**Finally**

**I Peter 5:12-14**

With the boon of social media, the days of extensive letter writing are going the way of the dinosaur. Except for those who write a year end letter to accompany their Christmas cards, people don’t take the time to sit down and write an actual letter any more. It’s easier and faster to send an email, a text, an instant message or snapchat or twitter. Twitter limits its messaging to 280 characters per tweet, that’s hardly the start of a good letter. My Great Grandma would be aghast at the decline of social networking through the media of the old fashioned letter writing. We are fortunate to have some of her letters preserved in a binder.

Peter’s letter has been preserved in the pages of Scripture bound together by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His letter is God’s Word given to anyone going through persecution and suffering as a way of encouraging and exhorting to stand strong.

In Greek culture a normal letter ended with a short, closing word. These endings included an oath, a wish for good health, a purpose statement that summarized the letter, and the name of the person carrying the letter.

Authors whose letters are preserved for us in the New Testament expanded the typical secular letter. There were greetings, a comment about the messenger, a purpose statement, a blessing or prayer after which the author would take the pen from the scribe and write the closing remarks in his own hand.

That’s what Peter has done with his letter. We come now to his closing remarks in **I Peter 5:12-14**. These words are more than just closing remarks. There are valuable nuggets of truth to discover in the mine of God’s Word.

We will consider these three points this morning.

He has a faithful brother

It is a final briefing

It is a farewell blessing

1. **HE HAS A FAITHFUL BROTHER – v. 12a**

Peter begins by identifying the person who has been his scribe in recording this letter. His name is Silas or Silvanus.

Silas would be his Greek name.

Silvanus is his Latin name.

We learn first that he was a trustworthy colleague.

1. **He Is A Trustworthy Colleague**

Scholars believe that he is not only the scribe of the letter but also the bearer of the letter to at least the first church in Asia Minor to whom the letter was written. He may have carried it to each church but most likely delivered it to the first church who then passed it on to the other churches in the region.

Some scholars believe that it was Silas who was the actual author of the letter, not Peter. They believe that some of the style and terms don’t fit the language of a rugged fisherman because it has some polish to it. These scholars believe that Peter may have given Silas an outline or suggested some topics and then Silas put those ideas into writing. But most scholars believe that Peter is the author and Silas is the scribe.

It’s interesting to note the overlap in ministries between Peter and Paul. Let’s take a moment and look at Silas to get to know him a little better.

In **Acts 15:22** we read that he was a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem. In **verse 32** we read that he was a prophet who also did a lot to encourage and strengthen other believers. We assume then that he was a person of godly character with attributes of compassion and wisdom in order to teach them to stand strong in their faith. Persecution by the Jews and Rome may have already begun in Jerusalem so the believers there would need encouragement.

How the church needs people like Silas to encourage and strengthen others who are going through hardships. Maybe that’s your role.

In Chapter 15 Paul and Barnabas had returned from their first missionary journey with news about how God was working in the lives of Gentiles to save them. Jewish believers in Antioch had challenged the teaching of Paul and Barnabas by stating that these Gentile believers needed to practice Jewish laws. The question was brought back to Jerusalem to the Apostles for consideration and to make a decision. After the council met, the Apostles instructed Paul and Barnabas to return to these churches and deliver their decision. Because of his godly reputation among the church in Jerusalem Silas was part of the delegation that went back to report the Council’s decision.

When a dispute between Paul and Barnabas rose on account of Mark’s lack of fidelity in ministry, Paul chose Silas to join him in returning to the various churches. In **verse 40** we read that they were commended by the church. In **Acts 16:37** we learn that not only was Silas a Jew, he was also a Roman citizen. Both would serve him well in gaining an audience with Jews and Gentiles.

In **Acts 16 (19, 25, 29)** we learn that he spent time in jail for his faith. It was there that he and Paul sang praises to God which resulted in the salvation of the Philippian jailer.

In **II Corinthians 1:19**, Silas along with Paul were involved in preaching the gospel. He also served alongside Timothy in Corinth.

In our passage we read that he is dictating the letter for Peter.

As I said a moment ago, you see the overlapping of

ministries here between Paul and Peter. Silas who had accompanied Paul was now working with Peter to write this letter. We’ll see in a moment that Mark who had worked with Paul was also working with Peter. Peter would have met both in Jerusalem.

When a person is willing to serve God it doesn’t matter who he works with or where he works. It’s all about serving God. Paul had no exclusive right on the service of Silas to expect or demand that he would only work with him.

The question isn’t about who you are helping, but whether you are helping at all. Silas was a helper, willing one moment to proclaim the gospel and the next willing to dictate a letter and carry it to churches in another region.

Peter **“with the help of Silas”**

I could put your name here. “Pastor, with the help of…”

Silas was not the author, but the scribe and not just a scribe or colleague, he was a person of trustworthy character.

1. **He Has A Trustworthy Character**

In college literature class we learned that “literature is a repetitively selective series of concretions revealing a value scale.”

I understand that to mean that every form of literature, whether fiction or non-fiction is written with the author’s own personal bias or values. The convictions you hold to will essentially come out in what you write.

If you believe violence is okay, then your writings will reflect that belief or bias.

If you believe that the environment should be saved then your writings will reflect that belief or bias.

If you believe in the need of society to have a solid foundation with moral character, your writings will reflect that belief.

Your values are reflected in your writings.

Part of each exam included two columns of words. Based on the stories we read we had to pick a word from column B that most closely aligned with a word in column A using that standard of measurement that “literature is a repetitively selective series of concretions revealing a value scale.” There was only one correct combination.

Let’s change that up a bit and suggest that in column A were listed your family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors – people you know. In column B you would list character traits like dependable, joyful, intelligent, faithful, athletic, and so on, and there was a mix of good qualities and bad ones. Your task is to match up the name with the character trait that best describes the person and there is only one right combination. That would be tough.

Of all the character qualities Peter could have used notice that he selected **“faithful”** to describe Silas. What a great compliment.

How would you be characterized?

Years ago I had a weekend youth retreat planned. The week of the retreat someone in the church passed away. The funeral was scheduled for the Saturday of the retreat. The Senior pastor was out of town so that left me to do the funeral and run the retreat. I took the group to the retreat center and left the kids with the sponsors and headed back to do the funeral. After the funeral was over I returned to the retreat center. The guest speaker who was a friend said “the one thing you can say about Howie is he’s dependable.”

That’s a pretty good trait, but is that what I really want to be known by, being dependable?

Silas was faithful. It may sound similar to being dependable but I think it has, for me anyway, a spiritual tone to its meaning.

What made Silas faithful?

The first thing is that if he is the recorder writing down what Peter was saying, it means he faithfully wrote down everything. He couldn’t rewrite it the way he wanted in order to make it sound better. He didn’t change something he didn’t like, maybe soften the tone a bit or give it a stronger message. He wrote down what Peter said.

Ken Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum shares about a time he was speaking in Japan. He had an interpreter to translate his message. If you have heard him speak you know that periodically he would insert some humor or tell a joke. When he told a joke to his Japanese audience they sat their politely sat and listened but didn’t respond with instantaneous laughter. Near the end of his presentation he told another joke at which they all laughed. After the program was over he asked the translator why they didn’t laugh at any of his jokes except the one. The interpreter said that being in a different culture they didn’t get the jokes so when you told the one joke where they laughed, it wasn’t because they got the joke, it’s because I told them “Ken Ham just told a joke, laugh.”

Silas faithfully wrote down what was said.

He was also faithful to deliver the letter to its intended audience. Peter didn’t have to wonder if it was going to make it to its destination, lost along the way or of little importance to deliver. He delivered the letter as instructed.

And then I think Silas was faithful because he had a godly character just as we read about him in Acts. When a person pursues godliness in his or her life, it will affect every other part of your life.

It will make you a better husband or wife.

It will make you a better father or mother.

It will make you a better child or sibling.

It will make you a better neighbor or employee.

It will make you a better citizen.

It will make you a better student.

Musician Steve Green has eloquently penned for us the testimony of the kind of faithfulness we should have for those who watch us today and for those who come after us. Are you leaving a legacy of faithfulness?

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey
Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
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As a Christian and colleague, Peter had every confidence in Silas because he was trustworthy, faithful.

Could that be said of you and me?

Peter then gives a final briefing.

1. **IT IS A FINAL BRIEFING – v. 12b**

These are Peter’s final words to these believers in

this letter. They are succinct and crystal clear instructions summarizing all that he has said in these 105 verses. They center around God’s grace.

There are three summary statements as to why Peter wrote to them.

He wrote to encourage them through God’s grace.

1. **Encourage Through God’s Grace**

We have discovered through this study that the true grace of God is able to see us through whatever hardship we are encountering. They needed to be exhorted and encouraged that during tough times, when it might be easier to take the safe road, to hang in there, that the hardship, the suffering, the persecution is just temporary. It won’t last. Stay true to the grace of God, because the grace of God has been true to you.

When it might be easier to seek revenge for those who mistreat you, or to harbor ill-will against them Peter encouraged them to live right, to live godly in spite of the persecution.

The word exhort in the Greek means to call to one’s side. Peter is coming alongside these believers not only as a fellow believer, someone saved by the same grace, but one who had also felt the sting of persecution, one who had been immersed in the crucible of suffering. He could identify with them and was therefore qualified to write to them. Speaking from experience he drew himself up alongside these hurting believers to encourage them to keep going because they were so near the goal. As we learned last week, God’s grace is sufficient for whatever you are going through right now. Trust in Him to sustain you.

One author noted that there are 35 imperatives or commands in the book of I Peter encouraging the believer to godly living during times of suffering.

Be encouraged through God’s grace.

The second instruction is to testify of God’s grace.

1. **Testify Of God’s Grace**

We get our word martyr from it’s root word. It simply means to be a witness. It became associated with those who gave their life for their faith. It is a word that simply means to give a testimony.

Peter is testifying, giving a witness to them that the grace of God is true no matter what they are going through. It’s not some pie in the sky, pin your hopes on a fanciful dream, too good to be true kind of idea. God’s grace is real and affects every part of your life.

**1:3-9**

**1:18-21, 23**

**2:2-3**

**2:9**

**2:24**

**3:18**

**5:4**

**5:10**

Peter was testifying of the true grace of God. We are called to testify of the same grace.

In his book *The Discipline of Grace*, author Jerry Bridges writes: “God’s grace is His active favor bestowing the greatest gift upon those who have deserved the greatest punishment.”

The more we understand about the true grace of God, the greater will be our desire to testify of it to others – both to the saved and the unsaved.

Testify of God’s grace.

The third instruction by Peter is that the truth of God’s grace helps us to stand firm.

1. **Stand Firm By God’s Grace**

Who wants to stand on something that may or may

not be true?

Who wants to stand on something that you don’t have a conviction about?

Who wants to stand on something that is like sinking sand?

God’s grace has been and always will be true.

Stand firm in it.

Be convinced of it.

Let the grace of God be your anchor on which you stand strong in the storms of life.

It’s the same instruction Peter gave back in **verse 9** to **“stand firm in the faith.”** It’s in the imperative mood making it a command not a suggestion. The true grace of God would be able to see them through anything. So stand fast in the truth of what you have in God’s grace, a grace that saves, a grace that strengthens, a grace that secures, a grace that sanctifies, and a grace that glorifies.

God’s grace will get you to the goal – your inheritance in heaven.

Back in **1:13** Peter wrote that we should set our mind fully or completely on this grace and to be prepared for action.

Stand firm in a grace that restores us, confirms us, strengthens us and settles us.

*When we are encouraged and testifying and standing firm in the true grace of God, God’s grace will be evident to unbelievers.*

That was Peter’s final briefing.

As we close out the book of I Peter, notice in **verses 13-14** a farewell blessing.

1. **A FAREWELL BLESSING – vs. 13-14**

Peter first of all gives a personal greeting.

1. **It Is A Personal Greeting – v. 13**

The first greeting comes from the larger body of believers he is associated with to the churches in Asia Minor.

1. **The Personal Greeting From the Church in Babylon – v. 13a**

Scholars disagree on exactly who Peter is referring to here. Some believe that the “she” referenced to here is Peter’s mother.

Others believe that the “she” is referring to the actual city of Babylon located on the Euphrates River. They believe that Peter had traveled there and lived for a period of time and that he is writing this letter from there.

Still others argue that in a clandestine way Peter is referring to the city of Rome. Ancient sources indicate that Peter spent the remaining years of his life there before being martyred. There is evidence that Peter visited Rome and lived there for a time and it’s also probably that’s where he met up with both Silas and Mark. In **Colossians 4:10** we find that Paul had placed in Rome about the time of the writing of this letter. Scholars who also hold this view argue that Peter used the term Babylon to secretly refer to Rome to avoid adding any additional hardship on believers living in Rome who were also experiencing persecution just like the believers in Asia Minor. Peter didn’t want to further antagonize Rome against Christians so he chose to refer to it with a code name, if you will.

Christians and Jews often referred to Rome as Babylon. What the city of Babylon was to the Old Testament prophets, Rome was to the New Testament believers. Both were proud, immoral, godless cities that dominated the world.

That’s the view I hold.

But regardless of where this particular church is, Peter is sending their greetings to the church in Asia Minor linking them together through the common call of God to salvation. That’s the chord that binds them together. This was a general greeting from one church to another.

1. **The Personal Greeting From Mark – v. 13b**

This is the same Mark who accompanied Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey.

This is the same Mark who deserted them because of the hardship.

This is the same Mark who wrote the gospel.

This is the same Mark whose mother had a church meeting in her home in Jerusalem.

This is the same Mark who later on would become beneficial to Paul’s ministry.

This Mark is the spiritual son of Peter. Peter had taken him under his wing and encouraged him in the faith, helped him mature in godly character, provided valuable insight into his later writing of

the gospel that bears his name.

It goes to show you that just because you may blow it doesn’t mean you’re washed up from serving the Lord again. There is still opportunity to grow in faith and be used by God. You may have your own Mark story.

Peter has personal greetings to pass on.

This was also a purposeful greeting.

1. **It Is A Purposeful Greeting – v. 14a**

**“Greet one another with a kiss of love.”**

It was a common greeting in that culture. Peter is including this greeting as a form of fellowship and display of Christian love. This fellowship was made possible through Christ and expresses the idea of unity in the body. After all if two people aren’t inclined to extend such a formal way of greeting, then somehow and in some way fellowship has been broken. Peter is suggesting here that a greeting of this kind expresses a degree of mutual love and care for one another. The church should take the lead in demonstrating its unity to a watching world.

It is the expressed command of Christ that believers should love one another and this gesture shows it.

Bruce Barton suggests that of all people, Christians should enthusiastically greet each other with “joy and good cheer. Pep up your Christian greetings. If it’s to be a handshake, double pump and add a big smile. If it’s hugging, do it like you mean it. Observe local customs on how to conduct yourself, but show a whopping-full portion of enthusiasm. Let your love for this person show through your action.”

Its purposeful in that it instructs believers to show unity and fellowship through a simple greeting.

There is one final thought Peter conveys to them.

1. **It Is A Peaceful Greeting – v. 14b**

**“Peace to all of you who are in Christ.”**

And so it is that just as Peter began his letter, he returns once more to end his letter with a greeting of peace. It is a word of comfort and encouragement when going through trouble. It’s a word that gives strength and courage in desperate times. The entire letter focused on God’s peace in the midst of hardship. Such peace is possible because we are in Christ. He has given us His peace, a peace that passes our comprehension. It is a peace that remains hopeful in the desert, in the storm, in the trial.

Following the crucifixion Peter huddled in a room with the disciples fearing for their lives. Weeks later gathered with the same group they met in peace because they had come to experience what Jesus meant He was giving to them when He said **“My peace I give to you.”**

Rome offered the Pax Romana – the peace of Rome which came at the end of a sword. The peace Peter was leaving them with was peace made available only through Christ.

Howard Marshall writes “If grace is the source of divine blessings, peace sums up the content of the blessings.”

Peace in Christ is real and lasting.

Do you have His peace today?

If you are in Christ it is available in full measure to you.