

1 Peter

Entrusting
Ourselves
to a
Faithful
Sovereign



1 Peter 5.6-14

Stand Firm in True Grace

How was your thanksgiving? In a year that has produced many difficulties, including government leaders attempting to limit who and how many people you can see at your home, were you still able to be thankful to God? I hope you were. God uses gratitude to change our perspective in the midst of trials and gives us renewed courage and hope. I recently read about the hymn, Now Thank We All Our God, written by Martin Rinkart, c. 1636.

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.
O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills, in this world and the next!
All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given;
The Son and Him who reigns with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God, whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

—Martin Rinkart, c. 1636

Rinkart wrote this hymn at a time when he was officiating multiple funerals everyday, sometimes dozens. He was the only pastor left in a town in Europe alive. The Bubonic Plague and the 30 years war ravaged his town, killing many of the citizens in a terrible year that was worse than 2020 for them. One funeral he conducted was for his

wife. To say he had a hard year is an understatement. Turning his heart and mind to God, he found that giving thanks to God renewed his focus on God's sovereignty and ultimate plan. By returning his sights to God his faith was reinvigorated.

This year, have you fallen for the trap of separating difficulty from God's sovereignty? Also, have you forgotten we have an enemy that wants to destroy our trust in God? By walking in the true grace of God in the gospel of Christ that Peter has written about, we follow Jesus, even as it includes suffering, until he returns or calls us home. As another pastor has put it, "Our choice isn't between suffering and not suffering. It's between suffering with hope and suffering without hope." -Pastor Daniel Simmons

Let's read this letter's final exhortations to walk by true grace and some final instructions.

**6 Humble yourselves, therefore,
under the mighty hand of God,
so that he may exalt you at the
proper time, 7 casting all your
cares on him, because he cares
about you.**

**8 Be sober-minded, be alert.
Your adversary the devil is
prowling around like a roaring
lion, looking for anyone he can
devour.**

**9 Resist him, firm in the faith,
knowing that the same kind of
sufferings are being
experienced by your fellow
believers throughout the world.**

10 The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.

**11 To him be dominion forever.
Amen.**

12 Through Silvanus, a faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!

**13 She who is in Babylon,
chosen together with you,
sends you greetings, as does
Mark, my son. 14 Greet one
another with a kiss of love.
Peace to all of you who are in
Christ.**

Walk by the true grace of Christ Jesus, as God himself gives you the ability to endure and thrive in faith through difficulty.

True Grace is based in faith in Jesus who suffered for sins to bring his people into God's family.

-If you are walking by true grace, Christ Jesus, who suffered a little while for your salvation, will himself give you the ability to endure and thrive in faith through difficulty. (5:10-11)

According to Ephesians, God has determined from before time his plan for salvation. It is not just your individual salvation from sin and his wrath. His plan of salvation is all-encompassing. Every aspect of creation has been affected by sin. And his plan of salvation is to redeem all of creation. The One by whom everything came into being is the One by whom new creation comes about. The crucified and risen Messiah, Jesus, is the only way to the salvation of God. We have entered into this new creation but not yet in fullness. So we are able to experience now the great joy of knowing God by means of this great salvation in Jesus. But believing in and following him includes suffering in the here and now.

A false version of grace says that because Jesus has risen and ascended that his followers will never face suffering. Instead of accepting Scripture's teachings on the suffering Jesus's followers will experience, some proclaim we are supposed to experience all of God's blessings now apart from God's presence. A health and wealth facade teaches that Christians should expect to live in extravagant health and wealth here and now. What kind of hope does such a lie offer when you lose a loved one, when you are hated and persecuted by others, when you lose your business, or when you become seriously ill? We should prefer to have Jesus by means of the Spirit and undergo suffering with the church than to have all the world's comforts apart from Jesus the Christ. We have studied through this beautiful letter because Peter teaches us how all situations should focus us on both the past and the future of the gospel so that we live well for God now. We look back to the Son's accomplishment of salvation through suffering and we look forward to the glorious day when we are vindicated and brought into God's glorious presence as his family.

By looking back to salvation accomplished and forward to salvation fully realized, we are compelled to look to God in the present. As we look to the Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit by faith, God gives us hope for full restoration. He establishes us even firmer in the faith. Do you know the difference between walking with sure steady balance and wobbling on a shaky foundation?

For some of us that difference may lead to bruises and broken bones.

Look, God is our solid rock. But we may get shaky legs if we are not prepared for turbulent seas. As we learn to trust him through difficulty, he further establishes our footing in terms of faith through trial. I think it was Spurgeon who said no sailor was made through tame seas.

As you wait on God, he strengthens you to fight the fight of the faith. None of us is strong enough in ourselves to obey God and resist the devil and the world. It is the Spirit who works in us to do the Father's will. He will make us able as we walk by the Spirit's guidance, as we abide in Christ. And ultimately, your foundation to stand in faith will be level and secure with Christ as your foundation. All these characteristics will be true in fullness after Christ returns and sets everything right. But we experience these realities now as the firstfruit of God's restoration.

**Let yourself be encouraged by
those who have walked in true
grace through suffering.**

This letter's testimony was sent by one who knew personally true grace amidst suffering.

Peter (and Sylvanus and Mark with him, as well as the church they were with) knew the experience of trusting God through trial. He had failed in previous times. But God kept restoring and strengthening him to be more faithful in future times. Jesus warned Peter that Satan had asked to sift Peter as wheat. He wanted to put Peter through trying times with the desired outcome that Peter would completely turn his back on Jesus forever. But Jesus told him, "but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.""

Mark had traveled with Paul and Barnabas on mission but deserted them for other concerns. Initially, Paul refused to trust Mark with missions matters, Paul and Peter both later acknowledge Mark as a faithful brother with great influence in the spread of the gospel.

The church Peter was with was apparently the church at Rome, but he writes that it is the church at Babylon. This is one of two allusions in our passage to great and mighty acts of God to deliver his people from foreign pagan peoples who had oppressed them. After sending his first people into captivity for their sin, he restored them to the land of Israel. As God was faithful to deliver Judea from Babylonian captivity according to his promise, he will be faithful to deliver his people in Christ from the persecution of any cultural power. If he can do that with the church in Rome, he can deliver the church in Asia Minor and in America or anywhere throughout the world. We show our trust in God's deliverance by walking in the true grace of the gospel now.

Let yourself be humbled under God's sovereign hand in His work to deliver you.

-If you are walking by true grace, you will humble yourself under God's sovereign hand.

Peter commands his audience to be humbled under the mighty hand of God. The phrase, "mighty hand of God" seems to allude back to the Exodus and once more the return from exile. "Therefore tell the Israelites: I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians and rescue you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. (Ex. 6:6)

God had promised to Abraham that he would send his descendants into Egypt and then bring them into the land of promise. But when the Lord began this great work of redemption, he warned Moses that pharaoh would be opposed to it with a hardened heart. God delivered his people by his powerful hand, but the process he brought them through included persecution by the Egyptian government and its people.

The world that does not know God will oppose God's people as they seek to set apart their lives for worship of God. Instead of raising up an army to fight back against those who oppose us, we are to trust God to deliver us.

Yes, we should make disciples who express their faith through different places in culture, such as in law and military, education and medicine. Moses, after all, was trained in political dialogue in pharaoh's own household. But our ultimate hope is in Christ's salvation for us. Do you know God? Martin Lloyd Jones pointed out that if your response starts with the equivalent of I have tried to do enough good things, you don't know God. Have you ever come to a place of simple trust in Christ?

Your only hope in life and death is that you, both body and soul, belong to Christ. If your trust is truly in Christ, then trust in Him to vindicate you as right and holy when the world belittles you for your faith in Christ.

So, how do you allow yourself to be humbled? The process of being humbled is the work of the Spirit in you to line your life up with the will of God. It is your responsibility to submit to this work of God in your life, including through suffering. You submit to God's work to humble you by casting your every anxiety upon God. This instruction on casting is connected in form to the imperative, be humbled. Just as you can't make disciples of all nations without going, so You cannot be humbled without casting your anxiety upon God. Tim Keller has pointed out that Job complains and whines throughout the book that bears his name, but he is declared righteous and vindicated because he was casting his anxieties upon God. He didn't turn away from God but clung to him in hope even amidst his cries for justice.

Are you giving your concerns to God? Are you lamenting to God? Are you bringing your troubles to God in faith, or are your troubles turning you away from God to trust in someone or something else?

The result of such humbling is that God will lift us up in due time. The timing is in His hands, just as you are in His hands.

If that guarantee is not enough, Peter adds that you should cast your anxieties upon Him Because he cares for you. Another possible translation could read, Regarding God, if it concerns you, then it matters deeply to him.

God is wiser than you could ever be, knows you more intimately than you know yourself, and cares more deeply about you than you could ever care for yourself.

That is why Satan wants to destroy your faith. Because you are a testimony to the world of God's love, Christ's victory, and the Spirit's presence.

Be prepared to stand against Satan's attempts to destroy your faith.

If you are walking by true grace, you will be prepared for Satan's attempts to destroy your faith.

Satan's goal is to destroy the testimony and presence of the church in the world. But take heart, Jesus has promised the church will endure to the end, but that is not a guarantee for individual churches. Satan wants to bleed the faith of Christians dry, if it were possible to lead the saved astray. Jesus teaches that those who are chosen by God cannot be taken from God. But that doesn't mean Satan doesn't want to try to ruin your life. You see God wants to use trials to show who really belongs to Him and to strengthen the faith of those who do know Him. Satan wants to use hard times to tempt you to sin and denial of Christ's lordship. Don't let yourself become an easy target to pick off. When a lion roars, sheep may be tempted to scatter. But your strength is found in God and with the church.

When you are hurting, angry, lonely, or tired, your resolve may be weaker than other times. Begin taking note of these moments as spiritual battlegrounds, with the victories leading you to greater strength and the losses to repentance and new plans of engagement. Learn from others of the church and let them fight alongside of you in prayer and support.

If he can't stop the individual Christian's faith, then Satan may resort to attempts have leaders influenced to attack the church to destroy it completely before a new generation arises within it. You may have heard of such attempts in African countries like Niger, Cameroon, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. Also, countries that were under the communist curtain are still reeling from the sweeping enforcement of atheism in devotion to the state. One former IMB missionary to the Czech Republic told me it was one of the most spiritually dark places he had ever been.

Resist Satan's attempts. We must have our minds prepared for action against his efforts. If we know what his designs are, then we need to stand in faith as we rely on God. We need to live consistently with scriptural faith in Christ alongside of one another. We must stand up for those who are targeted for their faith in Christ as the Lord allows.

But what if the Lord does not spare us from those who oppose us in this life? Jesus told us to not fear those who can only harm the body but fear Him, God, who has authority over both body and soul. He is able to kill both body and soul in hell and is able to bring to life both body and soul forever with him in his presence.

**If you walk by the true grace of
the gospel, you will participate
in the Savior's reward.**

-If you walk by true grace in Christ's suffering, you will participate in the Savior's reward.

“To him be dominion forever. Amen.”

Hear Daniel's vision about the reign of the one who is both Son of God and Son of Man:

“As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was removed, but an extension of life was granted to them for a certain period of time. I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. He was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.”

“The kingdom, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the people, the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey him.”

His dominion is forever, overcoming the different governments, its kings, and all people opposed to him and his people. And Christ hands authority over to his people remade in His image to serve him joyfully and freely.

So, until Christ returns and fully establishes his kingdom, we should dwell in peaceful, sincere unity with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, anticipating that full consummation of the kingdom. You don't have to kiss each other, but that was the symbol of a warm greeting then. Your fellowship should be as warm as a cup of hot cocoa on a winter's day. Your fellowship should be warm, even when the world has grown bitterly cold.

“Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.”