

It's easy to twist God's grace and make it into something it's not. But God's grace is never a green light (permission, license) to sin:

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? -Romans 6:1-2

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. -Titus 2:11-14

One has **missed** the true grace of God if he sees God's grace as:

- an **escape** from hell but not **empowerment** for holiness
- **forgiveness** of sin but not **freedom** from sin
- a changed **destiny** but not a changed **daily life**

What is the **true** grace of God? The **true** grace of God is:

- His unearned kindness to us in Christ that puts us in His family
- His seeking our good for His glory
- both pardon of sin forever and power to defeat sin today
- the ability to submit to and serve others for His glory
- the strength to stand when we would otherwise fall

The true grace of God: "We get the **help**. God gets the **glory**."

The true grace of God produces good works/deeds/behavior (mentioned at least 9 times in this letter—2:12, 2:15, 2:20, 3:13, 3:16-17, 4:19, etc.) in us. We could never be saved **by** good works, but we are always saved **unto** (for) good works (Ephesians 2:8-9). See also Philippians 2:12-13. In the end, it's all of God.

After speaking well of Silvanus (Silas), Peter not only summarizes the **content** of his writing but also the **purpose** of his writing, and the two verbs he picks to tell us what he's been up to ("exhorting" and "declaring") are related to what he said in 5:1:

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and **declaring** that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a **witness** of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in **the glory** that is going to be revealed:

Peter wrote to these suffering and much-loved brothers and sisters to encourage and call them to live out the true grace of God while living under the pressure of persecution. He urged them to operate in this hostile world by this grace that God supplies. And as he writes, he speaks from lots of firsthand experience in two ways. First, he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, but he was also someone who had drunk deeply of the saving goodness of God. He had personally and repeatedly tasted (experienced) this grace of God in his own life over the last 30 years or so. He declares to them what he himself had witnessed. And soon that grace would enable him to die a martyr's death.

**Peter calls them to stand firm in that grace. How does one do that?** You stand firm in the true grace of God by that same grace. It is the very grace of God that gives us the strength to stand in it.

Where can you stand firm in the true grace of God? Anywhere you are—at home, far away, at school, on campus, with friends, on your phone, at work, America, Africa, Asia—everywhere. His grace is our permanent standing place. Put your roots down there. Build your home there. No matter where you go in the world, you can always stand securely in His grace. It doesn't matter what your GPS coordinates are or which side of the ocean you're living on, grace can always be your spiritual address.

Peter finishes his letter with a “greeting fest” (which includes the command for us to lovingly greet each other) and a wish for the same of what he had wished for them at the start (1:2)–peace.

13 She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. 14 Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

**What do we learn from this “greeting fest?”** Relationships matter among God’s people. And greetings are one of the ways that we express our sincere brotherly affection for one another.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ... Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. ... Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, -1:22; 2:17a; 4:8a

Do you kiss those you love? Husband, do you kiss your wife? Parent, do you kiss your child? Grandchild, do you kiss Grandma?

Suffering saints still kiss each other (or express their love for each other in some other culturally appropriate way). Christians who are hated and hurting don’t stop loving each other. We may be laughed at, slandered, or worse in the world, but we truly care about each other in the church. We should give and receive love in the church that isn’t found in the world. It should be different in here than it is out there. See also 1 Corinthians 16:19-20.

**What can a greeting say to the one you greet?** It can say, “I see you. I notice you. I care about you. You matter to me. My relationship with you is important to me. We belong to each other in Christ. We’re in this together. I love you.”

*How has God used Peter’s first letter in your life? How’s it helped? Will this declaration of the true grace of God shape your life?*

All Scripture quotations taken from the ESV (unless noted otherwise).

## **Peter’s P.S.**

1 Peter 5:12-14

We have reached the postscript of this letter. What does Peter say before he (or Silvanus, on Peter’s behalf–whoever’s got the pen at the moment) puts down the pen? How does he sign off before his letter is sent off to the suffering saints living on the east side of the Roman Empire?

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

When Peter says, “I have written briefly to you,” he probably has everything from 1:1 to 5:11 in mind. So, Peter seems to be summarizing the message of his whole letter as an explanation of “the true grace of God.” That is, Peter has succinctly sketched out what God’s grace really looks like for God’s people who are on the receiving end of this dispatch (and for us all). This grace comes from “the God of all grace,” and he’s explained it to them.

Notice that Peter adds the word “true” before “grace of God.” This insertion of the word “true” tips us off that there must have been a false version of the grace of God being peddled by false teachers somewhere. There certainly was (and there certainly is):

3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. -Jude 3-4