

Standing in the True Grace of God (1 Peter 5:1-14)

Introduction:-

In this final chapter of 1 Peter, the apostle Peter shows us his true colours. He is above all a pastor, and is concerned about his flock. And it may not be fortuitous that he concludes his first epistle in this way, as he urges other pastors to also watch over the flocks entrusted to them by God, because in doing so, he may be consciously imitating his final encounter with Jesus after the resurrection, when at the conclusion of John's Gospel, Jesus gave him a threefold recommission to "feed" his lambs and sheep (John 21:15-19). And now, at the end of this letter, Peter feels that he can do no better than to finally conclude on this same note. Let us now explore further what Peter would want to finally leave with us as he draws this wonderful letter to a close.

1. Passing on the Shepherd's Role (verses 1-7)

*Often we wonder what things of lasting value and worth we can pass on to our children and those who would succeed us, that would bless them forever. At the beginning of this last chapter in his letter, Peter is under no illusions as to what that might be in terms of his own life and ministry, that he can now pass on with confidence. Now speaking as a "fellow elder" and not as an "apostle" by which he identified himself at the beginning (1:1), Peter was convinced that as surely as he had been a witness of the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, he would also be a sharer in "the glory soon to be revealed" (5:1), which he also wished for his fellow elders, when the chief Shepherd finally appears at 5:4, thus providing a frame for these first four verses. But in order that they might finally receive an unfading crown at the coming of the chief Shepherd, they must fulfil their calling according to Christ's pattern, which Peter outlines in these first four verses, remembering first of all, that the flock entrusted to them is not their flock, but it is God's. And for this reason, they should serve, not from a sense of mere duty, but willingly, not greedy for money, but rather eager to serve; and finally, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but as examples of **humble servant-leaders** recalling the example of Jesus at Mark 10:45 and John 13:3-5. With this instruction, Peter also reflects Paul's words to the Ephesian elders at Acts 20:28-35, with the same Shepherd imagery. Finally, if elders, who have very great responsibilities among God's people, are prepared to exercise humility in not lording it over God's flock, then this should be met by a similar commitment on the part of **younger** members of the flock. In fact, where servant leadership is practiced, without abuse of power, opposition or pride are less likely to happen, and young people are more likely to accept the authority of the elders. In verse 5 Peter uses an unusual word, translated "cloth yourselves." It means to tie on an apron (TEV = "put on the apron of humility"), reflecting the incident of the washing of the disciples' feet at John 13:3-7, in which Peter figured prominently. Ultimately the practice of **humility** is a two-way street, that relates to "all of you", because God opposes the proud, and gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:34; cf. 1 Peter 2:13-3:6 where this theme is prominent). Perhaps Peter's words at verses 6-7 may reflect situations like that of John 13:3-7 and John 21:15-19, in which God's mighty hand finally lifted him up from his own sense of failure and shortcoming, only after walking through the valley of defeat and failure. Only Jesus can carry the anxieties that would otherwise destroy us, because he "cares" for us (Philippians 4:6-7 - "Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus"). Finally, Peter tells us to "cast" our anxieties*

on God - This implies both a deliberate act as well as a letting go - And when we do, we experience a "caring" God who shields us by his power (1 Peter 1:5), and provides for us (Matthew 6:25-34).

2. Light at the End of the Tunnel (verses 8-11)

This section begins in verse 8 with the words "Be sober/self-controlled and alert" (see 1:13; 4:7), because we have an enemy (the devil) that prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." Perhaps it was persecution that reminded Peter of the reality of the work of the devil. Suffering and unrest of any kind can sharpen our awareness of good and evil, such as we daily witness on our TV screens. But Peter can even refer to "sinful desires" that can war against the soul at 2:11. The disciple who had witnessed the sufferings of Christ and had yet failed to watch and pray urges us to be disciplined. Was Peter also here recalling Jesus' own words to him at Luke 22:31-32 - "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brethren." But how encouraged Peter must have been on that occasion, to know that Jesus had prayed that his faith would not fail, and continues to do so (cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). And what is Peter's answer here? The adversary must be **actively resisted**, by **standing steadfast in the faith** (as especially presented at 1:1-2:3), helped by the knowledge that they are not alone in their suffering, but rather belong to a wider fellowship of suffering throughout the world. Finally in this section, we have a **doxology of blessing** in verses 10-11 which suggests that their suffering will not be permanent (as a frame to 1:6), but rather the **God of all Grace** will **restore** and make them strong, firm, and steadfast. All made possible by his might and power. This would have come as a deeply encouraging word to the people of Asia Minor who were suffering at this time.

3. The Purpose for Writing (verses 12-14)

As we come to these final verses, they are full of the **God of Grace** that we have already encountered in verse 10, for they speak of the help that Silas gave to Peter in the writing of this letter as a faithful brother, as a word of encouragement that also testifies that this is **the true grace of God** in which the readers are exhorted to stand. In verse 9, this is how believers should stand steadfast in the faith against the devil's attacks (Ephesians 6:10-18). Then the passage ends with a greeting from the church in Rome, together with a greeting from Mark, who Peter calls his son, which again speaks of the grace of God at work. Earlier, Mark had fallen out with Paul (Acts 13:13; 15:38). Finally, the letter ends with a greeting involving a kiss of love (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:20), followed by the greeting of "peace" with which the letter began in 1:2. This peace is only made possible through the blood of the cross (Col 1:20).

Conclusion:-

This letter began at 1:2 with a greeting of abundant grace and peace. And as the letter concludes with the dark storm clouds of trials and persecution still on the horizon, the letter concludes with the thought that in spite of all these things, they do not finally separate us from the God of all grace whose precious gift to his people is peace, not as the world gives (John 14:27), but as a peace to all who find themselves in Christ Jesus (1 Peter 5:14). May the final word of this letter encourage and help us as those who find their only strength and blessing as taking our stand in the message of the true grace of God. **Amen.**