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A Final Word, 5

1 Peter 5:5-14

The Bible has much to say about the mind/heart's role when it comes to what we do.

- Proverbs 27:19, "As in water face *reflects* face, so the heart of man *reflects* man."
- Proverbs 23:7a, "For as [a man] thinks within himself, so he is..."
- Luke 6:45b, Christ said our, "...mouth[s] speak from that which fills [the] heart."
- Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence."

Unlike the thinking of our day which in some quarters does NOT see a correlation between what a person thinks and what they do — think of the violence of video games or television programs both of which have been said NOT to correlate with action — it is very clear in the Bible that what we give ourselves to most certainly will form and shape us. Paul wrote this:

Galatians 6:8, “For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Truly, what we think, what we give ourselves to on a day-to-day basis, most definitely will impact the way we interact with the world.

That no doubt is why in his closing words to his persecuted brethren, Peter turned to that which must govern our interaction with God and the world! If we were to summarize Peter’s fourth, closing word to the people of God sitting under the Neronian persecution at the writing of this epistle, it would be, “Live, Suffer, and Die by Grace!”

1 Peter 5:12c, “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”

The word for “stand firm” in the Greek is ἵστημι (*histēmi*) which is an important word in the NT. While it can denote “standing in a marketplace” (Matthew 20:3, 6), nevertheless when used metaphorically, it carries the connotation of immovability! There are many examples of this in Scripture (like “a kingdom not standing”¹ or a person “standing for truth”²). Yet look with me at perhaps the most vivid example...

Ephesians 6:13-14a, “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth...”

The imagery here is that of the Roman Phalanx in which a shield wall would be formed by an army in which the front-line soldiers locked their shields together and, taking their sword, they would strike at the head or the feet of the opposing warrior. Behind them would be another line of soldiers with long spears to jab at the opposing army. And behind them would be another line of warriors — archers — who would shoot “fiery missiles” at their opponent.

Now, the most vital part of this type of warfare was *holding the line*. The goal was to advance as a group, slowly running over the opposing force. Now whether they did that or not all depended on the front line. They must NOT fall back! RATHER, they had to “stand firm”!

That is what is denoted by the exhortation in our text, “Stand firm in [grace]!” No matter what occurs in your life (your sin, doubts, doings), you and I must always relate to God and each other on the basis of God’s grace!

See, as Christians there are so many distractions in our lives... many of which are good things.

But as “the enemy of great is good”, Peter exhorted his brethren, as they faced persecution, to “stand immovable in the grace of God”! The language here is that of a *ποῦ στῶ* (*pou stō*)- which we need to define. In Physics, a *pou sto* is a leverage point. Recall the words of the Greek mathematician, Archimedes (287-212 BC), “Give me a fulcrum and a place to stand [literally a “*pou sto*”], and I will move the world.” When Archimedes said this, he was talking about a base for his lever’s fulcrum necessarily outside our planet! (as the picture illustrations)



Christian, when it comes to our relationship with God, “grace” is the Christian’s extra-cosmic foundation upon which to interact with God and this world! Accordingly, we are exhorted to “stand immovable in” and so upon this alien thing we call “grace.” Paul wrote, speaking of Christ:

Romans 5:2, “Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...”

And in our text speaking of the grace, Peter exhorted us to “stand firm in it!” (1 Peter 5:12c).

And yet, what does this mean practically? Notice the content of this call.

1 Peter 5:12b, “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God...”

The glorious reality in Scripture is that “grace” is much bigger than simply a principle of unmerited forgiveness! We most certainly are “saved by grace through faith” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet, the Bible speaks of “grace” as being much larger than unmerited forgiveness. For example, in Scripture it is described as:

- A “Pou Sto”, Romans 5:2; 1 Peter 5:12- which we just saw!
- Divine Enablement!

1 Corinthians 15:9-10: “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”³

A Worldview

2 Corinthians 1:12, “For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in

holiness and godly sincerity, NOT in fleshly wisdom BUT in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”

Here Paul speaks of “worldly wisdom” and “the grace of God” as two distinct worldviews by which an individual lives. And so, we must NOT live according to “worldly wisdom” BUT according to “grace”! Fourthly...

A Teacher

Titus 2:11-12a, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us...”

When a person is saved, they become subject to the instruction of Grace/Christ. They become His student/disciple, and so they become life-long learners of Him.

A Teaching/Curriculum

Luke wrote of Paul and Barnabas:

Acts 14:3, “Therefore they spent a long time *there* speaking boldly *with reliance* upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace...” - by “word” he means “teaching.”

Grace brings with it a theology when it comes to God, His Person, His Plan, His Redemption, man, our salvation, and so much more! That is “the word of God’s grace” — which if we submit to will bring kingdom blessing. Luke, speaking of Paul wrote this:

Acts 20:32, “And now I commend you to God and to the word [teaching] of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

It is the latter use that is the focus of our text, “Through Silvanus... I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this [Peter’s epistle] is the true grace of God...” Initially you might be tempted to think that the focus is on Peter’s previous teaching on suffering (5:9-11). And that would NOT be wrong... JUST incomplete. In Greek when you come across a word like “this”, you are taught to look for what was just immediately referenced. And here it is NOT suffering, BUT Silvanus. As such, most take this as a reference to the teaching of this entire epistle!⁴ Peter Davids wrote:

...since the phrase appears immediately after the commendation of Silvanus, most likely it refers to the letter as a whole, not to specific references to grace within it. (Davids, 1990, p. 200)⁵

Thomas Schreiner wrote:

The word ‘this’ (*tautēn*)... refers to the letter as a whole and should not be traced back to a specific antecedent.” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 249)⁶

So, what is the “grace” we are called to “stand in”? 1 Peter and so God’s word! Yet how do we do this? That brings us to the catalyst.

The Catalyst

1 Peter 5:12b, “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly...”

The stated role attributed to “Silvanus”/Silas (a shortened form) is the bringing of this epistle to God’s people. Some have suggested that by this expression Peter is telling us the Silvanus wrote this epistle; yet the language used here does NOT bear that out.⁷ In other places in the New Testament when a courier is entrusted with a letter, the one who wrote the epistle typically gave a commendation regarding the courier so that the receiving church could trust that the letter was genuine (cf. Ephesians 6:21–22; Colossians 4:7–9). For Peter, Silvanus was the perfect candidate since he already had been entrusted with a letter which was sent by the Apostles to the early church (cf. Acts 15:22).

Because of this, it is believed by most that Silvanus did NOT write this epistle. RATHER, he was the one entrusted with carrying it to the churches of Asia Minor. That having been said, notice the role Peter expected this epistle to play in God’s people standing firm in the grace of God.

1 Peter 5:12a, “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”

The language here is much more than a daily Bible reading program or memorizing Scripture! It involves a life where the word sinks deep into our soul... molding, shaping, and transforming us! Clearly, Peter is calling us to “stand in” and so become people who

- Rejoice in God’s salvation,
- Trust God’s goodness, and so
- Follow Christ! That means we must labor that the teaching of this book might change the way we think, live, and exist!

Think of it. God’s word is given to us that we might be “...adequate [mature], equipped for every good work”! (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Did you get that? God did NOT give us His word as an intellectual stimulant. RATHER, He gave it that we might be “transformed by the renewing of our minds”! (Romans 12:1-2)

Christ explains how we do this in the parable of the sower in which the environment in which

each seed landed corresponds to the four different ways a sinner interacts with the Word of God. Notice the language found throughout this explanation:

- Matthew 13:19, “does not understand”
- Matthew 13:20, “hears the word”
- Matthew 13:22, “hears the word”
- Matthew 13:23, “hears the word and understands”.

The clear emphasis here is NOT on what we do with the word, BUT what the word does with us. Notice:

Matthew 13:20-21a, “And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no *firm* root in himself...”

Our goal must be that God’s word settle deep within our soul, transforming what we think/do AND how we relate to God and man! This is what it means to profit from the word.

Hebrews 4:2, “For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”

Christian, do you understand the catalyst when it comes to “standing in grace”? It is NOT enough to be in God’s word daily. RATHER, our goal is daily fellowshiping with the Lord by His word whereby we settle for nothing less than being transformed by it!

And this brings me back to the call the Peter gives us here.

The Call

As we just saw, Peter closed out this exhortation.

1 Peter 5:12c, “Stand firm in it/[God’s grace]!”

I want to take one step back from this epistle and consider the fundamental teaching of grace found throughout Scripture; it has a very specific objective. Recall, at the dawn of creation, it pleased the Lord to enter into a relationship with man based upon what man would do... If Adam obeyed God, he and his descendants would enjoy an eternal relationship with God. But if they disobeyed, he and his descendants would die! (Genesis 2:16-17)

Now as God created this world and formed man to fit into it, we understand that at our core we have been created to relate to God on the basis of our conduct- just as Adam did in the Garden. After the Fall, what happened to this desire? You know the answer... Nothing! Think of it!

Prior to the Fall, Adam was created to subsist by consuming food. What happened to this after the Fall? Man still subsists by consuming food. Prior to the Fall, Adam was called to be fruitful and multiply. What happened to this after the Fall? As a race, we have been being fruitful and multiplying ever since. The point I want you to see is that the Fall did NOT change us (ontologically). Yes, we died! Yes, we lost the moral of image of God (cf. Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:24)! But our default passion/desire to relate to God on the basis of our conduct did NOT change!

With that, how are we saved? God Himself became a man- was born under the law (Galatians 4:4) that He might serve as a Second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45)- to uphold the law given to us in Genesis 2:16-17. This necessarily involved two very important facets to Christ's work as our Redeemer:

- Having been born under the Covenant of Works, Jesus had to uphold it perfectly. This is what theologians call His Active Obedience.
- But then, as we stand condemned in Adam as covenant breakers, Jesus had to take upon Himself the punish due us- which was and is death! Theologians refer to this as Christ's Passive Obedience.

Now if a man/you/me once again are to enjoy a love-relationship with God, it will only come as God by His grace credits our sin to Christ and Christ's life to us (cf. 1 Peter 3:18a; 2 Corinthians 5:21)!

Fundamentally- in its most essential form — this is “the grace” we are called to “Stand firm/immovably in!” This is focus and content of the entire Bible! With that, let's put together everything we have just seen. Though we have been saved by grace and so by grace relate to God on the basis of Christ's life and death, NEVERTHELESS because of our default inclination to relate to God on the basis of our conduct, we naturally and daily endeavor to “rebuild what has once been destroyed” (Galatians 2:18)!

Accordingly, as Christians, at any given moment, in our flesh we are endeavoring to relate to God and man on the basis of our conduct/good deeds/righteousness! As such, we constantly are seeking to “establish our own righteousness” (Romans 10:3)- either by:

- Delighting in religious devotion.
- Making much of our efforts/intentions at making God happy with us.

In this context, to “Stand Immovably in the Grace of God” is to fight against every inclination in us which might seek to relate to God on the basis of our Bible reading, our morally upright character, our good intentions, the things we don't do or the things we do! Secretly within each one of us we believe that a frowning providence on the part of God comes retributively, as a punishment for sins we have committed as a Christian.

No matter what occurs in your life (sin, rebellion, a bad attitude, failure, etc), it is to live with this conviction, “God is well-pleased with me at all times on account of Christ!” Sinclair

Ferguson put it this way:

Precisely because we are justified in Him- that is, in His justification- our justification is also final and irreversible. Indeed we can be so bold as to say that we are as *fully* justified before God as our Lord Jesus is. We are as *finally* justified as our Lord Jesus is. We are as *irreversibly* justified as our Lord Jesus is. The only justification we have- our only righteousness- is that of the Lord Jesus. (Parson, 2007, p. 91)

The call of Peter here is that regardless of the intensity of the warfare we find ourselves in, we must hold on to this glorious truth: In Christ I am at peace with God and He is as peace with me! Fundamentally, that is what it means to “Stand Firm in Grace!”

References

- Dauids, P. H. (1990). *The First Epistle of Peter (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- MacArthur, D. J. (2004). *1 Peter MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
- Parson, B. (2007). *Assured by God: Living in the Fullness of God's Grace*. Grand Rapids: P & R Publishing.
- Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1 & 2 Peter & Jude: New American Commentary [NAC]*. Nashville: B & H Books.

End Note(s)

¹ Mk. 3:24-25: Christ references that which will enable a kingdom or family to endure, “And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” To “stand” in this context is far more than simply existing in a geographical location. Rather, it carries the idea of health, longevity, and so endurance.

² Acts 26:22-23: Paul, speaking to Agrippa, gave his testimony, “And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” Paul’s use of this word speaks of that which he did, no matter what!! In life and death, Paul stood on this testimony: that Jesus Christ suffered for His people, died, and rose from the dead!

³ As we saw a couple of weeks back, it is by grace that Christians are able to (1) Conduct themselves in “holiness and godly sincerity,” 2 Corinthians 1:12, (2) Exercise the spiritual gifts they have been given, Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:4ff; 1 Peter 4:10, (3) Have “joy” in the midst of trials, 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, (4) Have all their needs “sufficiently met,” 2 Corinthians 9:8, (5) Glorify Christ, 2 Thessalonians 1:12, (6) Have “eternal comfort” and “good hope,” 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, (7) Have “help in time of need,” Heb. 4:16, and (8) Fulfill their call, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

⁴ As that is the case, once again we are speaking of a worldview which in 1 Peter includes nothing less than 7 convictions: (1) God is the Sovereign ruler over this world who cannot be thwarted or defied (1 Peter 1:5). He also is the supreme Judge before whom someday all will stand and be judged (1 Peter 3:12; 4:17). (2) God has been pleased to save us according to His fore-love (1 Peter 1:2). (3) So precious are we to God that He gave us His beloved Son on the cross that we might live (1 Peter 1:18-21; 3:18). (4) His will for us in Christ on this side of the grave is our good that we might inherit the eternal hope given us in Christ (1 Peter 1:5-9; 2:4-5, 9). (5) While Satan prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to

devour (1 Peter 5:8-9), nevertheless we are protected by God Himself for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time (1 Peter 1:5). (6) As such, our call is to serve God while on the earth, submitting ourselves to Him and one another (1 Peter 1:22; 2:13-14, 17, 18; 3:1, 8). (7) This no doubt will involve suffering which we must NOT resent BUT embrace (1 Peter 21-25; 4:1, 12-13), yet through it all we are called to be ready witnesses of the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15) and devoted to prayer (1 Peter 4:7; 5:6-7).

⁵ In fact, MacArthur takes from this broad reference that Peter here is attributing to this epistle Divine inspiration, "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? This is a claim to inspiration that in a sense previews Peter's statement in 2 Peter 1:20-21..." (MacArthur, 2004, p. 289)

⁶ Cf. C. Bigg, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901), 196; J. W. C. Wand, *The General Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, WC (London: Methuen, 1934), 128-29; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 308-10; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 352; cf. the comments of Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, 245-46. Elliot thinks the antecedent is the word "grace" in v. 10 (*1 Peter*, 878). E. R. Wendland argues that the aim of the entire letter is summed up here ("Stand Fast in the True Grace of God! A Study of 1 Peter," *JOTT* 13 (2000): 25-26. See also D. G. Horrell, "The Product of a Petrine Circle? A Reassessment of the Origin and Character of 1 Peter," *JSNT* 86 (2002): 29-60.

⁷ "The phrase to 'write through someone' (*graphein dia tinos*) during the time the New Testament was written does not identify the amanuensis but the carrier of the letter. Hence, Peter did not specify the amanuensis but informed the readers that Silvanus was the one designated to carry the letter to them... What we have here is a formula designating the bearer of the letter (cf. Ignatius, *Romans* 10:1; *Phld.* 11:2; *Smyrn.* 12:1; *Pol.* 8:1; Polycarp, *Phil.* 14:1)" (Schreiner, 2003, p. 248)