

1 and 2 Peter Bible Study Lesson 17

1 Peter 5:5-14 Notes

Stand Firm in the True Grace of God

Introduction:

Woven through the entire letter of 1 Peter is the repeated call for a condition of heart, and a way of life, that only makes sense if we are absolutely sure we will have a great reward in heaven. Peter calls us again and again to think and feel and act in a way that can only be explained by an unshakeable, all-satisfying hope beyond this life.

And, of course, this doesn't mean the hope for material wealth, or pain-free health, or reunion with loved ones, or perfect leisure, or futility-free productivity in the age to come --- all of that is true, but not central or primary. The ultimate reward that makes sense of the life Peter calls us to live is the reward of being with God enjoying His beauty.

This is the main thing Jesus died for. And this alone can make sense of the counter-intuitive life Peter calls us to live. In 1 Peter 3:18 Peter says, "*Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.*" This is why he died for us. "That he might bring us to God." Not for punishment, but for pleasure. Psalm 16:11 says, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." That is what Christ died for. That is our final reward. That is our ultimate hope. All else is overflow and secondary. If you don't want God as your supreme satisfaction, then you don't want heaven and you don't want what Jesus died to give.

But if you do --- if Jesus is your inexpressible joy, as 1 Peter 1:8 says --- then this letter makes sense to you, and the way of life Peter calls for will be possible. This is a mindset and a way of life that can only be explained by an unshakeable, all-satisfying hope beyond this life. (John Piper-Sermon 6/18/16 – The Inexplicable Life Humility, Hope, and Love in Suffering)

Grace in the Believers Life:

In John 1:14 it says, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" The Word --- who was revealed as God in John 1:1 --- became flesh, this is, became human, So God dwelt among us for about 33 years as the God-man, Jesus Christ. John's Gospel focuses on two things in John 1:14-18: Christ's glory and his grace. His truth is mentioned also at the end of verse 14 but grace gets the emphasis as seen in John 1:16, "*For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.*" After this verse the word grace is never used again in this Gospel of John, but the word truth, true or truly occurs 55 times. There is no minimizing the "truth" of this Gospel. Truth is the way grace works: "*You will know the truth and*

the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Jesus said, *"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth"* (John 17:17). But at the very beginning of John's Gospel the emphasis falls on grace.

This is so important for us to see and understand and for the world to know. John is saying that the way people meet God today, see God today, and get to know God today is by looking at the glory of Jesus, namely at the fullness of His grace. If you want to be really alert to seeing Jesus' divine beauty, His glory --- the spiritual brightness that sets Him apart as self-evidently real and true --- then make sure you tune your senses to see His grace. That is what His glory is full of. This is the great issue for all mankind. Will they see the glory of the Son of God?

Why do the people we know need grace --- grace upon grace, as John 1:16 says? Why did we need grace? The answer John mentions in this chapter is that without grace we are not children of God (John 1:12-13). The most religious people of Jesus' day were not children of God. That's the condition of everyone if they don't hear about Jesus, experience new birth, see the glory of Jesus, and believe.

Receiving God's grace is the reason why we can see the glory. This seeing is not a natural seeing, it is supernatural. When we receive supernatural grace and it opens our blind eyes through faith, we can see the glory of Christ. Jesus said to Martha just before He raised Lazarus from the dead, *"Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"* (John 11:40). Many people saw the raising of Lazarus as a physical fact, but only some saw in it the glory of God. That is a work of grace that can open our eyes to see Christ for who He really is. This is what we pray will happen for the lost people living in darkness. The simplest believer who sees Jesus Christ sees "the glory of God full of grace and truth."

True Grace:

- Grace is God's pursuit of our underserved good
- Truth is what is really good for us: the truth about God, ourselves, and the world that will lead us to eternal joy, what is good for us.
- True grace does not lead to lawlessness or immorality.
- Grace is both:
 - PARDON, so we can survive
 - POWER, so we can stand firm.
- God's grace does not save us from works but for works (Eph. 2:8-10)

God has always been concerned for believers to use their redeemed minds to search the Scriptures in order to know Him, and His glory, and to become conformed to the image of His Son full of grace and truth (Matt. 13:23; John 17:17; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 4:14; Col. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:13-14). There is still the danger of assuming that spiritual thinking is simply processing information to intellectually understand doctrine, when in contrast, spiritual

thinking involves far more. It includes all the attitudes, convictions, and motivations that lead to application of doctrinal truth into our everyday lives. In the final section of this letter, Peter addresses the godly attitudes so necessary to produce a spiritual mind, but most of all, to reveal His glory and grace. In a closing litany of exhortations and some final words, the apostle leads his readers to consider essential Christian attitudes --- submission, humility, trust, self-control, vigilance, courage in adversity, hope, worship, faithfulness, and love.

Submission:

The foundational attitude in the life of the saint must be submission, a familiar theme in this epistle. In chapters two and three Peter commanded believers to be submissive to employers, civil authorities, and within marriage. No less is required of those under the leadership of the divinely instituted office of pastor in the most important entity on earth --- Christ's own church.

Subjection to those over you in the Lord, Peter used the military term (hupotasso), "to line up under." He calls everyone in the church to put aside self-promoting pride, to willingly and respectfully place themselves under the leadership of their shepherds (1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17).

Christians are to be submissive to all in authority, but especially in the church. The process of spiritual growth flourishes among those who have an attitude of submission. An unsubmitive flock makes the shepherds' ministry difficult and forfeits a critical part of Christian growth in God's sanctifying work.

Humility:

Inseparably linked to and underlying a submissive attitude is a mind given to humility (Ps. 25:9; Dan. 10:12; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 5:3-5; Eph. 4:1-2; James 4:10). Because always the truly humble, and only the humble, submit.

Humility is not a popular human trait in the modern world. The basic reason for this is not hard to find: humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes, humility goes. In fact you might say that humility follows God like a shadow. We can expect to find humility applauded in our society as often as we find God applauded --- which means almost never.

In September 12, 1994 the Star Tribune carried a guest editorial that captured the atmosphere that chokes out humility:

'There are some who naively cling to the nostalgic memory of God. The average churchgoer takes a few hours out of the week to experience the sacred . . . But the rest of the time, he is immersed in a society that no longer acknowledges God as an omniscient (knowing everything) and omnipotent (unlimited power) force to be loved and worshiped. . . Today we are too sophisticated for God. We can stand on our own; we are prepared and ready to choose and define our own existence.'

In this atmosphere humility cannot survive. It disappears with God. When God is neglected, the runner up god takes his place, namely, man. And that by definition is the opposite of humility, namely, pride. Peter's command is foreign to our times but extremely necessary. If what is said here doesn't take foot in our lives, we will not be a Christian church, and we will not be salt and light for a perishing world.

The word "clothe" means "to tie something on oneself", such as a work apron worn by servants. Here it describes figuratively covering oneself with an attitude of humility as one submits to authorities over him. The word for humility here means "lowliness of mind" or "self-abasement". It describes the attitude of one who willingly serves, even in the lowliest of tasks. Perhaps even more so than today, humility was not an admired trait in the first-century pagan world. People saw it as a characteristic of weakness and cowardice, to be tolerated only in the involuntary submission of slaves.

As Peter wrote this verse (1 Peter 5:5), he likely recalled Jesus tying a towel on Himself and washing the disciples' feet, including his own, as recorded in John 13:3-17.

"So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." (vs. 12-17)

To reinforce his exhortation for humility in 1 Peter 5:5, Peter quoted from Proverbs 3:34, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." The prophet Isaiah stated the principle well, "For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy. 'I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'" (Isa. 57:15).

Peter next commands forcefully: "therefore humble yourselves" in submission, not only to avoid divine opposition and to receive divine grace, but because the authority over all believers in the church is none other than "the almighty hand of God." James stated it, "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord" (James 4:10).

The mighty hand of God is descriptive of God's sovereign power at work in and through the elders and life experience of His people in the church. Whether for deliverance, for testing, or for chastening, God's might is always accomplishing His eternal purposes on behalf of His own. In their time of persecution, suffering, and testing, this assurance would encourage Peter's audience to persevere,

knowing that all their suffering is only so that He may exalt them at the proper time. Peter's reference to "in time" (kairo) is not an eschatological term (the end times). It is better to see this as the appointed time when the Lord lifts the humble and submissive believer up out of difficulty.

If the foundational attitude for spiritual growth is submission, humility is, then, the footing to which the foundation is anchored. To become proudly rebellious, fight against the Lord's purposes, or judge His providence as unkind or unfair is to forfeit the sweet grace of His exaltation when the trial has fulfilled its purpose. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who promised, *"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* (Luke 14:11).

Trust:

As believers endure with attitudes of submission and humility, they find their strength in the midst of trials, by means of confident trust in God's perfect purpose. The psalmist David is surely Peter's source, since this trust was his, and the apostle must have known his words well: *"Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken"* (Ps. 55:22). David's anxiety came from attacks by a Judas-like friend (see vs. 12-14), a most difficult trial to bear since it comes from one who is loved and trusted. Peter drew from that text to instruct all believers in all kinds of trouble to follow David's example and give themselves to the Lord's care.

"Casting" (epiripto) means throwing something on something else or someone else. In Luke 19:35 the same "cast" is used of throwing a blanket over an animal. Peter exhorts believers to throw on the Lord ALL their anxiety, a word that can include ALL discontentment, discouragement, despair, questioning, pain, suffering, and whatever other trials they encounter, because we can trust His love, faithfulness, power, and wisdom.

Self-Control:

Again, Peter says to be of sober spirit (1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7), which refers to self-control in relation to intoxication. However, it has a more figurative meaning. It includes ordering and balancing life's important issues, which requires the discipline of mind and body that avoids the intoxicating allurements of this world.

Vigilance:

The reason Christians must cultivate submission, humility, trust, and self-control is that they face fierce and relentless spiritual opposition from Satan and his demons. Believers must not become indifferent to that reality or indulgent of sin, lest they become victims of the enemy. Instead, the realities of spiritual warfare call for vigilance. Peter urges believers to be on the alert, be watchful, or stay awake. The spiritual forces that assault Christians, not only directly, but often very subtly, demand that those who love Christ maintain such vigilance.

The Lord warned His disciples: *“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matt. 26:41).

Satan is not only the adversary of God and His holy angels, but he is the vicious, relentless enemy of all God’s people. The term “devil” takes Satan to the level of a “malicious enemy who slanders or attacks.” Three times Jesus called him the ruler of this world, which shows the formidable platform from which he launches his malevolent assaults.

The devil commands the demonic realm and administrates the human, fallen world system. Personally, and through his surrogates the demons, who like him never sleep nor rest, Satan untiringly, like a predator in the night of his own evil darkness, hunts to kill. Satan’s final object is not to wound with a bite or mauling, but to destroy.

Revelation 12 is the watershed passage that draws the battle lines in the long war with the enemies of God’s kingdom (Rev. 12:3-4; Isa. 14:12-16; Ezek. 28:1-19). The demons who are not bound are the sinister, diabolical forces behind the world system. God’s children, in their struggle against deception and temptation that come from the world to their flesh, are actually wrestling with and contending with demonic strategies (Eph. 6:11-12; 2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Satan and the demons hide unseen in the spirit world, but do their work through human agents (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1:3-16). The enemy continues tirelessly in his efforts to oppose Christ through twisting the saving gospel and attempting to ruin God’s redemptive plan. Satan also seeks to destroy the church’s unity, render its spiritual power ineffective and confuse its purpose.

Peter’s first line of defense for protection from Satan’s strategies is simple and direct --- BE ON THE ALERT! If Satan so easily deceived Eve in Eden’s perfect environment, how much more are redeemed sinners living in a sinful, fallen world susceptible to Satan’s craftiness and deception.

Satan has already been defeated by Christ and through belief in the truth and prayer, can also be defeated in believers’ lives. It is by the Word of God, believed and obeyed, that Christians overcome Satan.

Courage in Adversity:

Peter commands Christians to have a mind that is resolute to resist Satan by being firm in their faith. Such resistance causes the devil to “flee from you” (James 4:7). Resist means “to take a stand against,” to be firm is to make that stand solid on your faith. It is the whole body of revealed truth contained in Scripture. This is a call to know and believe sound doctrine, to be discerning, distinguishing truth from error, and to be willing to defend the truth and expose error. Jude’s call is most appropriate in this connection: *“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all handed down to the saints”* (Jude 1:3). It is that “once-for-all” faith which is

the inscripturated revelation of God and constitutes the FAITH on which believers stand solidly, from which they continually resist Satan. Standing strong is the result of the faithful leading of shepherds in the church (Eph. 4:11-14).

Since Satan is a liar and deceiver, the only sure way to stand up against him is by faithful obedience to biblical truth. The battle is a spiritual one, in the supernatural realm (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Speculations are satanic ideologies, ideas, theories, religious philosophies, and systems of thought “raised up against the knowledge of God”; that is, anit-biblical viewpoints that have people captive as if they were imprisoned in a great fortress. Christians cannot smash those ideas with human ingenuity, but only with biblical truth --- “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Only when someone has the mind of Christ on a matter is he rescued from such ideas.

Peter concludes this section with a word of assurance to his readers as they persevered humbly and submissively, vigilantly and courageously, in the midst of many persecutions, sufferings, and trials --- they were not alone. Believers everywhere could empathize because every segment of the Christian community has experienced or will experience attack from the Enemy. To remember that God allows this form of painful testing to accomplish His perfect work in the lives of His elect.

Hope:

Hope provides believers with the settling confidence that after the trouble and difficulty of this life, they can count on God glorifying them in heaven. And during this life, they can count on His continued work of sanctifying them through their suffering. Christians need not fear suffering, knowing that nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:31-39).

Peter calls God the God of ALL grace! God has already promised us grace for eternity; here grace is provided for the present to strengthen believers and make their Christian character what it ought to be.

The saints’ glory will be to be made like Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20-21). Because of that objective, God will personally, in the meantime while we are still here --- and even when the devil attacks them --- use believers’ suffering to mold them into Christ’s image. Peter concisely describes the promise of our earthly, sanctifying process of spiritual maturation by God with four synonymous words:

Perfect - bring to wholeness (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 2:10; 10:1; Jam. 1:4)

Confirm – set fast (Ps. 90:17; 119:106; Rom. 15:8; 1 Cor. 1:8)

Strengthen – make sturdy (Luke 22:32; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; Jam. 5:8)

Establish – lay as a foundation (Ps. 7:9; 89:2; Isa 9:7; Rom. 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:13)

These terms all imply strength and immovability which God wants for all believers as they face the spiritual battle. He sets them firmly on the truth of

divine revelation, where they stand in faith and confidence until they realize their eternal glory (Eph. 3:17-19).

Worship:

In addition to Peter's exhortations, and in response to the promises attached to them, his example to believers' minds must be constantly filled with an attitude of praise and worship toward God. Dominion actually signifies strength, and here denotes God's ability to dominate, to have everything in the universe under His sovereign and unassailable control. Since He has ALL wisdom, ALL power, ALL authority, and ALL sovereignty, our God is worthy of All the praise and worship saints can render to Him.

Faithfulness:

Peter gives affirmation of faithful brothers such as Silvanus to be a model of fidelity to the truth and the church by penning this letter and later delivering it to its intended recipients.

Again, Peter exhorts and testifies that this is the TRUE grace of God. What can he mean by this other than the letter itself, with all its gospel truth coming to his readers and all others who love the true, saving, sanctifying, and glorifying grace of God? Because this letter is true to be the living and enduring word of God, the apostle exhorts believers to faithfulness to these truths by exclaiming, STAND FIRM IN IT!

Love:

Peter closed the epistle not by commanding the attitude of love, but by personally illustrating it. Matthew Henry states, "Cherishing and increase of Christian love, and of affection one to another, is no matter of empty compliment, but the stamp and badge of Jesus Christ on His followers."

Conclusion:

There is no shortcut to a Christian mind processing these godly attitudes and motives Peter outlined. They will be perfected only as believers regularly and faithfully place themselves under the preaching, teaching, and study of God's truth, to obediently allow His Word to change their hearts and shape their characters. To always remember grace is God's pursuit of our underserved good. He wants us to know and experience His glory, truth and grace through the fullness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

References:

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary 1 Peter
- R.C. Sproul St. Andrew's Expository Commentary 1 & 2 Peter
- John Piper Sermons: From His Fullness We Have All Received, Grace Upon Grace; The True Grace of Christian Camaraderie; The Inexplicable Life-Humility, Hope, and Love in Suffering; Are You Humble Enough to Be Carefree?; Anxieties: To Be Cast Not Carried