well let's look closely as I unpack what Peter says...

In verse 13, Peter relays to his readers that "she who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings." *[pause]*

Who exactly is Peter talking about here?

Well at this time, Christians would refer to the city of Rome as 'Babylon'.

This is because the term 'Babylon' was used as symbolic for a place which is the center of worldliness and a place opposed to God and his people. *[pause]*

Like Israel was in exile in the worldly Babylon in the Old Testament time period, so now Christians were like exiles, living in the worldly new Babylon, which was Rome. *[pause]*

You see, Rome at this time was the capital of the Roman Empire, which was strongly antagonistic towards God, and was the pinnacle of luxury and sin.

That's why Peter uses Babylon to simply say that the church in Rome sends its greetings to the readers. *[pause]*

Yet that's not all he says about this church, for it is "likewise chosen".

That church, like Peter's readers, were all chosen by God, recipients of his marvelous grace in salvation.

There was a common election that they had together, which linked them together in the faith. *[pauseeee]*

Peter also states that Mark sends his greetings, as well.

This is most likely the man that we know as John Mark.

He's the writer of one of the Gospel's.

He's the one who left Paul and Barnabas during one of Paul's missionary journeys, and Paul and Barnabas had a strong dispute over him.⁸

Yet, as time went on, Paul considered Mark as useful in ministry.⁹ *[pause]*

So Mark was connected with Paul, he was the cousin of Barnabas¹⁰...

...And he was also a close associate with Peter, as we see that he is in the same location as Peter, sending his greetings. *[pause]*

It's said that Mark most likely wrote his Gospel using Peter's witness for much of what he wrote.

It was Mark's mother's house which Peter went to after being miraculously released out of jail by an angel.¹¹

And they are so close that Peter considers him a "son" in the faith. *[pauseeee]*

With both of these greetings, from the church in Babylon and from Mark, you see that in the early church there was this familial love between Christians in different places.

Though they lived in different areas, the love of God brought them together as a family, who cared about each other. *[pauseeee]*

This love that Christians had and were to show was an affectionate love for each other, which is demonstrated by Peter's exhortation to, "Greet one another with the kiss of love." *[pauseeee]*

This 'kiss' wasn't a romantic kiss, so don't think of it that way.

This kiss was a welcoming kiss that showed affection between close friends or family members. *[pause]*

In some cultures, this kind of kiss is actually still prevalent.

It was simply meant to convey love amongst one another. *[pauseeee]*

So why would Peter encourage them to do this, or keep doing this?

Because as Christians, we are called to show affectionate love to each other. *[pauseeee]*

⁸ See the story in Acts 15:36-41.

⁹ See 2 Timothy 4:11.

¹⁰ See Colossians 4:10.

¹¹ See Acts 12:12.

There's a story of "One ingenious teenager, who was tired of reading bedtime stories to his little sister, and he decided to record several of her favorite stories on tape.

He told her, 'Now you can hear your stories anytime you want. Isn't that great?' She looked at the machine for a moment and then replied, 'No. It doesn't have a lap.'"¹² *[pause]*

That little girl didn't just want a story, she wanted to read a story on her brother's lap.

She didn't want the distant love of recording a story for her, she wanted the close, affectionate love of being near to her brother. *[pauseeee]*

Each of us desires love, and not shallow love, but affectionate love.

We want hugs from those we love, we want to feel close and loved by others. *[pause]*

A baby wants to be held and kissed.

A toddler wants to sit on your lap and read a story.

And a husband or wife wants at least some affection shown to them by their spouse. *[pause]*

Ingrained in us is a desire to feel and show love and affection with others.

We give hugs when we see family.

And we sit close to people that we love.

And if you think about it, this affection displays our love for each other, *and* actually cultivates an even deeper closeness and warmth in our relationships. *[pauseeee]*

The greetings that are given here, and especially the command to give the "kiss of love" teaches us that we should be showing affectionate love to one another in the church. *[pause]*

The church is a *family*.

We aren't merely "like" a family, we ARE a family.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ, meant to show brotherly love to each other.¹³

So since we are a family, Peter wants us to show it in how we interact with each other.

And he points out that a great way to display this love is by giving an affectionate greeting. *[pauseeee]*

This greeting shows that we care about others.

¹² Original source unknown. Found at: <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/l/love.htm>.

¹³ See 1 Peter 1:22, 5:9.

It makes people feel loved, welcomed, and appreciated.

And showing affection cultivates even more closeness in a church family. *[pause]*

Imagine going to a place where you are treated like family, that's what the church should be!

And isn't that even more important as we encounter difficult times?

It is! Because as we all face our own trials, or our corporate times of suffering, we are supported by and loved by the church family.

This is what the church should be like.

A place of family love, whereby we care about each other and show that we care about each other. *[pauseeee]*

Now the question remains: are we supposed to start giving this "kiss of love" to each other starting next week?

Well if you and another person in the church are both comfortable with it, then kiss each other on the cheek or forehead.

But the truth is: in our culture this is not normal, and actually creates awkward, uncomfortable situations.

We are certainly never to throw out the truth behind this verse, but there are some cultural differences. *[pause]*

We must keep the truth of showing affection to each other, but cultures change as to what is normal and appropriate in regards to greetings.

Back then, this kiss of love was normal, now this 'kiss' might put you in a very awkward situation, depending on who you kiss! *[pause]*

So we must think of it this way...

If we were to bridge this 'kiss of love' from their culture to ours, what would be our modern, cultural equivalent?

This kiss happened during a greeting of close friends or family members, so the closest thing we do today is probably a hug. *[pause]*

Now everybody is different in their level of affection, and in our culture, people are often very unaffectionate.

But we should at the very least do a handshake, a hug would be ideal, and possibly a hand or arm around the shoulder. *[pause]*

The point is simply this: we should show affectionate love towards each other.

Americans in general are already very stand-offish in the first place, yet the church shouldn't be like that.

We should be counter-cultural and show love to one another as a family would.

I don't know exactly what that will look like for you and another person, but we should show it in some way.

We shouldn't just disregard a verse like this, but seek to follow the foundational truth in it.
[pauseee]

Let's seek to do this as a church.

Let's show affectionate love towards each other.

Don't go out of your way to make people feel uncomfortable just to do that, but in ways that both are comfortable with, show affection as you interact with each other.

We are family, so let's act like it, and as we do, it will only grow us closer and closer together in love. [pauseee]

Not only do we hear about grace and love in this passage, but thirdly, Peter talks about peace, as he shows us that you should...

III. Know the peace you have in Christ. (14b)

Back in 1988, in the Moody Bible Institute's *Today in the Word*, it says that "The Personnel Journal reported this incredible statistic: since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time!

In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3,530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace. Moreover, in excess of 8,000 peace treaties were made--and broken."¹⁴ [pauseee]

In a world filled with conflict, how can anyone have peace?

Yet peace is exactly what Peter desires, wishes, and blesses his readers with.

And he uses the common way back then for Christians to begin or end a letter by saying, "Peace to all of you who are in Christ." [pauseee]

To have peace starts with having peace with God.

Before Christ, we were all alienated from God because of our sin.

¹⁴ Moody Bible Institute, *Today In The Word*, June, 1988, p.33. Found at: <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/p/peace.htm>.

Our sin created the great divide between us as sinners and God, the holy One.

And because of this divide, our relationship with God was broken and we stood under condemnation for our rebellion against Him.

But “in Christ” we now have peace with God. *[pause]*

He took our place and paid the price for our sin debt, thereby getting rid of the hostility and reconciling us to God.

We now have our relationship with God restored, and we are even called His children. *[pause]*

We have peace with God.

This peace is the basis for any peace we have and it’s all because of Jesus. *[pause]*

That’s why Peter wishes peace for all those “in Christ”.

He shows us that the world cannot give true peace, but true peace comes from being connected to Jesus, who is the ever-flowing conduit of peace in our lives. *[pauseeee]*

This peace is inner rest and harmony; inner tranquility and calm.

Think about the difference between a calm lake and an ocean of raging waves.

That’s the difference between having inner peace or not.

Instead of having turmoil, distress, and worry in your life, you can have rest, tranquility, and calm. *[pause]*

This peace isn’t peace because there are zero troubles in your life, for Peter has shown us the place of suffering in the Christian’s life, but it’s peace *in the midst* of troubles. *[pauseeee]*

Our peace comes because we know that our relationship with God is made right and we are now God’s children, a people of his own possession.¹⁵

Our peace comes because we know that God is in control, and only if it’s necessary and according to God’s will, will we suffer for a little while.¹⁶

Our peace comes because we have a living hope, eternal glory to come, and an inheritance awaiting us in Heaven.¹⁷ *[pauseeee]*

This is the peace that we have ‘in Christ’!

What do we need to fear when we have such a loving, powerful Lord?

¹⁵ See 1 Peter 2:9.

¹⁶ See 1 Peter 1:6, 4:19.

¹⁷ See 1 Peter 1:3-4, 5:10.

Why are we stirred up inside and weighed down by anxiety when we can cast our cares on God, who cares for us?¹⁸

Peace is truly ours in Jesus!

So know the peace that is yours in Him! *[pauseee]*

Peter's wish was that his readers would know the peace of Christ and experience it even more.

So that's what God desires for you today, as well.

He wants his people to have peace, for why else would Jesus say, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you...Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."¹⁹ *[pause]*

You can have peace today because you are 'in Christ'.

This peace is exactly what suffering Christians need to hear!

Even when you are going through the hardest moments of your life, you can have a peace that doesn't make sense to the world...

..Because you are 'in Christ' and when someone is 'in Christ', they are infinitely loved by a great, all-powerful God. *[pauseee]*

I don't know what you will face in the future, but I know this, peace can be yours in Christ Jesus.

Like a bird, sitting calmly through a storm, so you can sit calmly in the storms of life.

So know the peace that is yours through Jesus, and confidently trust in Him and rest in his promises through each moment. *[pauseeeee]*

As we finish out the book of 1 Peter, what can we learn from Peter's words?...

Remember the grace, peace, and love that you have and are called to display as a Christian! *[pause]*

Grace, peace, and love.

These are three main topics found throughout the New Testament, and they speak to God's kindness towards us.

He didn't have to give us any of these things, yet he does because that's who He is - He gives us grace, peace, and love through what Jesus has done. *[pause]*

Through his death and resurrection for us, we receive undeserved kindness and love.

¹⁸ See 1 Peter 5:7.

¹⁹ John 14:27.

Through his shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins, we possess the peace that surpasses all understanding.²⁰ [*pauseeee*]

So now because of these things that we have in Christ, let us stand firm in them, and display them to others.

This is the Christian life.

Recipients of grace and love, clinging to the precious truth of what he did, and showing grace and love to others.

May this be the pattern of our lives, as we conclude the book of 1 Peter, empowered with truth to persevere through difficulties as sojourners in a strange land.

²⁰ See Philippians 4:7.