

EXPOSITION OF I PETER

Message #21

I Peter 5:12-14

I am always intrigued by how things end, especially books or letters. A good writer will typically leave you with some final thought or picture connected to what he just wrote.

For example, in 1997, Casey Teffertiller researched and wrote one of the most exhaustive and honest books on the life of Wyatt Earp that has ever been put into print. As he brings his book to its conclusion he cites the words of Nate Holden who was a city councilman in Los Angeles who was dedicating the former Earp home in 1994. Here is how the book ends: “Frankly, we could use Wyatt Earp in America today. He was an incredible tall-in-the-saddle hero, a mixture of great myth and fact, who should never be forgotten. ... John Clum, George Parsons, Clara Brown, Bat Masterson, and Florence Finch Kelly might all say the same thing. In fact, they did.” What an intriguing way to end a book.

We can expect, when we come to an inspired book of God that it will end in a very unique way that is not only intriguing, but very important. All Scripture is inspired by God right to the very word, which means even the way the Epistle ends. When you first read the final three verses of I Peter, you might think it is just filling up some words on paper, but when you look a little further, you discover there are some powerful things here.

From a pure grammatical analysis, the final three verses of I Peter are grammatically unconnected and unrelated to what has gone before it. What this means is that it sets apart by itself. It is its own section. Apparently, Peter wanted to issue a final appeal to the believers and his final message is this:

PETER WROTE THIS SO THAT GOD’S ELECT WOULD STAND FIRM IN THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD AND MAINTAIN A CONSTANT LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AS WE WAIT FOR THE CHIEF SHEPHERD TO APPEAR.

The first thing I want you to see from **verse 12** is that Peter says, “I have written” this. There have been times when I have received anonymous letters or reports, in which someone is too cowardly to say - yes I wrote this, yes, I said this. Not Peter, he is up front about this. It is true Peter had failed at times, but he confessed it, got back on track and God had made this man a strong apostle. Peter’s change gives us all hope. Get out of the rut and get going for God.

There are five concluding points that Peter makes that are all inspired by God.

CONCLUDING POINT #1 – Peter has written through Silvanus. **5:12a**

The prepositional phrase “through Silvanus” has been interpreted in three ways:

- 1) Silvanus was the one who carried the letter to the churches.
- 2) Silvanus was the one to whom Peter dictated this letter.
- 3) Silvanus was the one who, under Peter’s direction, constructed this letter as his amanuensis.

It is very probable that all three are somewhat true. Peter was the apostle who was being born along by God to write the inspired text and he used Silvanus as his secretary, to not only pen the letter, but to transport it to the people of God.

Now before we discuss Silvanus, I want you to notice that the **Scriptures are written**. It is the written Word of God which is able to cause us to stand firm in God's grace. It is the written Word of God that can enable one to cope with trouble and suffering. What people actually need when they are hurting, more than a hug, is the written Word of God.

We may also observe that Peter considered his epistle to be a brief one. It is true that 105 verses is not long when compared to some of Paul's letters, but it is certainly not as short as some - Philemon, I and II John or Jude. But all of God's Word is inspired and necessary.

Now there can be little doubt that the man known as Silvanus was also known by the name Silas. Silas, in the book of Acts, was Paul's co-worker on his second missionary journey. We may establish that Silvanus and Silas is the same person by comparing II Corinthians 1:19; I Thessalonians 1:1-2; II Thessalonians 1:1 with **Acts 15:22**.

Silas was selected by Paul as his companion on his second missionary journey to be a replacement for Barnabas - Acts 15:40. Barnabas had traveled with Paul on his first missionary journey and had been a good friend and co-worker. But as they were preparing for a second missionary journey a dispute broke out between Paul and Barnabas over Barnabas' cousin, Mark (Colossians 4:10). Barnabas wanted to take Mark and Paul didn't so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus and Paul chose Silas to travel with him (Acts 15:37-41). By virtue of the fact that Paul chose Silas shows the caliber of man Silas was. By the way, we may offer a little postscript to this story. **When Barnabas leaves Paul, he disappears from the book of Acts.** Paul refers to him in some of his letters, but the truth is we don't hear much about him ever again. In my opinion, he made a big mistake not submitting to Paul. **Walking away from Paul's ministry was the biggest mistake of his life.**

Silas had been a faithful man in the church at Antioch (Acts 15:22) and he stuck right with Paul even when he was dragged off with him and beaten and jailed (Acts 16:19-25). In fact, Paul would eventually connect him to being like an apostle (I Thessalonians 1:1/2:6). He was an upbeat guy who would be a joy to have with you, not a drain on you. He traveled with Paul to Berea (Acts 17:10-15) where he stayed with Timothy as Paul went on. He apparently hooked up with Paul again in Corinth (Acts 18:5) and ultimately at some point, he joined up with Peter. This was a great man to have by your side.

Now there are two facts that Peter develops concerning Silvanus:

Fact #1 - He is our faithful brother.

Literally the Greek reads "Silvanus, to you *is* the faithful brother" (του πιστου αδελφου). That adjective "faithful" means that Silvanus was one who could be trusted, one upon whom you could rely (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 362).

In other words, this is no ordinary brother. This is a very reliable and trustworthy man of God, who had earned a tremendous reputation as being faithful to God.

Fact #2 - Peter considers him to be his faithful brother.

He had also earned a tremendous reputation as being faithful to the apostles. When Peter says “for so I regard him,” he means this is my apostolic calculation, my apostolic judgment. Now keep in mind that he had been Paul’s faithful brother and friend, but now Peter considered him to be his also. This is a very positive endorsement from the great Apostle.

Silvanus is not a big name apostle, but he had earned a big name with the apostles. Apostles loved him, trusted him and esteemed him. Apostles knew they could rely on him no matter what the circumstances.

When you are in ministry, you need a Silvanus by your side. You need a trustworthy man or woman of God who says - I’ll go with you, I’ll stick with you no matter what we face for God. Someone who recognizes God has his hand on you and just connects to you because of that.

CONCLUDING POINT #2 – Peter has written for a purpose. **5:12b**

Peter wrote to get people to stand firm in the grace of God. When he says he exhorted them, he means that he had emotionally appealed and encouraged them to do this in a very comforting way. When he says he testified of this, he means that he had given much confirmatory evidence for the challenge.

Now the primary point of the epistle is that believers would “stand firm in the true grace of God.” He has referred to the grace of God four times in this epistle - 1:13; 5:5, 10, 12.

The idea behind the verb “stand” is you make your stand; you get yourself steadfastly balanced so that you are firmly standing in the true grace of God (Smith, p. 219). Hunker down and take your stand in the true grace of God.

The adjective “true” is one that refers to the genuine, actual, real grace of God. The emphasis here is the true-to-face grace of God as opposed to the false, lying antithesis of it (Smith, p. 20).

CONCLUDING POINT #3 – Peter sends greetings from others who care. **5:13**

There are two specific groups who are named:

Care Group #1 - The chosen of Babylon. **5:13a**

Peter continues to teach the doctrine of election right up until the end of this book. This one time emotional, somewhat unstable fisherman was now a rock solid theologian. He wanted believers to always remember, no matter what, that God chose them. You are His property the recipient of His elective grace.

The pronoun “she” probably refers to the church. The noun church (ἐκκλησία) is feminine, which uses the feminine pronoun “she.” In fact, there are some Greek manuscripts that actually say “church.”

There have been three views as to where the church of Babylon is actually located:

- 1) Some have said it is a reference to an old Roman garrison that was near Old Cairo in Egypt.
- 2) Some have said it is a symbolic name for Rome.
- 3) Some have said it is a literal reference to the city in Mesopotamia, better known as Iraq.

I believe this is a reference to the church that is located in literal Babylon, better known today as Iraq. But the point of this is to show that there was solidarity among suffering believers. Peter wanted them to realize they were not suffering alone. Other believers loved them and cared.

Care Group #2 - Peter's son Mark. 5:13b

Now this is a reference to John-Mark, whose house apparently was a main meeting place for Peter (Acts 12:12-17). He had traveled with Paul at one time and then abandoned his mission (Acts 12:25; 13:13). Later, he had a change of heart and wanted to rejoin Paul, but Paul would not let him (Acts 15:36-41). However, Mark eventually proved himself as a very faithful man of God who was highly valued by Paul before he died (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; II Tim. 4:11).

If Paul had just recently been executed, it is quite clear that Mark had become a very close associate of Peter. He was so solid in his faith that he stayed with apostles who were being killed, even if it meant he would be killed.

When Peter refers to Mark as being his "son" it is a reference to the special relationship Peter had with Mark as a teacher-pupil. There is no evidence that Mark was Peter's physical son. Since Mark was from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27; 12:12, 25), it is possible that Mark came to faith through Peter's preaching in Acts 2 and Peter became his spiritual father in the faith. He communicated truth that saved him and taught him truth that developed him.

Mark is an example of one who made a horrible ministry decision, but then resolved it and reversed it. He stands out in eternity as one close to Paul and one close to Peter.

CONCLUDING POINT #4 – Peter wants every believer greeted. 5:14a

In the first century world of Christianity, a holy kiss was a literal kiss that was exchanged among church family members (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26). The Greek word used for "kiss" is not a reference to an erotic kiss (eros), but a family, friendship kiss (philos) that was typically on the cheek. In ancient times, this was as normal as a handshake is in our day.

The noun used for love is agape. So what I gather from this is that this greeting which was a kiss, typically on the cheek or forehead, was one that showed you loved and cared about your family member at the highest level. You wanted God's best for them.

This was an inspired action that was to take place in the local church but apparently things became so legalistic that by the 13th century it had all but disappeared. I think some churches have become cold. Almost afraid to show that they care. There are no holy kisses, no holy hugs, not many handshakes. People scoot in and scoot out. It seems to me God wants some form of greeting given in His churches. This is exactly why we have a greeting time at the beginning of our worship. God wants every believer loved and greeted in the church.

CONCLUDING POINT #5 – Peter wants every believer to have God’s peace. 5:14b

Peter ends this with a powerful concluding statement that is rich in theology. Peace be to every one who is “in Christ.” No matter what is happening to you in your world, you may have great peace in Christ. You may be broken and bruised, battered and busted, but in Christ there is the peace of God.

May we leave you with five parting thoughts from I Peter:

- 1) No matter what is going on in your world right now, you may have hope because you do have God’s elective grace.**
- 2) Any suffering we ever experience is only temporary.**
- 3) God uses trials and troubles to build our character.**
- 4) The one place you need when hurting is the church. You will find love, acceptance and truth.**
- 5) We must always remember, we are not citizens here, we are bound for glory.**