

## The True Grace of God

*1 Peter*

By Van Morris

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**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 5:6-14  
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**Calvary Christian Center**  
11829 Highway 44 East  
Mount Washington, KY 40047

**Website:** [calvarychristiancenter.net](http://calvarychristiancenter.net)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/calvarychristian](http://www.sermonaudio.com/calvarychristian)

I'm going to ask you if you would, please, to take your Bibles and let's turn to the New Testament book of 1 Peter 5 and we're going to begin reading in verse 6 through the end of this letter. Peter writes,

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 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. 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.

This is God's word.

Let's pray.

O Father, how we need your true grace. Holy Spirit, may our hearts be prepared this morning to receive the true grace of God that we may get our footing, that we might be able to stand firm in troubled times. Holy Spirit, anoint me today. May your anointing be upon me, Lord, that I may speak clearly, that you would guide us in truth that we may have the true grace of God dispensed to us today by your Spirit, through Christ, I pray. Amen.

The Apostle Peter is the primary author of this letter. He's coming to the close of this letter that he describes, notice he describes it as both brief and being the true grace of God. I want you to think about that with me for just a moment. This is a letter written by

the Apostle Peter, it had an original audience to it during somewhere around the middle of the first century AD, writing to Christians and he said, "This is the true grace of God to you. This letter written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God is true grace from God to his people." Brothers and sisters, this is God's grace to us today. It's God's grace to those who battle with human pride while striving to walk in humility before God.

This is God's grace to those who are now waiting for God's proper time that he may exalt them. I mean, I wonder how many of you here today, you've been praying and you've been wondering, "God, when are you going to come through and help me? I've been praying, waiting on God and waiting on his proper time to exalt you, to raise you up." This is God's grace for those who face anxieties. I would imagine every one of us in this room at some time or another face anxieties. This is God's grace for all those who face anxieties. This is God's grace for whom the circumstances of life have obscured their awareness of the presence of a caring compassionate God. You see, sometimes life can get so hard, things can be so difficult that they obscure the reality that God does really care for his people. So this letter, this is God's grace to us to help us to see clearly that God truly does care for his people. This is God's grace for those who clearly hear the roar of the adversary, the roaring lion, but wonder if God is hearing their cry. This is God's grace for those who truly want to stand firm in the faith but their faith is currently being battered and challenged.

Brothers and sisters, this is God's grace to us. Receive it today and let's consider that God's grace both calls us and empowers us for the following things. I want to walk through just a few things in our passage today that both God's grace calls us to and empowers us for.

The first one is this: God's grace both calls and empowers us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. One of the immediate things that strikes me about the passage that we have before us today is that we must remember who is the original audience of this letter. It's first century Christians. Peter is writing to Christians and amazingly he's writing to Christians who have been called to eternal glory, Christians who are already recipients of God's grace, and he is saying to them, "Humble yourselves." You see, that ought to cause you to think a little bit. He's writing to Christians who already ought to be the most humble people in the world. Christians ought to be the most humble people in the world. Really when you think about it, you think about the grace that God has shown us, the privilege, the blessing that we've received, we have not earned we have received it.

We ought to be the most humble people in all the world yet Peter's writing to Christians who ought to be the most humble people in the world and saying to them, "Humble yourselves." You see, the "therefore" in verse 6, do you see it? "Humble yourselves, therefore," the "therefore" in verse 6 means that since God resists the proud and pours out his grace on the humble, which verse 5 tells us, since this is true, by all means, humble yourselves. In other words, here's how God responds to proud people: he holds them at distance. That's what he means. It means that he resists the proud, he keeps them away; he holds them back. There is no grace poured upon them. There's grace abounding for

humble people but for the proud, you see the proud, human pride always seeks to exalt itself above everything else. Human pride always rebels against God. Human pride sets itself against God, therefore, God himself sets himself against the proud. It is not smart to be proud. In fact, everything we read in the Bible about human pride is not good.

It is foolish to go against God and rebel against him in human pride. Therefore, we must humble ourselves and it's amazing here that he is writing this to Christians which ought to indicate to us that our battle with pride is not over. We have an ongoing struggle with pride. You see, when facing the grief of various trials, that's the way Peter put it in chapter 1, he's writing this letter and he talked about the grief of various trials. Various trials. Many different kinds of trials that Christians will face. When we face those, we may sometimes react proudly against God. You see, that's the concern. That's why Peter is saying, "Humble yourselves. Humble yourselves before God," which means we are to resolve ourselves to remain faithful to God and trust him. That's really the heart of what Peter is saying here. Hang in there and trust God. Don't be proud. Humble yourself before God and say, "God, I'm gonna trust you. I can't figure this out right now. I can't really see what's going on but I want to trust you."

How many of you have had someone in your family who bought your children gifts that were really loud and crazy? You know, those toys that make all kinds of crazy noise and they give them to your child and say, "Here," and your child loves it and they go home and play it all the time and it's driving you nuts. I read about a man the other day that happened to. His brother-in-law bought his children some of those crazy toys, here's what the guy said, he said, "I've discovered something about these toys." This might be helpful by the way, "on the back oftentimes hidden under a tab or behind some Velcro is a switch. The switch has a play setting, okay, the play setting which means noise at full volume and duration, then there's another thing you can switch it to called demo, and that's the noise at full volume but only for about five seconds, or thank God, there's an off switch that you can move it to and there is no noise at all." He goes on to say, "And I as the sovereign interceptor of these toys can flip the switch. I intercept the gift and in my flipping off the switch, I change the gift's function." Now listen as he goes on, he says, "Only someone who's sovereign over something can flip its switch, someone who's sovereign can take something that was intended for one purpose and alter it so it accomplishes something different." Now here's his point, "This is what God does with suffering in our lives. He flips the switch. Satan intends to use suffering to destroy us, God flips the switch and uses suffering to refine us, not destroy us, however, we have to trust him." Okay?

That's what Peter has been saying all through this letter, that the various trials that come, the sufferings that we face, the devil intends to destroy us and to weaken or demolish our faith but God wants to refine us, God wants to do us good, yet we must trust him. And Peter gives us a solid reason in verse 6 to trust God. Look at it with me. "Humble yourselves, therefore," notice the next phrase, "under the mighty hand of God." Now I did not know this until I was looking at these passages myself, but the phrase "mighty hand of God" is unique. In other words, Peter uses this, he selects it for a reason and it's an expression that is associated particularly with God's delivering Israel out of Egypt. Over

and over again you read in the Old Testament when it speaks of God delivering Israel out of Egyptian bondage, it's referred to as God doing so with his mighty hand, his strong hand. In other words, Peter is using that phrase, this historical phrase, he's bringing it over to Christians in his time and for us to say to us, "God has a faithful resume. When it comes to his people who are in trouble and who are in rough waters, God has a faithful resume. It's the same God today that used the same mighty hand with his ancient people Israel. The same God today is able in his, what, proper time, proper time to lift us up and in the meantime we are to humbly trust him."

So God's grace is calling us to and empowering us for the task of humbling ourselves before God's mighty hand, but then we also see this: God's grace both calls and empowers us to cast all our anxieties on the Lord. Now, I know and you should know and you probably do, that there are those in Christian circles that suggest that to have any kind of anxieties, any kind of depression, is somehow a lack of faith. I'm glad Peter's not in that crowd and you should be too, because Peter says here and he's writing to Christians, folks, he's writing to Christians and he says in verse 7, "casting all your anxieties," all your cares, all your anxieties, "on him."

Now let's understand what anxieties are. I think this is a helpful definition: anxiety is an emotional response to a threat to one's well-being. I like well-being, right? You like well-being, right? We all cherish well-being and anything that threatens our well-being brings about an emotional response called anxiety. Another person put it this way: anxiety is the state of being pulled apart. Have you felt that before? You didn't know a name to put to it but, "I feel like I'm being pulled apart here." You see, when grief and loss cut into our peace, you know, we're living and it's peaceful, it's well-being and all of a sudden grief or loss just cuts right into that; when uncertainty and financial struggle disrupts our carefully laid plans, we've got it all laid out, we've got it all figured out, we've got the financial assistance and all the people to help us with planning and all this kind of stuff and then all of a sudden some kind of financial struggle comes out of nowhere; when trials and hardships are like IEDs dropping into our cherished dreams, you see, it's not surprising, then, that we experience the emotional response of anxiety even for Christians. Christians living in a fallen world, Christians living where there's a constant threat to our well-being, what do we do? What do we do about this?

Well, notice in Proverbs 12:25. Let's look closely at this verse for just a moment.

25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

Now let's hold that there for just a minute. We see the word "anxiety," it's the same meaning we gave just a moment ago. It's that emotional response we have when there's a threat to our well-being, but then if we hold onto that, if we let that reside and just take up residence in us, we decide to just live with this, just going to have to live with this, then what happens is it weighs him down and that's a Hebrew word there for depression. In other words, ongoing continuous anxiety can lead to heavy depression but, notice what it says next, but a good work makes him glad. I did an internet search the other day on the

phrase "anxiety medications," and before I say anything more, I just want you to know I'm not anti-medication. Don't want to lead you there. I'm not going to jump all over you if you take medication. I'm not saying that at all. Here's what I am saying. There was a list of 56 anxiety medications. Now, what this is a result of, of course, if there's a public need, there's going to be someone to supply that need and more and more we see more and more the levels of anxiety of people needing something, some form of help, and I just want you to notice here in this verse is an antidote for anxiety. It is an antidote from God to his people for anxiety. Do you see what it is? "But a good word makes him glad." In other words, you see, this is why some people don't like the Bible, it's too simplistic, it's so archaic. "Brother, are you telling me?" I'm saying that the word of God says, "But a good word," a true word, a good word, a true word, "makes a person glad."

Now, what am I trying to say here? I'm trying to say this: would you look at verse 7. Now everybody put your eyes on verse 7. Have you got your Bible open I hope? Look at it. Here's what I'm going to ask you: do you see the good word that Peter is giving to the people of God here? First off he says, "Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you." Do you see? Now when I say "good word" I don't mean one word, it could be a series of a few words but it's just, we say, a good word. Do you see it? You do, don't you? "Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down but a good word makes him glad. What is Peter saying here to the church, to the people of God, the people who have been called to eternal glory in Christ? He is saying, "God cares for you." You say, "That's it?" That's it.

Friends, I'll tell you what: when this world batters you about, when you get into the rough waters of this world, you're going to begin to wonder, "Where's God? Does he love me? What's going on here? I thought I was God's child. What's going on here?" Peter's writing to that kind of people and he is bringing them a good word, a true word. God cares for you. His love and his concern and his compassion is available for you. Here's where we need to be particularly careful because Jesus warns us that it is anxiety that can choke out the good word. In other words, we face anxieties, things that threaten our well-being and so we become anxious, but then Scripture tells us a good word is an antidote for that, a good word is like medication for that and so Jesus warns us, though, that if we hold on to anxiety, it can actually choke out any good word.

Look at it in Mark 4. You'll see it here,

19 but the cares of the world [that's anxieties, okay] and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

So if we decide – now listen – if we decide, "I'm going to handle anxiety my way. Or I'm going to handle it the world's way." Because we're going to face it, there are going to be threats to our well-being so we're going to have to deal with it, so how are we going to deal with it? Well, if we hold on to it, Jesus said it will choke out the very good word that you need to help you.

So what do we do? Well, we must be vigilant to cast our anxieties on him. Now what does it mean to cast? You see, in some way that might sound like, "Here, just take it. Here you go." Loft it. "Here you go, take it." In order that we may live a careless carefree life. Some people are like, "I'm just going to throw it off on God. God, it's your problem. It's not my problem." So the idea is I just go and live a careless carefree life. No. No. God has not designed for you and I a careless carefree life. When Peter says cast your anxieties, he is using figurative language for praying. In other words, it's not some careless carefree, "Just dump it off on God. It's his problem now." No, it's praying. It's bringing our needs, our cares, our anxieties, our worries, whatever you want to call it, and we bring them to God in prayer. That's casting, and at the same time we are praying, we are also seeking a good true word from God. In other words, we pray and we talk to God about our anxieties and then we open his word and we hear his word and it proclaims to us a good true word.

However, and I just want to be real honest and open here, there are some hearing me right now and you might be recoiling at this because you're really facing some tough things and so I don't want to be cavalier here this morning and just suggest, "Here, take two good words and call me in the morning." It's not what I'm saying. You may be here today and you may say, "Look, pastor, you're saying God cares for me and I really want to believe that, I really want to believe that, however, I'm one of his children and you say he cares for me, you see, I have children who I care for but my care for them goes about trying to alleviate all of their troubles and problems. In other words, I have children, I care for them, and so I go in and I try to fix everything for them." I just want to say to you: there are different kinds of parenting, right? You see, I'm aware, you're aware that there are some parents who say to their children, "Get outta the way. I'll fix it." And they try to come in and take over their lives and say they don't want their kids to face any kind of sadness, any kind of hardship, any kind of challenges, any kind of difficulties, and so they come in and they try to fix it all with money and all their strength and all that kind of stuff.

So that's one way of parenting and some parents parent that way, but there is another kind of parenting, right? There's another kind of parenting where parents play more of a supportive role. What do I mean by that? Well, when Peter writes verse 7 and look at verse 7, "casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you," he's not just making that up. He's not just saying, "Hm, I'd like to find something really nice to say to the people of God, so I'll just make this up." No, he is referring back to Psalm 55:22 and you'll see it, here it is, he is quoting an Old Testament passage and let's look at how it speaks in the Old Testament. It says this,

22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Now if you will look at that very closely, you and I can learn what God's care looks like. First, does God's care look like the first parent that moves in and says, "I'm gonna fix everything here. I'm just gonna remove all your challenges, all your problems"? You see,

if it did, here's what it would say, "Cast your burden on the Lord so he can take it all and you can live a careless carefree life." It doesn't say that though, does it?

Notice what it does say, "he will sustain you." Now what does that mean? It means this: that as we pray and talk to God about our cares and our concerns and the threats to our well-being or what we perceive as our well-being, he in turn will provide strength, his strength and support that we may be able to bear up and not be moved. In other words, he plays a more supportive role of coming alongside of us, not snatching all of our problems and all of our troubles and all of our sufferings away. No, no, no, because he's developing us. He's working on us. He's building character in us. He plays a more supportive role that we'll not be moved and in his time – listen – in his time, he will lead us through the stormy waters to quieter waters. Yeah, you see, there are people here this morning, you've been through the stormy waters and you've held on to God and you've trusted him and you've experienced his care of sustaining you and in his kindness and in his time, he has brought you through the stormy waters to much quieter waters and God be praised and thanked for that.

Another thing that we need to see quickly and I'm going to try to hurry with this. Another thing that God's grace calls and empowers us to is this: God's grace both calls and empowers us to be sober-minded and watchful and resist the devil. Isn't it interesting that right after Peter speaks about anxiety, he mentions the danger of the devil.

This weekend, I was scanning through a book about Charles Spurgeon and some of the depression that he faced as a man of God, and this one little sentence, he said, "The great enemy makes a dead-set at anxious souls." In other words, picture it this way. Let's say, what would happen if you held up a big juicy steak in front of a lion? He'd be dead-set on that, right? He wants to get that, okay? I think what Peter's saying here is when we hang on to our anxiety and we don't cast it, we don't pray through asking God for his good word and seeking his good word, we're like a steak hanging in front of a roaring lion, the devil, who seeks to devour us in our anxieties.

You see, the picture Peter is pointing to here is the reality that there is a devil and he gives us the people of God, a strategy in regards to the devil. In other words, what does the devil want to do? He wants to destroy your faith. You go back to Genesis 3 with Eve. He comes to Eve, "You know, did God really say that? Did God really mean that?" Tried to undermine the authority of God. "You can't trust God," basically is what he was saying. So that's the same strategy that he uses today. In times of trouble, in times of trial, he comes along, "You say God cares, your preacher says God cares for you, the Bible says God cares for you, but where is his care at? You see, you can't really trust God."

Let me ask you: if a lion was loose in your neighborhood, you go home today, the phone rings, neighbors are warning you there's a lion in your neighborhood, what would you do? Do you say to your kids, "Kids, time to go play"? Probably not. Let me ask you this: would you carry on as normal? You wouldn't, would you? There'd be a certain height of vigilance, like, "Uh-oh." Check the windows. Check the doors. You'd respond differently. "Hey, a lion is in your neighborhood!" Yeah.

Peter is saying to the church, "There's a lion that's roaming, seeking whom he may devour." How are we to react to that? Well, we don't have to guess. Look at verse 8, "Be sober-minded." The King James Version says "sober." The English Standard Version says "sober-minded." It helps us to see that the mind is the issue here. Your mind. Your mind. And you see, when we hear the word "sober," we think of a state of being free from the influence of intoxicants, so here it means to be mentally alert and realistic. Christians need to be realistic. Be realistic. Really, that's what the word means. Be mentally alert and realistic and have your passions under control. Oh, how many times do we hear people say, "I felt like I had to do it. If I couldn't do it, I was gonna bust"?

Catherine and I were at a feed store last week right after church. We go there a lot. We know before we get there, we know what we want. We know. Internally we think we're starving, "Man, I could really eat today." Then we agree, let's have a light meal. A light meal? Not only is it lighter, you know, on your stomach, it's lighter on the billfold, all that. So we get there and they take us, never have they done this before, they take us and sit us right next to the buffet. Two arms' lengths and you could get a pork chop, you know? We had our mind made up. We had our mind all made up, light meal. We began to look over there, fried fish, you know, brisket, all this stuff available. Pay one price and you can have all of it and go back as often as you want. We got the buffet. We got the buffet. Our passions were not under control is what I'm saying.

Be sober-minded. Have your passions under control. Then he uses the word "watchful." Do you see that? "Be sober-minded; be watchful." This is spiritual alertness, vigilance – listen – that avoids moral jeopardy. In other words, it's drawing lines before you ever get there, okay? It's not getting there and stepping across a line and going, "Man, you know, I've got to learn how to draw a line." No, drawing lines now. You see, be watchful, be alert, be vigilant. Why? Because we have an enemy and finally it says, "Resist him."

Now I know that down through the years, I've been a Christian for 35 years and I've heard all kinds of methods for resisting the devil, but I like the Bible method, okay? I hope you like the Bible method. The Bible method, you can find it in James 4. We'll just look at this one first and then we'll come back to our text. What does it say here? Look, we're going to learn something real quick here. How do we resist the devil?

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Now what does that mean? Humble yourself before God. Obey God. Trust God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Now class, how do you resist the devil? Submit yourselves to God and draw near to God. There it is. What does that mean? It means sink your roots deep into God. Seek to put your roots deep into God, into his character, who he is, what he is, what he will do. Get close to God and as you do that, you resist the devil and he flees.



It's really actually from a biblical standpoint, pretty simple, but let's go back to our text and see what it says. "Resist him, firm in your faith." Do you see that in verse 9? Firm in your faith. You see, you're trusting God. You're trusting his word. You're trusting what he says. That's what it means.

Firm in your faith. But notice the next words, "knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." Now what does that mean? You see, when the roaring lion comes and during times of various trials and sufferings whatever those may look like, he will always try to isolate you and make you think that it's just you. It's just you. Nobody else suffers like you do. Nobody else is going through what you're going through. You're unique. You're one-of-a-kind. And what Peter is saying here is this, "No, you need to know that you are part of God's holy nation which suffering will be the norm until Christ returns."

You see, I don't know who you listen to outside of here. I hope, I hope that you have healthy people that you listen to, I hope you do because I think you need to listen to more than me, okay? I hear about 15-20 sermons every week and some of you are looking at me like, "What kind of life do you live anyway?" Fifteen to 20 sermons a week and I enjoy every one of them most of the time. My point is this: I don't know who you're listening to but if you're listening to somebody that gives you some kind of panacea that somehow you can reach a certain plateau that you're not going to have to deal with suffering and rough waters of this life, then you need to shut it off. You need to stop and stop today because Peter is saying, "Did you see that? Knowing the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." That's the norm. That is the norm for the Christian until Christ returns. I don't care what anybody else tells you, listen to the word of God and see if it's not so.

Quick, I've got to be done with this last one. God's grace both calls and empowers us to stand firm in the true grace of God. We see that in verse 12, "this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." Here was my big discovery this week and you've probably thought about this before but I'm sitting there thinking, "Who wrote this letter? Peter wrote this letter." Let me think, "What did Peter do? Peter was with Jesus." Peter was with Jesus. Peter walked with Jesus. Peter saw all kinds of miracles. Peter saw all kinds of miracles so I thought, "Hm, why is it Peter somewhere in this letter doesn't say you need to seek an outpouring of a miracle. You're suffering persecution, you're facing various kinds of trials and so Jesus does miracles. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. He does miracles so you need to seek a miracle." And Peter doesn't do that. I mean, out of all people with credentials. Peter was with Jesus. He saw miracles. He saw Jairus' daughter being raised from the dead. He saw all kinds of miracles but we don't find him in the thick of it right here, we don't find him saying, "Alright, church, you need to seek out your miracle. You seek an outpouring of miracles." No, we don't see that. What we see is verse 10, look at verse 10, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace," look at this, look at this phrase, "who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

Now what does that mean? "Who has called you to his eternal glory." Do you know that if you're a Christian, you have an appointment with glory and I wish, you know, if I had another 30 minutes or so, we could talk about what glory is, but you have an appointment with glory. Friends, you could accumulate all of your best stuff, your best days, all your best here on this earth, it won't even make a pimple on glory. It won't. You have an appointment with glory. You see, when you believe the Gospel, when you obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you answered the call, when you answered the call of the Gospel, you were inducted into glory. You answered the call of glory, eternal glory. You see, by the virtue of the new birth, you are a partaker now of future glory.

Now, you see, you're sitting there looking at me and I wish I could get into your head here, I wish I could get into your heart here. You have an appointment with glory and you have a taste of it now. How do I say that? Because God's Spirit will now restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you through this little while of suffering. That's what Peter is saying. Peter is saying to these believers who are experiencing the suffering of persecution, "Little while. It's a little while." He's not minimizing, he's just simply saying in light of the eternal glory that you have an appointment with, you taste it now, you have a taste of it now because God's Spirit is going to establish you and confirm you and strengthen you and restore you during this little time of suffering, but it's going to be small in comparison to the eternal weight of glory, and as we continue to trust God and obey him, by his grace we shall stand firm in grace.

Let me close with this story. I don't know anything about rafting in the Zambezi River but I read about it the other day. You load a raft at the bottom of Victoria Falls. Victoria Falls are the largest falls in the world. They are more than a mile wide and 300 feet high. I mean, I would be dead if I was on that raft. I would have to be because there is no way I'm getting on that raft. I would be dead from a heart attack if somebody tried to put me on there. More than a mile wide, 300 feet high falls just roaring of water. To a guy who can't swim, I'm like, "What in the world?" And I read about this. It is the largest rapids, the water comes down and it forms the largest rapids in the world and this guy is going to ride in a raft and here's what he said. He said, "Our guide says this," there's him and seven others and then the guide, the guide says this, "When the raft flips." He goes on to say, "There was no 'if the raft flips or on the off chance we get flipped." No, when the raft flips. He's done this enough times, it's going to flip. Here's what he tells them, "When it flips, stay in the rough water. You will be tempted to swim toward the stagnant water at the edge of the banks. Don't do it." Now, I'm like, that's exactly where I'm going. Rough water, peaceful water, I'm going to the peaceful water, but here's why you don't do that, because it is in the stagnant water that the crocodiles wait for you. They are very large and very hungry. Even when the raft flips, stay in the rough waters. Isn't that what Peter is saying in this letter? I mean, I think if you were to go back and read it again, that would be the tone, "Stay in the rough waters."

So let's close with this thought. Church, we will face rough waters. We are already beginning to face rough waters. America is changing rapidly and the change is going to affect many things and many people, but especially the church of Jesus Christ and we must resist swimming away from the rough waters. That is what Peter is writing here to

believers. It's going to be tempting to get to the peaceful waters, to get away, to kind of scatter yourselves, get away from all the roughness and all the water that's churning, get away from it, but Peter is saying, "Let's stay in the rough water and let's go and let's pour out our lives to others and God will help us. God will sustain us." Why? "Because we're standing firm in his grace."

So my encouragement to you, Calvary, is stay in the rough waters. There may be periods where God will in his sweet mercy bring us out of the stormy waters into quieter waters but stormy rough waters are ahead for the church in America. Stay in the rough waters and stand firm by the grace of God.

Let's bow our heads.

April 26, 2015  
**The True Grace of God**  
**I Peter 5:6-14**

Let's turn to the New Testament Book of I Peter Chapter 5, beginning with verse 6 and reading through verse 14.

Peter writes, "Humble yourselves; therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that at the proper time, he may exalt you. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brothers throughout the world. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She, who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, send you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love."

The Apostle Peter is the primary author of this letter. He's coming to the close of this letter that he describes it as both brief and being the true grace of God. Let's think about this for a moment. This is a letter written by the Apostle Peter. It had an original audience to it, during somewhere around the middle of the first century A.D. Writing to Christians he says, "This is the true grace of God to you." This letter written under the inspiration of God is true grace from God to His people.

Brothers and sisters, this is God's grace to us today. It's God's grace to those who battle with human pride while striving to walk in humility before God. This is God's grace to those who are waiting for God's proper time that He may exalt them. I wonder how many of you today, you've been wondering, "God when are you going to come through and help me?" You've been praying, waiting on God. Waiting for God's proper time to come exalt you and raise you up. This is God's grace for those who face anxieties. I would imagine every one of us and sometime or another face anxieties. This is God's grace for all those that face anxieties. God's grace for those whom the circumstances of life obscure their awareness of the presence of a caring and compassionate God.

Sometimes in life, things can be so difficult that it can obscure the reality that God really does care for His people. This is God's grace to us to help us to see clearly that God truly does care for his people. This is God's grace for those who clearly hear the roar of the adversary, the roaring lion. They will wonder if God is hearing their cry. This is God's grace for those who truly want to stand firm in the faith but their faith is currently being battered and challenged. Brothers and sisters, this is God's grace to us. Receive it today.

Let's consider that God's grace both calls us and empowers us for the following things. I want to walk us through a few things in our passages today that both God's grace calls us to and empowers us for. The first one is this: God's grace both calls and empowers us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

One of the immediate things that strikes me about the passages that we have for us today is that we must remember who is the original audience of this letter. It is first century Christians. He is writing to Christians and amazingly he is writing to Christians who are already recipients of God's grace and he is saying to them, Humble yourselves.

That ought to cause you to think a little. He is writing to Christians who already should be the most humble people in the world . Christians ought to be the most humble people in the world. Really when you think about it, you think about the grace that God has shown us. The privilege, the blessing we have received . We have not earned, we have received it. We ought to be the most humble people in the world, yet Peter is writing to Christians who ought to be the most humble, saying to them “humble yourselves.”

You see, the “therefore” in verse 6: “Humble yourselves, therefore”. The “therefore” in verse 6 means that since God resists the proud and pours out his grace on the humble which verse 5 tells us. Since this is true, by all means, humble yourselves. In other words, here's how God responds to proud people. He holds them at a distance. That is what it means, He resists the proud. He holds them back. There is no grace poured upon them. There is grace abounding for humble people but not for the proud. Human pride always seeks to exalt itself above everything else . Human pride always tries to rebel against God. Human pride sets itself against God; therefore, God himself sets himself against the proud. It is not smart to be proud. Everything we read about human pride is not good. It is foolish to go against God and rebel against him in human pride; therefore, we must humble ourselves. It is amazing here that he is writing this to Christians which ought to indicate to us that our battle with pride is not over. We have an ongoing struggle with pride when facing the grief of various trials. This is how Peter put it in Chapter 1, he is writing and he talks about “The grief of various trials”, many different kinds of trials. When we face those we sometimes react proudly against God. That is why Peter says “humble yourselves”. Humble yourselves before God. Which means we are to resolve ourselves to remain faithful to God and trust him.

That is really the heart of what Peter is saying. Hang in there and trust God. Don;t be proud. Humble yourself before God. Say to God, “God I can't figure this out right now. I can't really see what's going on, but I'm going to trust you.”

How many of you have had someone in your family who bought your children gifts that were really loud and crazy? You know those toys that make all kinds of crazy noise? They give them to your child and your child loves it and plays it all the time and it is driving you nuts. I read about a man and it happened to his brother-in-law who bought his children some crazy toys . Here's what the man said, “I've discovered something about these toys. On the back oftentimes, hidden under a tab behind some velcro is a switch. The switch has a play setting which means 'noise at full volume and duration'. Then there's another thing you can switch it to and that is called demo and that means 'noise at full volume but only for about 5 seconds' or thank God there's an off switch you can select and there's no noise at all.” He goes on to say “and I as sovereign interceptor of the gift can flip the switch. I intercept the gift and by flipping off the switch I change the gifts function. Only someone whose sovereign over something can flip the switch. Someone who is sovereign can make something intended for one person or purpose can alter it so it accomplishes something different.” Here is his point, “This is what God does with suffering in our lives.” He flips the switch. Satan intends on using suffering to destroy us. God uses suffering to refine us not destroy us; however, we have to trust him.

That is what Peter is saying all through this letter. Through the various trials that come and the sufferings that we face, the devil intends to destroy us or weaken and demolish our faith, but God wants to refine us. God wants to do us good but we must trust him. Peter gives us a solid reason in verse 6 to trust God. It reads: “Humble yourselves; therefore, under the mighty hand of God.”

Now, I did not know this until I was looking at these passages myself but the phrase “mighty

hand of God” is unique. In other words, Peter uses this and selects it for a reason. It is an expression that is associated particularly with God's delivering Israel out of Egypt. Over and over again, when reading the Old Testament when it speaks of God delivering Israel out of Egyptian bondage its referred to as God doing so with his mighty hand. Strong Hand. In other words, Peter in using that phrase is bringing it to Christians in his time and for us to say to us, “God has a faithful resume.” When it comes to his people who are in trouble and who are in rough waters God has a faithful resume. It is the same God today who used the same mighty hand with his people Israel. The same God is able, in his proper time, to lift us up and in the meantime, we are to humbly trust him. God's grace is calling us to and empowering us for the task of humbling ourselves for God's mighty hand.

Then we also see this, Gods' grace both calls us and empowers us to cast all our anxieties on The Lord. Now, I know and you should know and you probably do that there are those in Christian circles that suggest that to have any kind of anxiety or any kind of depression is somehow a lack of faith. I'm glad Peter is not in that crowd. You should be too. Because Peter is writing to Christians and he says in verse 7, “casting all your anxiety on Him, all your cares on Him”. Let's understand what anxieties are. I think this is a helpful definition: anxiety is an emotional response to a threat to one's well-being. I like well-being. We all cherish well-being. Anything that threatens our well-being brings about an emotional response called anxiety. One person puts it this way, “anxiety is a state of being pulled apart.” Have you felt that before? You didn't have a name to put to it but you felt like you were being pulled apart. When grief and loss cut into our peace, we are living great and then grief and loss come. When uncertainty, financial struggle disrupts our carefully laid plans. We've got it all laid out and figured out and all of a sudden some kind of financial struggle comes out of nowhere. When trials and hardships are like IED's dropping into our cherished dreams, it is not surprising then that we experience the emotional response of anxiety. Even for Christians. Christians living in a fallen world. Christians living where there is a constant threat to our well-being. What do we do about it?

Notice in Proverbs Chapter 12, verse 25. “Anxiety on a man's heart weigh him down but a good word makes him glad.” We see the word “anxiety”. It is the same as the word we looked at a moment ago and is that “emotional response we have to threats to our well-being”, but then if we hold on to that, if we let that reside and take residence in us, then what happens is it weighs him down and that is a Hebrew word meaning “depression”. In other words, continued anxiety can lead to heavy depression, but a good word makes him glad.

I did an internet search the other day on the phrase “anxiety medications”. Before I say anything more, I just want you to know I'm not anti-medication and don't want to lead you there. There was a list of 56 anti-anxiety medications. What this is a result of is if that there is a public need there is a need for someone to supply that need. More and more we see, more and more the levels of anxiety needing something to help. In this verse is an antidote for anxiety. It is antidote from God to his people. Do you see what it is? “But a good word makes him glad.” This is why some people don't like the bible. It is too simplistic. It is so archaic. I am saying that the Bible says, but a good word (a true word) makes a person glad.

Would you look at verse 7. Here's what I'm gonna ask you, Do you see the good word that Peter is giving to the people of God? First off he says “cast off all your anxieties on him for he cares for you.” When I say good word, I mean one word . One good word. Do you see it? “. . . casting all your anxieties on him because he **cares** for you.” Anxiety is a mans heart weighs him down but a good word makes him glad. What is Peter saying to the church? To the people of God? The people he has called to eternal glory? He is saying God cares for you.

When this world batters you about. When you get into the rough waters of this world you are going to begin to wonder where's God? Does he love me? What is going on here? I was God's child. What's going on here? Peter is writing to that kind of people and he is bringing to them a good word. God cares for you and his concern and compassion is available for you. Here is where we need to be particularly careful because Jesus warns us it is anxiety that can choke out the good word. In other words we face anxieties, things that threaten our well-being so we become anxious but scripture tells us a good word is an antidote for that. A good word is like medication for that. Jesus warns us though if we hold onto anxiety it can actually choke out a good word. You will see it right here in Mark Chapter 24, "Let the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful." So if we decide I'm going to handle anxiety my way or the world's way then the word can be choked out. Face it, there are going to be threats to our well-being. How are we going to deal with it? If we hold onto it, Jesus said it will choke out the things you need to help you.

What do we do? We must be vigilant to cast our anxieties on Him. What does it mean to cast? In order that we may live a carefree life some may say just throw it on God and say "It's not my problem". So the idea is that I will just live a careless, carefree life. NO, NO. God has not designed for you and I a careless, carefree life. When Peter says cast your anxieties, he is using figurative language for praying. In other words, it is not some careless, carefree life and just dump it on God. No, it is praying. It is bringing our needs, our anxieties, our worries and we bring them to God in prayer. That is casting. At the same time we are praying, we are also seeking a good true word from God. We pray and we talk to God about our anxieties and then we open his word and it proclaims to us a good, true word.

However, I just want to be real honest and open here. There some hearing me now who might be recoiling at this because you really are facing some tough things so I don't want to be cavalier and suggest two good words and call me in the morning. You may be here today and you say "Pastor, you are saying God cares for me and I really want to believe that; however, I'm one of his children and you say he cares for me. I have children who I care for but my care for them goes about trying to alleviate all their problems. I try to fix everything for them." I just want to say to you. There are different kinds of parenting. There are some parents who say to their children, "I'll fix it." They try to come in and take over their lives and don't want their kids to face any kind of sadness or hardship or challenges. They try to fix it all with money and all their strength. That is one way of parenting and some parents do that. There is another kind of parenting where parents play a supportive role.

When Peter writes verse 7 "casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you." He wasn't making that up. He is referring back to Psalms 55 verse 22. He is quoting an Old Testament passage. "Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved". If you will look at that very closely, you and I will learn what God's care looks like. Does God's care look like the first parent who moves in and tries to fix everything to remove all your challenges and worries? If it did it would say "cast on all your worries to the Lord and he will fix all your problems and you can live a carefree life". It does not say that though. Notice what it does say, "He will sustain you." What does that mean? It means that as we pray and talk to God about our cares and concerns and the threats to our well-being, He in turn will provide His strength and support that we may be able to bear up and not be moved. He plays a more supportive role coming alongside of us, not snatching up all our problems and sufferings away. He is developing us and building character in us. He plays a supportive role that we will not be moved and In his time he will lead us through the stormy waters through the quieter waters.

There are people here who have been through the stormy waters and you've held onto God and you've trusted Him and you experienced God sustaining you and in His kindness in his time brought us through the stormy waters to much quieter waters. Another thing we need to see quickly is another thing that God's grace calls and empowers us to. That is God's grace both calls us to and empowers us to be sober-minded and resist the devil. Isn't it interesting that right after Peter speaks about anxiety He mentions the danger of the devil. This weekend I was scanning a book about Charles Spurgeon and some of the depression he faced as a man of God and he said "The great enemy makes a dead set and anxious souls." In other words, let's say what would happen if you held up a big juicy steak in front of a lion? He would be dead set on that steak. He wants to get it. I think what Peter is saying is when we hang on to our anxiety and we don't cast it and we don't pray through and ask for God's good word we are like a steak hanging in front of a roaring lion. The devil who seeks to devour us in our anxieties. The picture Peter is painting here is the reality that there is a devil and he gives us a strategy in regards to the devil. What does the devil want to do? He wants to destroy your faith. You go back to Genesis Chapter 3 with Eve. He comes to Eve and says, "Did God really say that?" "Did God really mean that?" Satan was trying to undermine the authority of God and say she could not trust God. It is the same strategy that he uses today. In times of trouble satan will question God and question if God really cares.

If a lion was loose in your neighborhood and neighbors are warning you, what would you do? Would you say to your kids, "Kids it is time to go play." Probably not. Would you carry on like nothing was wrong? There would be a certain height of vigilance. You would check the windows and the doors. You would respond differently. There is a lion in your neighborhood. Peter is saying to the church, "There is a lion seeking whom he may devour." How are we to react to that? Looks at verse 8. Be sober-minded. King James Version says "sober", English Standard Version says "sober-minded". It helps us to see that the mind is the issue here. Your mind. When we hear the word "sober" we think of a state of being free of the influence of alcohol. Here, it means to be mentally alert and realistic. Christians need to be realistic. Be mentally alert and realistic and keep your passions under control. Have you heard anyone say, "I felt I had to do it and if I didn't I felt like I was gonna bust."

Katherine and I were at Mark's Feed Store last week after church. We go there a lot. We know before we get there what we want. Internally we think we are starving. But then we say, "Let's have a lite meal." Not only is it lighter on the budget but it is lighter on our bodies. They have never done this before, but this time they sat us right next to the buffet. Two arm's length and you could get a pork chop. We had our mind made up to have a light meal. One look over there and we see fried fish, brisket. Everything is available and you pay one price and you can have all of it at one price. We got the buffet of course. Our passions were not under control. Be sober-minded. Have control of your passions. Then he uses the word "watchful". This is spiritual alertness, vigilance that avoids moral jeopardy. In other words, it is drawing lines before you get there. We need to draw the lines before we get there. Be watchful because we have an enemy. Resist him.

I've been a Christian for 35 years and I've heard all kinds of methods of resisting the devil, but I like the Bible method. I hope you like the Bible method. The Bible method you can find it in James Chapter 4: "Submit yourselves therefore, to God." What does that mean? Humble yourselves before God. Obey God. Trust God. Resist the devil and he will flee before you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Now class, How do we resist the devil? Submit yourselves to God and draw near to God. It means sink your roots deep into God. Sink to put your roots deep into God, and His character, who he is, what he is, what he will do. Get close to God and as you do that the Devil flees. From a biblical standpoint, pretty simple. But let's go back to our text. Resist him, firm in your faith in verse 9. You are trusting God and trusting His word. That is what it means. Trusting his word. Notice the next



words, “knowing that at the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. “

When the roaring lion comes and during times of various trials and sufferings, whatever those might look like, the lion will always try to isolate you and make you think it is just you. Nobody else suffers like you. You are unique. You are one of a kind. What Peter is saying is that you are part of God's holy nation and that suffering will be the norm until Christ returns. I don't know who you listen to outside of here. I hope you have healthy people to listen to. If you are listening to someone that tells you that you can reach a plateau and that you won't have to deal with suffering in this life, then you need to shut it off. Peter is saying “Knowing that the same kinds of suffering is being dealt with by your brothers. That is the norm for the Christian. That is the norm until Christ returns. Don't listen to what others tell you. Listen to the word of God.

God's grace both calls us and empowers us to stand firm in the true grace of God. We see that in Verse 12. Here was my big discovery this week. You probably thought about it. I'm sitting here thinking who wrote this letter. Peter wrote this letter. What did Peter do. Peter was with Jesus. Peter walked with Jesus. Peter saw all kinds of miracles. I thought why is it that nowhere in this letter does Peter say “you need to seek an outpouring of a miracle. You are suffering and you are facing all kinds of trials and so Jesus does all kinds of miracles so you need to seek a miracle.” Peter doesn't do that. Out of all people with credentials Peter was with Jesus, he saw all kinds of miracles, but we don't find him in the thick of it right here. He is not telling the church that they need to seek out their miracle. What we see is verse 10. “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to the eternal glory in Christ will himself restore you and make you strong and steadfast.” He has called you to his eternal glory.

Did you know as a Christian that you have an appointment with glory. You have an appointment with glory. You could accumulate your best stuff and your best days and your best on this earth and it won't even make a pimple on glory. When you obey the gospel, you answered the call. When you answered the call of the gospel, you were inducted into glory. You answered the call of glory, eternal glory. You have the virtue of a new birth. You are a partaker now of future glory. God's spirit will now restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you through this little while of suffering. This is what Peter is saying. Peter is saying to these believers who are experiencing the suffering that in this time of suffering it will be small in comparison to the eternal glory. As we continue to trust God and obey Him by His grace will shall stand firm.

I will close with this story. I don't know anything about rafting in the Zambeze River but I read about it the other day. You load a raft at the bottom of Victoria Falls. Victoria Falls are the largest falls in the world. They are a mile wide and 300 feet high. I would be dead if I was on that raft. I would have to be because there is no way I'm getting on that raft. I would be dead from a heart attack. It is the largest rapids in the world and this guy is going to ride in a raft. This is what the man says, “Our guide says this 'When the raft flips' there was no 'if the raft flips or on the off chance our raft flips', it was 'when the raft flips'. He had done this enough times to know that it is going to flip. The guide continued 'When the raft flips, stay in the rough water. You will be tempted to swim to the stagnant water at the edge of the banks. Don't do it’’. I'm like, that is exactly where I'm going. Rough water verses peaceful water, I am heading for the peaceful water. Here's why you don't do that. “It is in the stagnant water that the crocodiles wait for you. They are very large and very hungry. Even when the raft flips, stay in the rough water.”

Isn't that what Peter is saying in this letter? If you were to read it again you would hear that

undertone, stay in the rough waters. Let's close with this thought. We will face rough waters. We are already beginning to face rough waters. America is changing rapidly. Change is going to affect many people, but especially the church of Christ. We must resist swimming away from rough waters. What Peter is writing about to believers is that it will be tempting get to the peaceful waters, to get away from the roughness and all the water that is churning and get away from it. But Peter is saying, Let's stay in the rough water and let's pour out our lives to others and God will help us. God will sustain us because we are standing firm in God's grace. So my encouragement to you is to stay in the rough waters. There may be periods where his sweet mercy will bring us out of the rough waters into the quieter waters, but stormy rough waters are ahead of the church of America. Let's stay in the rough waters.