

**Text: I Peter 5:12-14**

**Title: “Stand Fast in Grace”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles to I Peter 5:12. As you're turning I want to let you know that tonight at 6:00 here in the sanctuary we will have our deacon ordination service. I invite you to join us for that holy time. Now I'm skipping I Peter 5:10-11, but I'll come back to it next week. It is a doxology and I thought it would be a perfect way for us to conclude this series in I Peter. So let's read I Peter 5:12-14.

It's easy for us to come to the last paragraph of a letter or email and think that the writer is just trying to finish, and doesn't have much of importance to say. But that would be a mistake.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I heard about a guy writing to his girlfriend. “Dear Jennifer: I love you so much. I would climb the highest mountain; swim the widest ocean, cross the burning desert just to be with you. I will see you on Saturday. P.S. If it's not raining.”

The last sentence is very important. There was a district manager writing to an employee: “Dear Sir: Seldom have we had such an employee of quality and consistency as you. Your productivity is hard to beat; as a team player you're an example to everyone. At year end we want to acknowledge the fine job you've done. Sincerely, the District Manager. P.S. You're fired.”

So pay close attention to the last sentences. Now there's some important information in the last verses of I Peter ... important details there about people and places.

**1 Pet 5:12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.**

Silas is perhaps Peter's secretary, or he may have been the one delivering the letter, or both. And this was probably the same Silas who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15-16). He was with Paul in Philippi singing hymns to the Lord in the dungeon.

**1 Peter 5:13 (NIV) - She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.**

Now we have a geographical note in v.13. Babylon is probably a code name for the city of Rome (see Revelation). Peter may have been writing from Rome or perhaps from somewhere near Rome. And if so, the church there (“chosen together with you...”) sends greetings to these brothers and sisters in the churches in the northern part of what we know today as Turkey.

Now there is another person in Peter's mind ... Mark. Mark is called his son ... his son in the Lord. Note the family terms. Silas is a faithful brother and Mark is a son. This is an interesting way to refer to Mark because you may remember that Mark had what you might call a black mark on his resume.

Mark was also involved with the Apostle Paul and Barnabas. The Book of Acts tells us that at one point John Mark abandoned the missionary team, and when it came time for another trip, Paul and Barnabas got into a dispute over Mark. Paul didn't want to take John Mark along. So Mark is somewhat disgraced at this point; but later we learn that Paul requests Mark to come to his side because he is profitable to him in the ministry (II Timothy 4:11). Failure would not define Mark. So he was an important worker with Paul, and he was also important to Peter.

This Thanksgiving season let's be grateful to God for the people God has placed in our lives. Express that gratitude to others ... faithful brothers and sisters. Maybe there are sons and daughters in the faith whom we should affirm and appreciate as well.

**1 Peter 5:14 (NIV) - Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.**

Now I want us to come back to v.12 and to a very important phrase and idea ... one that is found repeatedly in Peter's letter ... grace. Specifically, "the true grace of God."

**1 Peter 5:12b - I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God.**

So when Peter says in I Peter 5:12, "This is the true grace of God..." he's going all the way back to the beginning of the letter. Everything he talks about in the letter is summed up in this phrase ... "the true grace of God."

And what has Peter sought to do with this "true grace of God"?

**1 Peter 5:12b - I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.**

There are times when we need others to come encourage us about the grace of God. There are times when we need others to testify about the grace of God. That's what Peter has been doing in this letter.

**DEFINITION** – Now this would be a good time to define this "true grace of God." There are all sorts of definitions of the grace of God. As I have read and studied this through the years I have come to this definition: **Grace is the powerful, undeserved activity of God in our behalf.**

And the whole of the Christian life is built on this ... "the powerful, undeserved activity of God in our behalf." Nothing that happens to us as followers of Christ happens apart from grace.

**ILLUSTRATION** – In President George W. Bush's recent book entitled *Decision Points* he talks very frankly about how God worked in his life drawing President Bush to Himself. In the Introduction of his book President Bush talks about how on his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1986 he and his wife Laura went on a trip with some friends. After an evening of drinking too much, he got up the next morning to go for a run. Here's how he describes what happened: "About halfway through the run, my head started to clear. The crosscurrents in my life came into focus. For months I had been

praying that God would show me how to better reflect His will. My Scripture readings had clarified the nature of temptation and the reality that the love of earthly pleasures could replace the love of God. My problem was not only drinking; it was selfishness. The booze was leading me to put myself ahead of others, especially my family ... Faith showed me the way out. *I knew I could count on the grace of God to help me change.*”

So Peter says “I’ve written this letter to you to encourage you and testify to you that this is the true grace of God.”

This is the grace “of God.” God is the source of this grace.

**1 Peter 5:5b - “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

Note that he “gives grace.” We don’t earn it. Grace by its very nature is not deserved.

Back in I Peter 5:10 Peter calls God, “the God of all grace...”

Now let’s just go back for a moment and remember what we’ve learned about God’s grace in this part of God’s Word. We’ve learned that God’s grace is...

## **1. SAVING GRACE**

Now keep your Bibles handy because we’re going to go back into previous chapters to pick this up. Now go all the way back to...

**1 Peter 1:2c - Grace and peace be yours in abundance.**

How can grace and peace be ours in abundance? Well, starting with I Peter 1:3 Peter talks about God’s mercy...

**1 Peter 1:3 (NIV) - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

So abundant grace and peace are found in this new birth, that has been given us by God’s mercy. He goes on to talk about this salvation in ...

**1 Peter 1:10 - Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,**

Salvation was the grace of God that came to us. It is the powerful, undeserved activity of God in our behalf.

**ILLUSTRATION** – President Bush continued his story in his book. About a year before that trip where he said his life came into focus, Bush recalls how the famous evangelist Billy Graham was invited by George Bush’s father, George H.W. Bush, to come to their family retreat at

Kennebunkport, Maine. Billy Graham made a great impression on George: “I was captivated by Billy. He had a powerful presence, full of kindness and grace, and a keen mind. The next day he asked me to go for a walk around the property. He asked about my life in Texas ... In his gentle, loving way Billy began to deepen my shallow understanding of faith.”

Bush goes on to describe what happened next: “The center of Christianity is not self. It is Christ. Billy explained that we are all sinners, and that we cannot earn God’s love through good deeds. *He made clear that the path to salvation is through the grace of God.* And the way to find that grace is to embrace Christ as the risen Lord – the son of a God so powerful and loving that He gave His only son to conquer death and defeat sin.” President Bush goes on to explain how God used that event to radically altar the course of his life.

The grace of God is seen in...

**1 Peter 2:24 (NIV) - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**

This is grace. We are filthy in our sin, but we are made new by the mercy and grace of God through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

**1 Peter 3:18 (NIV) - For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,**

In the grace of God we find the answer and the solution to our great and grave problem of sin. This is unique to Christianity. You don’t find this in Buddhism or in Islam or in the cults. They all are based on a works-righteousness. How can I be right with God? Do as many good works as I can and hopefully end up with more in the credit column than in the debit column. Then God will accept me. So no wonder so many people live their lives with this cloud of uncertainty hanging over them because they wonder, “Have I done enough?”

But as followers of Christ we say, “I could never do enough. But that’s OK. Jesus did enough when He died on the Cross and rose again. I put my trust in Him, and immediately God sees me righteous in Christ.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Let’s repeat together the words of that great hymn of the faith, Amazing Grace:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

T’was Grace that taught my heart to fear.  
And Grace, my fears relieved.  
How precious did that Grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

So God's grace is saving grace, but it is also...

## **2. SECURING GRACE**

**1 Peter 1:13 - Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

Now God's grace comes to us at the beginning to save us. But notice that grace is there at the end as well. Go back a few verses and you see that we have been born again ...

**1 Peter 1:4-5 (NIV) - into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**

The grace that saves us is the grace that secures us. If your good works can't gain your salvation, then bad works can't cause you to lose your salvation. Why? It is all grace.

It's the powerful, undeserved activity of God in our behalf that saves us, and it is that same activity of God that keeps us saved.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Again let's say aloud the familiar words of the hymn Amazing Grace:

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far  
and Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.  
His word my hope secures.  
He will my shield and portion be,  
As long as life endures.

When we've been here ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun.  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

God's grace is saving grace and securing grace. But it is also...

## **3. SERVING GRACE**

When God saves us He calls us to a life of service to others. But we don't serve God in our own strength or power. Christian service is the grace that God has poured into our lives overflowing into the lives of others.

Peter mentions this in...

**1 Peter 4:10 - Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.**

**ILLUSTRATION** - Here again is the undeserved, powerful activity of God in our behalf. A couple of weeks ago I was sitting in a committee meeting, and a precious lady in our church said something that really encouraged me. She didn't know it, but the Lord had ministered grace in her life and that grace overflowed into my life that day. And that's the way the Body of Christ is supposed to work.

That's how the Spirit of God moves in the church. As we serve God with the spiritual gifts He has given us, God's grace, in its rich multi-colors, flows into the lives of others.

So God's grace is saving grace, securing grace, serving grace, and it is ...

#### **4. SUSTAINING GRACE**

Now we come back to where we started this morning:

**1 Pet 5:12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.**

Remember that the believers who first received this letter were in danger of being swept away by a flood of persecution and suffering. The pagan currents were so strong that they needed to have a firm footing and to stand fast in the grace of God ... in the powerful, undeserved activity of God in their behalf.

There's something in the true grace of God that is the sustaining that we need for life.

**ILLUSTRATION** – A preacher who ministers to me often is a guy by the name of Alistair Begg who pastors a church in Cleveland, Ohio. In one of his messages he told of how he had always had great respect for one of the great preachers of Great Britain, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. For many years Dr. Lloyd-Jones was the faithful pastor of Westminster Chapel in London. Alistair Begg had a friend who one day decided he wanted to just go stand beside Dr. Lloyd-Jones at the end of the service to hear what he said to his members as they left church. Begg tells of how he was amazed to know that Lloyd-Jones had two words that he left with each person he talked to ... “KEEP ON!”