

Standing Firm as the Family of God

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[0:00] For our sermon this evening, we are going to begin at the end. That is, at the end of 1 Peter. So we're going to look at the very last few verses that come out of 1 Peter.

And what we're going to see here is we're going to be looking at the valediction, the signing off here of 1 Peter. Now as I was thinking about this idea of signing off, that at the end of a letter we write our valediction some way, of something kind of, to end the letter appropriately, that still makes sense to the people.

So this is actually something I've kind of struggled with on an email. Like, what is the exact right way to sign off on an email? And I've got a few things that I go to.

But as I was thinking about this, like how do we sign off on an email? I looked up and I came across some suggestions for us. You are welcome to use any of these suggestions as you sign off on an email.

Or you may not want to use them. You can decide. One of my favorite ones that I noticed.

Confusion to your enemies. Comma, Terran. Later, Vader.

[1:08] Here's one that we all might want to use, but I'm not necessarily sure it's the right thing to use. It's this. In my humble but accurate opinion. Comma, Terran. You can send that one to your boss.

Next one. This message will self-destruct. And the last little suggestion. You can use these if you want. Once again, no compulsion there. Viva la revolution.

All right. Long live the revolution. There we go. As we look here at 1 Peter, we're going to find his closing remarks. We're going to find that he did a far more effective job of closing out his letter than I do in my emails.

And that some of these suggestions most certainly would do for it. And what we're going to find is that Peter, in his farewell, he brings in some subtle but punchy remarks.

And he also does here in this very last few verses, is he does a reframing of the concept of grace. So as we go through the sermon today, what we're going to find is that there's three aspects that come out of this passage.

[2:10] And we're going to follow a little H alliteration. So there will be some H words that we're going to put together. And then finally, we're going to look at the idea of true grace, which is something that's mentioned here.

And the thing that I want you to get out of this, at the end, as you're looking back and saying, what did I get out of this message? Here's the point that I want you to hear out of this message, is that true grace is the lifeline for Christian exiles.

Once again, true grace is the lifeline for Christian exiles. Now as we go through this, I'll be referencing other parts of the scriptures and reading a few other verses that are not found in 1 Peter.

Usually I'd like to keep things kind of tight within the passage that we're looking at, but just for the help of looking at this passage this evening, I'm going to bring in a number of other verses.

So my suggestion to you is actually just keep your Bible right there at 1 Peter. I'll read the verses. If you're wondering about where those are located, you're certainly welcome to check with me afterwards. But I suggest just keep right there in 1 Peter looking at that.

[3:11] And as I come across those verses, you can just hear them as I say them. First thing I want to look at is the idea of help. So the first thing we'll look at is help. This is going to come out of the first part of verse 12.

So verse 12 starts, By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you. So the question we have for us is, who is Silvanus? So Peter is saying that by Silvanus, he has written

this letter.

So the question is for us, who is Silvanus? And what we're going to find is that Silvanus is actually mentioned in a couple of other books. He's mentioned in 2 Corinthians, both of the Thessalonians. And Silvanus most likely is the same person as Silas. Silas is in the Greek form, while Silvanus is in the Latin form of the word.

And so it's most likely the very same Silas that we found mentioned in Acts 15 through 17. What would also seem to be the case with Silvanus is that he is known to the people who are receiving the letters.

[4 : 12] So when Peter says, By Silvanus, they're like, Oh, Silvi, yeah, we know Silas, our friend. So when we come to this idea, By Silvanus, I have written briefly to you, there's kind of two possible meanings from this.

First, Silvanus maybe was the scribe. Maybe he wrote the letter, Peter dictated it, and Silvanus was the one who wrote it. Another possible idea is that Silvanus was the courier.

And so Peter writes the letter, gives it to Silvanus, and says, Hey, why don't you carry this around to some people so that they can see it? You know, at the end, what's really going to matter, what I really want us to see with Silvanus, is that he's been helpful to Peter in providing this information to the people who need to hear it.

Whether Peter needed help in someone writing it, or Peter needed help in someone delivering it, Silvanus was someone who helped him. And that's one of the things I want you to see from the beginning, is that this idea of helping others within the Christian community.

And this idea of needing people to help, and needing others to assist in things, is certainly a pattern that we see through the course of scriptures, is that people who are doing God's work, people who are serving God, often need help.

[5 : 30] It's expected that we need help. We're not expected to do things by ourselves, we're expected to be part of a community. A church is a community. Within a community, we're going to help each other.

But just think of some of these biblical patterns of people who needed help. From the very first guy God made, Adam, it came, God's like, Hey, Adam, you need someone to help? And Adam's like, Yeah, I do.

Here's Eve. Woo, that's good. That's good. Moses. Moses needed a little help. And Moses was someone who said, Hey, God, I need a little help. God got a little frustrated over it, but said, Hey, here's your brother Aaron.

He can help you with this. You even look at Elijah, a great prophet, Elijah. Elijah was feeling lonely, kind of like he's the only one. And Elijah gets a mentee, Elisha, who comes alongside Elijah and helps him.

And even we see Jesus on the cross who needs help. He needs help for his mom. And so that's where we find Jesus on the cross, worrying about his mom and who's going to take care of his mom.

[6 : 31] He's like, I need someone to help me. And so he turns to one of the disciples and he says, Take care of her. This is now your mom. And mom, he's now your son. He's going to take care of you.

So even Jesus on the cross needed help. As we think into our own context, is that we're going to need to help each other a lot to make this church go forward.

So for the vision of this church to be fulfilled, for people to be reached through this church, it's going to require the help of lots of people. And as I'm looking out at you now, you know what I see?

I see lots of people helping. Many of us in here have a role. Many of us in here are helping in some ways. And so it's great. We have many people helping.

One of the things that I would come and say to you, if you're one of those people who are helping here, who are helping provide and make things move forward, if you come to the point that you get overwhelmed, and we've all been there, if you volunteer for something, if you ever took on the word volunteer in whatever organization, at some point in time, most likely in this volunteer role, you're like, I'm feeling a little overwhelmed.

[7 : 45] And at that moment, you're thinking, I wish I had never volunteered for this. And you're like, what do I do? What do I do? So if you're in that point, and you get, and you feel overwhelmed, let the right person know.

That's what we do in that community. That's what we do in a church. We're going to let the right person know. And we're not going to let the wrong person know. The wrong person, we know who that is.

That's someone who's not going to help your situation. The right person is someone who will help your situation. So if you're in this point where you're helping here, and you get overwhelmed, let somebody know. Let the right person to know.

One of the other things too, as we think of helpers, is that we have people in this church who are not yet here, who are going to serve important roles in leading and helping this church.

And we don't know who those people are yet because they're not here. But we trust that God's going to send people in. And these people that God sends us are going to be people who can help. People who can take up leadership roles.

[8 : 45] People who can make ministries go forward. And the temptation that can arise for people who've been here a long time is a bit of resentment towards these people.

So some of you, many of you, have been here a lot longer than I've been here. And so you're like, whoa, we've been doing this for a long time. And I'm like, oh, I've been doing this for maybe a few weeks, maybe a little bit more than that.

But we see the discrepancy that's there. But even as we go and move forward out of this place and into a public launch, we're going to be having new helpers come in.

We're going to have people who join the church. We're going to be like, this is going to be a good person. That's good for us. And what we all need to do is embrace that. Even though they weren't there in the hard part, they weren't there meeting in the apartment.

They weren't there where everyone had not three roles, but ten roles to make things move forward. But when these people come, we want to receive them well and allow them to take roles and leadership that would be needed to help this church.

[9 : 53] Second thing I want us to look at is the idea of home. So the first thing we looked at was health. The second thing we're going to look at is the idea of home. And that's going to come out of verse 13. Let me read that for you.

She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. So the phrasing she who is in Babylon is a bit of an odd phrase.

So when you first hear that, you may, hmm, what are they talking about? What's Babylon got to do with what Peter is mentioning here? Well, let's just take a look at Babylon and see what Babylon is. First thing we need to know is that Babylon is an Old Testament reference. And in Babylon, in the Old Testament story, the nation of Israel had been formed and established for a long period of time. And they felt like God would never abandon them, never leave them. And God's been sending prophets of warning, saying, you need to do the right thing. You need to turn and follow me.

[10 : 53] And as we follow the people of Israel in the Old Testament, sometimes they follow God well. Many times they do not. And finally, as a final form of judgment upon them, God allows Babylon to come and overtake Jerusalem, the city they thought would never fall to its enemies.

And the people are then sent and forced out of Jerusalem, out of their home, and forced into a new home, into exile, into the land of Babylon.

And so, this idea of exile is a reminder of the people who were forced out of Jerusalem and now are being forcefully relocated into the land of Babylon.

One of the interesting things that we have is that Peter, like those people in the Old Testament, like those people in Jerusalem who were forced to leave, Peter also was forced to leave Jerusalem. We see in the story of Acts, actually comes out of Acts 12, is that there was a great persecution upon the church. And Peter was sent into prison as part of this persecution.

[12 : 03] And then he is miraculously escapes out of prison. And he comes, he lets the people know there's people praying for him and Peter's like, your prayers have been answered. And it's kind of a funny story by the way.

If you're not familiar with it, Acts 12, read it. It's a good, interesting read. It's a nice story. So Peter is miraculously freed from prison. And we find that there in Acts 12 it says that Peter departed and went to another place.

He had to leave. He had to leave. He had to go into Babylon. He had to go into his place of exile, away from where he wanted to be. This idea of Babylon and a place of exile, the place from where Peter writes down, he's like, Peter is saying to these people, I am writing to you from exile.

I am writing to you from my Babylon. But this idea is similar to things that we find throughout the book of Peter. In fact, Peter 1.1, the very first chapter as Peter is greeting his hearers of this message, the first thing Peter says is, to the elect exiles of the dispersion.

To the elect exiles. And so Peter is picking up on this idea that you have been sent out. These people who are receiving this letter have been sent out. You face persecution.

[13:21] And now you have been sent away. You are now exiles as well. And we have this idea that Peter is saying, you are exiles. Just like Peter is saying, I am an exile.

I am also in Babylon. And why are they exiles? Because of their faith. Because they've chosen to follow Jesus Christ. And in following Jesus Christ, they've been sent out. They face persecution and been sent out to waste for their own safety.

This phrasing of exile, referring to the people of exile, actually occurs twice more in 1 Peter. And it's interesting as we were to look at the word exile and how it's used in the other parts of the New Testament.

The only other times it's referenced is referenced three other times in the New Testament. And all three of those times that it's referenced actually are reflecting upon the Old Testament story. So they're telling the Old Testament story.

So the only time that these Christians who have been sent out as a result of persecution or referred to as exiles come out of 1 Peter. And so this is an idea that's developed here in this book.

[14:23] And as we look in Peter in this passage here in verse 13 says, she who is she who is at Babylon. The she that I was referring there is most likely a group of people.

So it's referencing the church. So when we say she who is in Babylon we think of the church. That it's the church that has been sent into exile. Notice that Peter as he writes to the recipients of this letter he writes from in essence the same place in which they are.

And that place is not home. Whatever their home is they're not there. And as a result they are sojourners. They are people who don't have that calmness that comes with a place you call home. Whatever their homeland is they're not in it. They have been forced to live away from their home for the sake of the gospel. And as you were to look through the book of 1 Peter if we were just to walk through and we've been walking through this as a sermon series over the last few months but if we were to look just briefly back through 1 Peter we're going to find that there's some challenges with being an exile for the gospel.

There are some challenges in being forced to live in Babylon. We see out of just the first chapter of 1 Peter that they're told that they're going to be grieved by trials and tested by fire.

[15:51] And then they're also encouraged in the first chapter to be holy as God is holy. It's a pretty high standard, right? Not only be holy remember God's holy be like God.

They're told in chapter 2 to abstain from the passions of the flesh and further to be subject to every human institution. Chapter 3 bless those who are evil towards you.

You want to be an exile for the gospel? Peter says you're going to need to bless those who are evil towards you. You're going to need to suffer in the flesh to cease from sinning. Suffer in the flesh in order to cease from sinning.

chapter 4 they're told to rejoice in your fiery trial. Chapter 5 people are instructed to humble themselves. The exile will need to face difficulty and face challenges but they're to respond to these with a Christ-like manner.

Whether it means they need to kill off the sinning that is within them or whether they need to humble themselves or they need to rejoice in fiery trials.

[17:02] These people need to respond to these challenges in the same way that Jesus Christ would. As we come and we think about this in our modern context we remind that as Christians as followers of Christ that we should be exiles.

We should be exiles. In pursuing God we should feel different from the people around us. this world is a sinful world and if we are pursuing God in this world we shouldn't feel at home in it.

We should feel like this isn't my home that my home is a place that God has set aside a place without sin a place with righteousness abounds.

We should look upon this world that we're in and have a certain unsettled feeling that unsettled feeling that you have when you're just not home it's not your place. We are sojourners through this world.

We are sojourners because of our commitment to following Jesus Christ. So the question I have for you is that do you feel like an exile?

[18:10] Do you feel like an exile as a result of the gospel's effect upon your life? And are you living a life that sets you apart from others?

So the question would be do the people who know you do the non-Christian people who know you would they look upon you and say there's something different about you?

And perhaps look upon you and not quite know exactly what that is. Not be able to quite explain it. But they look upon you and say there's something different. You're different than the rest of us.

What about the people you work with? Do they see something different in you? What? If you have housemates and neighbors do they see something different in you?

What about the people who follow you on social media? When they look at your posts and your pictures do they see something different about you? We would hope so.

[19:15] We would hope so. Because that is the lack to which God has called us. A life which we are minded. This place that we live is not our home. Our home is a place without sin.

Our home is a place where righteousness is known. Our home is a place where Jesus is king and Jesus is reigning. That is our home. As we continue looking at this passage the third thing we're going to look at is the idea of harmony.

So the third thing will be harmony. And there in verse 14 the passage reads greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. So we are told to greet one another with affection.

So what is greeting one another with affection? I was thinking of the contemporary greeting that shows your affection. So if I greet someone in a professional setting I don't know them well we might have the handshake.

If I greet a friend that I know well you get the bro hug. You get the handshake and then you get the pull in and a couple of I don't know if they're pats or like smacks on the back a little bit.

[20:27] You know kind of a little bump of the chest kind of thing going there. So it's the bro hug. It's the affectionate greeting. And what Peter is saying to these people is greet one another affectionately. What is that going to look like?

It's going to look like the bro hug. Peter says to greet another one with the kiss of love. I'm not sure if that's necessarily maybe not the literal kind of kiss. You know like we don't necessarily need to literally greet another one with kiss.

If you want to that's fine. That works for you. That's okay. Some people might take it wrong. But think bro hug. Maybe you get that. That makes a little bit more sense. But do what we want to see is that when he's talking about through this church.

churches to whom he is writing. He says I want you to greet one another affectionately. I want you to greet one another like your family. In reality we are family. In fact even if we look at this passage we can see the nature of family within the church as Peter is writing.

As he refers to Silvanus his brother and Mark his son. It's his brother in Christ. It's his son in Christ. The church is much like a family.

[21:35] And the reality is that churches and families are much better when there is harmony. When there is peace within the home, when there is peace within the household, when there is peace within the church community, when there is harmony, the message of the gospel can go forward.

Something you already know is this, that conflicts do happen in church. just like in your family, conflicts will arise, the church is like a family, and guess what? Conflicts will arise.

There will be disagreements, there will be hurt feelings, and this is part of doing life together. A church does life together, and conflict is simply a part of that life.

But as these conflicts arise, we're given a little bit of a hint of something that we can do, and that's to greet one another.

So that's what the kiss of love wants to give. Think affection. Greet one another with affection. And what so often happens is that amidst conflict, one of the first steps that we take is to avoid the other person.

[22:58] You've been there, maybe it's just me, maybe I know it when you study it, but there's some sort of conflict with a person. Maybe it's in your workplace, maybe it's with one of your neighbors, maybe it's with someone in your natural family.

So what happens when this conflict arrives? You're like, don't look at them, don't make eye contact, we don't have to communicate if we don't see each other, so you avoid them.

And in a church sometimes it's easy to avoid people, there's lots of people here, you can say I'm just going to pretend like he's not there. This doesn't solve the problem, this doesn't bring about harmony, greet one another.

Greet one another with affection. Because that will go about creating harmony within the church. And personally here's what I've experienced, and maybe this will be the same for you, is that at times I've felt frustrated with people.

There's at times, no one here by the way, no one here, but theoretical people, no, no, actually real people, but I don't remember who they are. But at times I know I felt frustrated with people, but when I looked them in the face, and I said hello, I'm thinking, what was I feel frustrated about?

[24 : 12] I don't remember. I think that was being silly. Because I looked at them and I was like, you know, whatever that thing in my mind that I was thinking they were doing terribly or wrong. Now I've looked at their smiling face, and they're looking nicely at me, like, don't do that, right?

So greet one another with affection. Even if you're not feeling so happy with them, greet them with affection. And the reason that we do is because we want harmony to be part of our church. church. The reality is this, is that churches demise because of conflict within.

Churches implode. That's how churches stop functioning and stop doing well and stop growing and people stop coming because of problems internally within the church. And the thing that we have that we want to always protect is the harmony, the peace within Trinity Cambridge.

Because if we have peace and harmony within the church, the church can go forward in its mission. If there is disharmony within the church, then the church won't be able to go forward with reaching people.

As this church tries to reach people, the thing that we rely upon is the movement of the Spirit. We need God to send people to our church, and there's obviously things that we can do to help facilitate that, but ultimately we look upon it as a work of the Spirit, that God will send people to this church.

[25 : 47] And most certainly we look upon it as a work of the Spirit, that God will bring people to the salvation that they need through this church. And we look and we say, God, we also want you to send believers into this church who can grow in their faith.

But why would God use His Spirit and send people into an unhealthy, disharmonious, anger in filled church? It's just simply not going to happen.

Because it would not be good for people to be in that. So as we come and look at this idea of harmony, it's vital. It's vital to the success of this church. And we can talk much more about it.

But here at the end of 1 Peter we're given just one little hint. Greet one another with affection. Greet one another with affection. Finally we will look at the idea of true grace.

True grace is something that comes out of verse 12. So the second part of verse 12. And the passage reads, This is the true grace of God.

[26 : 52] Stand firm in it. So there in verse 12 it says this. So what is this? Well this is the entire of the writing.

So this isn't just the passage that we're talking about this evening. This is Peter concluding his message to the people, his letter to the people. And this is everything I've written you.

And he says everything I've written you stand firm in it. So what he means by standing firm is that this is something that I want you to maintain. But also understands the reason that he's telling us to stand firm in it is because at some point it's going to be difficult to maintain.

At some point we're going to say I don't want this, all that you're giving me Peter, I want to get rid of it. But Peter is saying no. Stay with it. Stand firm in it. So what exactly is this?

Well this, as it's explained here in verse 12, this is the true grace of God. true grace. This idea, this pairing of true and grace to create this term true grace, it's actually found nowhere else in scripture.

[28 : 02] So the phrasing true grace is something that only comes in this passage. So this hair at the end of first period is the only time we'll see those two words put together to make this notion of true grace.

So what is true grace? That's something we need to know. So we're going to begin with our understanding of grace. So grace, what is grace?

Grace is unmerited favor. So grace is simply unmerited favor. And the result is that God has much grace towards us. God has much unmerited favor towards us.

And when we think of God's grace, we often think of God's grace as providing good things, things that we want. So we're told in Titus chapter 2 that grace brings salvation.

That's a good thing. We're told that it's Titus 2.9, the grace of God appears bringing salvation to all people. So grace is that unmerited favor that brings a good thing.

[29 : 03] We also see that grace brings redemption and forgiveness. Ephesians 1 chapter 7 reads, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

We see that first Peter brings in this idea of true grace. So we've seen grace as this unmerited favor, these things that we want, these things that we need, but Peter comes and says, I want you to think about this as the idea of true grace.

And in this idea of true grace, it moves grace from simply the unmerited favor that we receive, but it moves it towards this favor that we show towards others.

grace. And so the idea of true grace is not only receiving what God offers, but then bestowing that towards people around us. And when we bestow what we have received from God, it creates a loop.

It creates a loop of increase. And what that means is that as we receive grace from God, and then we turn and bestow that grace towards others, we have an ability to better receive God's grace.

[30 : 16] We have a deeper understanding of God's grace, which we then bestow grace out, which then gives us an even deeper understanding of grace, which gives us a better ability to bestow upon others.

So as we receive grace, bestow grace, as we continue through that process, we're actually going to deepen the grace and our understanding of grace. And this idea of we must receive something and then give it, this pattern, is something that occurs in the Bible.

So it's not an idea, here as we look at this idea of true grace, it's one of the things I think to see important is that I'm not telling you there's some like secret hidden idea that's coming out of 1 Peter of this idea of true grace.

This idea that we receive grace and then bestow it towards others, that's a pattern that we would see marked throughout the scriptures. And this idea that God says, hey, I've given you something good, but I want you to turn around and give it to others, is a pattern that we also see in the scriptures.

Even as we look at the model prayer, as Jesus, he teaches his disciples to pray. And one of the things that Jesus teaches us to say in this model prayer, he teaches us to pray, is that we ask God for forgiveness.

[31 : 27] So we're to pray to God, forgive us. But it's a conditional forgiveness. Forgive us as we have forgiven others. It's that loop, it's that pattern. If we want to receive God's true forgiveness, we're going to need to pass that forgiveness on to others.

In the same way with grace, we do receive God's unmerited favor. We absolutely can receive it. God says, now give it away. And that's what Peter's plan for these people here is to give that grace away.

To bestow that grace upon others. True grace is something that we receive and then bestow. And the reality is that both can be an obstacle.

Receiving that unmerited favor from God, it's an obstacle for people. Bestowing that favor towards the people around us also can be an obstacle. As we look at this idea of true grace, what I want us to do is we're going to work that idea back through some of the concepts that we've talked about here in this passage.

We're going to link this idea of true grace through and just to see how it pertains into some of these ideas. So the first thing that we looked at was the idea of help. Is that we need to help one another.

[32 : 32] So what we have with the idea of help is that we have received help from God. In the form of salvation we have received it. We're also going to need to bestow it.

In 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 9 we see that we have received help. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, holy nation, a people for his own possession.

So we have received these things from God. He says, I chose you. And the passage continues. We're not going to need to give something out. And the passage continues. You have received

these things and now the passage goes in chapter 2 verse 9 that you will proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light.

You are a chosen race that you may proclaim his excellencies. You've received the grace of being chosen and now you're going to bestow that grace by proclaiming the excellencies of God.

True grace, we're going to proclaim Christ. We're not just going to receive but we are going to proclaim. We also looked at the idea of home. That we are exiles.

[33 : 42] We are in this world and it doesn't quite fit in. It's not quite our home because we stand out because of our faith. But as a result of the grace that we have received with God, we're told in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 16 and 17, the first told that we can live as people who are free.

We have received that from God. The ability to live as people who are free. But now we have this grace that we can bestow towards others. The passage continues. Not using your freedom as a cover up for evil but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Through grace we can live as free. God says now I want you to bestow that towards others.

And in true grace we are called to submission to earthly authorities. We are called to submit to society at large. We are called to submit to our governments.

We need to submit in our workplaces. In our classrooms. We need to submit within our church community. We need to submit within our roles within the family.

[34 : 52] We have received grace. We can live as free people. But we are going to use that freedom. So that we can live in submission to the people around us. Finally we looked at the idea of harmony.

And the idea of maintaining peace within our community. And certainly we have peace with God. Despite our sinful nature we have peace with God.

We are told in 1 Peter 3.18 For Christ suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous. That he might bring us to God.

God has come. Jesus has come. And suffered for our sins. So that we might be brought to God. That we might have peace with God.

We would never have that peace with God without the work of Jesus coming and suffering and dying for us. That is the harmony that we have received from God.

[35 : 55] And now we are going to take that harmony that we have received and we are going to bestow that towards others. 1 Peter 4.8 we are told Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sin.

The passage continues and we are told to show hospitality and use our gifts to serve others. In true harmony, we are going to seek peace with other people.

We are going to love, welcome, and serve them. We have been given harmony, peace with Christ, peace through Christ towards God. And from that peace that we have received, we are now going to bestow that peace into our community.

So as we have looked at this idea of true grace, what I want you to see is that true grace is the lifeline for Christian exiles.

Once again, true grace is the lifeline for Christian exiles. As we come and close out, I want you to think of a few things. A few questions I have for you. Are you a Christian?

[37 : 02] That is where we begin. Are you a Christian? Do you have peace with God? And even as we just looked at the passage, that Christ came that we might have peace with God.

Jesus suffered on our behalf to bring us peace with God. So that's not a decision that you've pursued in your life. I would put that before you. Find peace with God.

There is only one way to find peace with God, and that is through Jesus Christ. The whole question is, are you a Christian? Second question I have for you. Is, are you in exile?

Do you fit into the world? Does this world feel like home to you? If you're a follower of a Christ, this world shouldn't quite feel like home. This world we shouldn't quite fit in.

We shouldn't be quite like everyone around us. There should be something about us. We should have a bit of a success. I feel like a sojourner. I feel like an exile. Finally, a question for you.

[38 : 04] Is, are you living in true grace? Are you bestowing what you have received? What you have received from Jesus?

That unmerited favor that you have received? Are you now living that out towards others? And the many facets of your life of what you are able to? Are you living out that true grace in proclaiming

Christ?

Are you living out that true grace in submission to authorities? Are you living out that true grace by pursuing peace with others? Are you living in the true grace? As I started today, I said that we were going to begin at the end.

And now that we are going to, at the end, we are going to end at the beginning. And the beginning is this. Someone just gave me the look like, you're just starting over.

No. No. Not that. No. We are going to begin at the end. So we are, as we, as we go out, what is going to be different about you?

[39 : 10] So as you take this message, and you, you have heard it and you have received it, what, what about it? You say, that is something I can use. That is information I can use. That is something about me that can be different.

Because if the, if we take the message and we just end it here, it really doesn't do us much good. It doesn't change things. But if we, if we take the message and we say, I'm going to begin something coming out of this message.

What for you is that thing that you want to begin? What for you will be different? What can you do different this week that you didn't do last week?

And as I say, that's why I say as it comes, that we're going to end at the beginning. The beginning is, what will be different for you in this coming week than it was in the previous week?

Let me close this in prayer. God, we come before you recognizing the great work that you have done in our life.

[40 : 10] The great love that you have for us. And the great salvation that you have provided through Jesus Christ. God, we pray we would be people who earnestly follow you in all aspects of our life.

Amen. Thank you.