

Last Words to Pilgrims

1 Peter 5:5-14

The Twenty-First Sermon on First Peter

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Famous last words. As we come to the end tonight of Peter's first epistle, they are neither famous nor his last words. But they are his *Last Words to Pilgrims* in this letter and they are the words God wants us to hear tonight.

He wrote these words to Christians in Asia Minor and then sent the letter to them **by Silvanus** (v. 12), whom we know better as Silas. And as we see at the end here, Peter sent this letter from the church in **Babylon**, that is, Rome, with their greetings as well as the greeting of **Mark** (v. 13). Children, imagine that. Peter could not write a letter in an email and then with one click send it around the world in an instant. He could not Facetime or Skype from thousands of miles away as if he were just one room away. To write a letter in the ancient world meant you loved someone greatly because you would invest in expensive scrolls and in sending someone to deliver the letter. This is just a picture to us of how much God loves us in sending his Son from heaven!

And he states that he wrote **briefly to** these believers for the purpose of **exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God** (v. 12). Isn't it interesting that Peter considers his words in this epistle as **declaring** and **exhorting** us in **the true grace of God**? What I mean is that Peter speaks here much of Jesus Christ's sufferings and glories (1:11; 3:18; 4:13). And we would all heartily declare our "Amen" that this is the grace of God. But Peter has also

exhorted us much in this epistle about godliness and about suffering. This, too, he says is **the grace of God**. You see, justification *and* sanctification is the grace of God to us. It's not that justification is grace and sanctification is merely our response; no, sanctification is just as much grace as justification. In justification God works for us by his grace in Christ while in sanctification he works in us by his grace through the Holy Spirit. And it is of this comprehensive grace that Peter says, **stand firm in it** (v. 12), and it is because of this comprehensive grace that he says, **greet one another with the kiss of love** (v. 14).

So what does Peter wish to say at the end of his first letter? He writes an exhortation in three areas:

1. ***Humbleness***
2. ***Watchfulness***
3. ***Steadfastness***

Humbleness

First, he exhorts us to *humbleness*. And notice how our humility is towards one another in verse 5: **Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** This is one of the reasons I love our church. We're are humble enough with each other to acknowledge our faults, to be open about our problems, and to ask for help from one another. Don't ever change! Don't ever be so concerned about yourself that you close yourself off from a brother or sister.

And notice how humility is also towards God: **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you** (v. 6).

And one of the ways we humble ourselves under God's hand is through prayer. In prayer Peter says you **cast[...]** **all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you** (v. 7). Children, what is prayer? It is talking to God. Why talk to God? One reason is that he alone can help us in our needs, our struggles, and our worries.

Watchfulness

Peter also exhorts us to *watchfulness*. **Be sober-minded; be watchful** (v. 8). He's speaking of spiritual watchfulness here. In the ancient world cities had walls. Why? To keep out the bad guys. And on the walls were watchmen who would be on the lookout. We know this is how our military operates, but imagine your personal life operating this way on a day-to-day basis!

What are we to watch for? **Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour** (v. 8). I know this is how ancient people thought and that we're not supposed to think this way, but this is as true as it was when Peter wrote it! What does Peter mean by **devour**? We know that Jesus teaches us in John 10 that not even the devil can snatch us from he or the Father's hand, and so we are eternally secure in our salvation. But he can devour the

outwardly Christian church member by causing them to deny their faith in the face of persecution. He can also devour the true believer with all sorts of discouragement, spiritual depression, and disillusionment.

We have to realize that the devil is alive and at work. He has been alive and at work among us. We have brothers and sisters who are no longer among us because they have been devoured for a time or for good, only God knows that. Some have convinced themselves that God did not elect them. Some have found someone or something about us they didn't like and won't come back. Some have sought their assurance in the tangible elements or water, bread, and wine because Christ alone through faith alone wasn't sufficient.

Be on guard, brothers and sisters. If I can encourage you to do one major thing tonight it is to keep watch for each other and if you see someone falling on Facebook, in their lifestyle, in their lack of attendance, whatever it might be, don't wait to act; act! Watch; warn; fight for them!

Steadfastness

Finally, in relation to the devil Peter exhorts us to *steadfastness*. **Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world** (v. 9). This is what Paul spoke of in Ephesians 6 in relation to the armor of God when he said over and over again, "Stand!"

And notice the promise to the steadfast: **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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen** (vv. 10–11). What a beautiful pattern we have seen over and over again here in 1 Peter and in our morning sermons through Revelation: suffering then glory; tribulation then triumph. Amen.