

CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – 1 Peter 5:8-14

Read 1 Peter 5:5-14

In 1 Peter 5:5-14, Peter concludes his letter with some final reminders to all his listeners on how God's people ought to be living in a world in which they will face hardships and suffering. In our last study, we considered the importance of humility before God and before one another (5:5-7). We conclude our study with Peter's final exhortations and greetings in 5:8-14.

1. What do these verses tell us about the devil?

- he is real and he is a being, not just an impersonal force
- he is our adversary ("accuser")/enemy
- Peter likens him to a lion – a strong and vicious opponent; also cunning – prowling around seeking prey; can attack unexpectedly
- he seeks to "devour"/destroy God's people, for example, by inflicting suffering on them to turn them away from the faith (v.8-9)
- he can be and ought to be resisted

2. How can we resist the devil? What are some encouragements Peter gives us to help us in this fight? (v. 5-11; you might also consider James 4:6-10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:10-18)? What are some ways you need to be putting this into practice in your life?

- humble ourselves before God (5:6) → when we do, He gives us grace (5:5)
 - as we submit to and draw near to Him, He draws near to us, we then are able to resist the devil in the strength of God (James 4:6-10)
- be sober-minded and watchful (NIV: self-controlled and alert) (5:8)
 - having a clear mind that knows and recognizes the danger and is on the lookout for it
 - know from Scripture how the devil operates; expect that he will try to attack/devour
 - need to constantly evaluate ourselves and the situations we find ourselves in from the perspective of Scripture
 - lack of awareness or watchfulness (i.e. failing to see the danger) makes us vulnerable to attack → avoid situation where you know you may be susceptible (like you'd avoid places where you knew lions often were on the prowl)
- stand firm in the faith (5:9) – stay grounded in what Christ has done for us; don't let hardship or suffering cause you to fall away
 - remember God's promises and trust in them
- remember that other believers around the world are facing the same sufferings (5:9)
 - as a result, we ought to pray for them and for one another (Ephesians 6:18); we can also seek out prayer & support from others
 - there may also be a certain comfort & encouragement in knowing that others are facing the same struggles and are standing firm
- remember who God is (5:10-11)
 - that God is the God of all grace (5:10), and that His grace will supply all we need
 - He will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to bear it, but will also provide a way out (1 Cor. 10:13)
 - in His grace, He has called us to His eternal glory, in Christ (5:10)
 - thus, we should not lose hope, but rather press on to that glory – thus, not give in to sin, but resist
 - that He is sovereign
 - the suffering/trial/attack that we face is only for "a little while" (v.10), so be patient and endure → God will bring it to an end in His time, when His purposes are accomplished
 - He uses trials to mature us, and will Himself restore us, make us strong, firm & steadfast through them (5:10)
 - that His is the power & dominion for ever and ever (v.11)- and so we should praise Him with all that we are and all that we have
- Ephesians 6:10-18 has similar thoughts – need to clothe ourselves with the full armor of God so that we can resist the devil's schemes
 - belt of truth – our lives need to be girded by truth, so we won't be deceived by the devil's lies
 - breastplate of righteousness – if we don't live righteous lives, we expose ourselves to the devil's attacks
 - feet fitted with readiness given by the Gospel of peace – an eagerness to obey God helps us stand our ground
 - shield of faith – trust in God and His promises keeps us safe from Satan's attacks
 - helmet of salvation – remembering how God saved us, and all that entails
 - sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God – our offensive weapon, with which we can counterattack, as Christ did (Matt 4:1-11)
 - prayer – in the Spirit, with all kinds of prayers and requests, and for all the saints

As we saw in the Introduction to the book of 1 Peter, Peter is sending this letter to his readers through Silas (or Silvanus), who may also have served as a secretary who helped Peter write the letter (5:12). While it is difficult to be completely certain, this may well have been the same Silas who had been tasked with bringing the decisions of the Jerusalem Council to Gentile believers in Antioch and the surrounding regions (Acts 15:22-34) and who later accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys (e.g. Acts 15:40-18:5; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Peter wrote this letter from "Babylon", which most likely a reference to Rome, as the earthly centre of power in a hostile world in which Christians found themselves as "exiles of the dispersion" (1:1, ESV) (Babylon was the centre of power of the empire in which the Jewish people found themselves living as exiles in the Old Testament.) He sends greetings from those who are with him, namely the church in Rome ("She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you") and Mark, his son in the faith (5:13), whom tradition holds to be the author of the Gospel of Mark.

3. What is the grace of God of which Peter speaks (5:12), and how can we stand fast in it? (cf. 1:10; 2 Peter 3:1-2)

- Peter is speaking of the “grace that was to come to you” – i.e. the salvation we have in Christ, of which the prophets spoke
- but not just being saved, but also all that that salvation entails, for example,
 - blessings (e.g. being chosen by God; new birth into a living hope & relationship with God through faith; an eternal inheritance; being built together into a temple for God and a holy, royal priesthood)
 - call to suffer as Christ did (pattern of suffering preceding glory)
 - patient endurance of suffering, following Christ’s example of not repaying evil for evil, but continuing to do good/right and committing selves to God while suffering
 - we may even suffer for doing good (i.e. because we are doing good) – if so, we are blessed
 - consequent holiness life – a life lived in light of the hope we have; one that honors God, imitates Christ, bears witness to the world of our salvation → living as aliens and strangers in the world
 - shows itself in humble submission to others in government, the workplace, the church, the home
 - shows itself in deep love for one another that leads to serving one another
- we stand firm by
 - remembering the Word of God, as spoken through Peter and the rest of the apostles and prophets (2 Pet. 3:1-2) – holding fast to it (not deviating from it) and putting it into practice!

4. How should Christians greet one another, and why? (5:14)

- “kiss of love” (or Paul refers to a “holy kiss” e.g. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20)
- a kiss was a common greeting in that day (still is in parts of the world today)
- not romantic in nature, but holy; meant to be an outward, physical display of inward affection/love
- the type of greeting (i.e. externals) might depend to a degree on cultural norms, but principle is of showing affection to those who are in Christ → a reflection of the unity we have in Him

In completing his letter, Peter finishes as he began, with a blessing of peace on all who are in union with Christ (5:14).

Toward the Goal...

The epistle of 1 Peter was written to encourage God’s people living as aliens and strangers in the midst of a hostile world, by reminding us of the “true grace of God” (5:14) – the unmerited favor shown to us by the God of all grace, who saved us and called us to His eternal glory in Christ (5:10). In His great mercy, He gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for us (1:3-4). Here and now, He is building us into a spiritual house in which He dwells (2:4-8); He calls us into His service as a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ; and He makes us citizens of a holy nation, that we might declare His praises (2:5-10).

For our part, we are to stand fast in this grace of God (5:14), setting our hope not just in the grace that we have already received, but also in the fullness of the grace that will be given to us when Christ returns (1:13). We ought to live lives of holiness and reverent fear (1:13-17), knowing the great price that was paid, in the precious blood of Christ, to bring us this grace (1:18-20). Our lives should be characterized no longer by evil thoughts and intentions towards others (2:1-3), but by a deep and sincere love for one another that shows itself in how we treat and serve one another (1:22-25; 4:7-11). No longer should we be controlled by the sinful desires that once dominated us and that continue to war against our souls (2:11; 4:1-6), but we should be a people characterized by purity and good deeds that testify forcefully and undeniably to the grace of God in our lives (2:12, 15-16). Mindful of God’s grace to us, we should submit for His sake to every authority instituted over us, whether in the society (2:13-17), in the workplace (2:18-25), in the family (3:1-7), or in the Church (5:1-7). We are to persevere in this way of life even if we face unjust suffering or persecution for doing so, for we are called to follow the example of Christ, who Himself suffered unjustly for our sakes (2:21-25; 3:8-4:2). And when we do face hardship or suffering for doing what is right, we ought not to grow weary or discouraged, but as Christ did, we ought rather to commit ourselves to God as our faithful Creator and our righteous Judge and continue to do good (2:21-25, 4:17-19), not repaying evil with evil, but with blessing (3:9). As we do, we will be able to rejoice with a glorious and inexpressible joy when we face trials (1:6-9; 4:12-16) – whether attacks of men (2:12; 3:13-16; 4:14) or attacks of Satan (5:8-9) – for we know that God is using such trials to refine our faith (1:6-9), that His blessing and His glory rest upon us as we participate in the sufferings of Christ (4:13-14), and that He will in His time restore, confirm, strengthen and establish us (5:10). And thus our lives will give glory to the God of all grace, to whom belongs the dominion forever and ever.

Spend some time over the next week reviewing 1 Peter and reflecting on the grace of God to you. In what ways has the grace of God been manifest in your life? How are you living (and how **should** you be living) in light of that grace? Are you abusing the grace of God, or are you standing firm therein?