August 15, 2021

Sermon 13

1 Peter 5:6-14

Rob Conti

(Context: Earlier in the service, Blair talked about the current crisis in Afghanistan and he read some words from our friend, Amir, who is in fear for his life in an undisclosed location.)

Scripture is always timely, sometimes it’s just more glaring, as we will see tonight as we work through this passage. This has been our focus all along—it’s been the focus of Peter’s letter—that as believers we are exiles, we’re elect exiles. We’re chosen by God and rejected by the world. This world is not our home and what we can expect in this world, because we’ve aligned with Jesus, because He has chosen us, called us—what we can expect is persecution and suffering. But in that, all we have is hope. All we have is hope because we are following the example of our Lord who himself suffered and His suffering was followed by glory. That’s our hope as well. So, turn to 1 Peter 5. We will pick up in verse 6 where we left off last week.

I love good storytelling. I think most humans do. We just love good storytelling and for me, most of my life that’s been through movies and books, but I love flashbacks. I love flashbacks, not personal ones, but in a movie a good flashback if used well brings a story together in a unique way. And as I was studying for this passage, as we finish out Peter’s first letter, I couldn’t help but to imagine Peter with his gnarled hands just holding the pen and just pausing as he’s writing out these last words of encouragement, of these last commands, and in such a beautiful way depicting our hope. I couldn’t help but to picture him except to pause and set down the pen as his mind would race back to these awesome and terrible flashbacks from his personal experience with Jesus.

So, I want us to do that just quickly before we dive into the passage, to have these flashbacks with Peter and to remember. I can’t help but to picture him remembering sitting with Jesus and telling Jesus, looking into the eyes of Jesus, and saying, “Oh, no, no. I don’t care if everyone else abandons you; I’m with you to the end. I will die with you.” And I imagine him flashing to Jesus saying, “You’re going to deny me three times before the rooster crows,” then flashing to denying, in fear, in absolute fear of this little girl who is accusing him of knowing Jesus, and denying, and denying, and denying again, and hearing the crow, and looking over and making eye contact again with Jesus. I flash to him alone in an alley somewhere weeping bitterly because he knows he has denied Jesus. I picture him flashing to the empty tomb and running past John, and looking inside and seeing the cloth folded neatly. I picture him flashing to that day on the shore—it’s a good memory—when he sees Jesus, when he sees Jesus on the shore and he knows it’s his Lord, and he dives in, and he swims, and he eats fish with Jesus again, and then he hears Jesus say, “Do you love me? Do you love me?” He flashes and hears Jesus say, “Feed my sheep.” He’s been restored. “Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs.” I picture him remembering the taste of glory that Peter got on the Mount of Transfiguration, knowing that was just a taste of the hope that is to be realized.

So, I want us to have those close by as we work through this passage and to imagine, as Peter is laying out these commands, and admonishing us, and encouraging us, and challenging us, and laying out the hope that we have. I want these images close by to grab. So, 1 Peter 5 and starting in verse 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 …

(Rob gets choked up.) It happened early tonight. What in the world. It’s fresh, right? This is real. It was real 2000 years ago and it’s real right now.

… 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.

So, he’s writing this and this is flowing, and obviously, as he is writing this he doesn’t pause and take a week off. Last week, we ended with how we are supposed to clothe ourselves in humility. We’re to humble ourselves in humility and he says,

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,…

The mighty hand of God—this is rich, biblical imagery. In the Old Testament there are so many places we could go. The most familiar for all of us would be the Exodus. This is a euphemism, right? The mighty hand of God, or the strong arm of the Lord, or the outstretched arm of God—it’s a euphemism for the power and the desire of God to save and to keep His people; to rescue and to protect those who belong to Him. That imagery should be in our minds that, yes, under the mighty hand of God, that the God who saves, the God who delivers—in a little while we will see what He has called us out from. What has He saved us from and what is He saving us for? What is He delivering us to? Those images should be fresh in our mind and he’s saying that under that mighty hand, the hand of God that is strong to save, and to keep, and to protect—humble yourself. But we’re told to do it. He told us earlier in the chapter, “You clothe yourself,” and he gave us that picture, the picture of putting on humility, as it were, like a robe. Now, he’s saying, “Humble *yourself* under the mighty hand of God.” Humble yourself.

So, let’s talk about humility for a minute. C. S. Lewis said,

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.

If you’re dyslexic like me, that just melted your brain. So, I’m going to read it, for us, again.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.

Right? We’re not to be spiritual Eeyores walking around with a low self-esteem, and hating ourselves, and despising things about who we are. That’s not what he’s saying. That’s not humility. Humility is just that I don’t think of myself very often. Here’s what’s beautiful—that happens. Biblically, humility happens when I have a right view of God, when I see God, when I see Him as the One with the mighty hand to save. When I have a right view of God, what that does for me is it gives me a right view of myself. I’m able to be lowly. I’m able to bring myself under because I see that God is all-powerful, and He’s all-knowing, and He’s all-wise, and He’s ever present, and He’s good, and gracious, and merciful, and steadfast in His love. He’s declared the end from the beginning and He’s perfect in holiness, and justice, and righteousness, and I should fear Him. I should absolutely fear that God, but with a fear that doesn’t cause me to run away from Him in terror, but a fear that causes me to run towards Him in hope. The same God I should fear is the same God I should run to for His salvation, because His arm is strong to save. What the fear of the Lord does is it gives me a right understanding of who God is. This gives me my identity, then, in Christ; a right knowledge of who God says that I am in Jesus. Humility is knowing who I am in Christ. That doesn’t make me hate myself; that gives me confidence, not in my strength or my ability, or my wit, or my wisdom, but in Jesus, in what God has said to be true of me and who I am because Jesus took off His righteousness, put on my sin, and in place of my sin He clothed me in His righteousness.

Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus gives us a picture of humility. Matthew says,

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 And calling to him (Jesus) a child, he put him in the midst of them (the disciples) 3 and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The humility of a child shows itself in their dependence on their parents and their trust in them to provide for them, to protect them, to care for them. Humbling myself under the mighty hand of God looks like recognizing my dependence on God’s ability alone to save and to keep me. Humbling myself under the mighty hand of God looks like trusting in His promises in times of peace and in times of suffering. It looks like walking in repentance when I fail to trust and love Him as I should.

Peter is about to point out two things that we really need to let go of in different ways. First is self-reliant pride, which again Peter would know. The flash of saying to Jesus, “I’ll never abandon you,” and trusting in his own ability. He says, in this world, under this kind of persecution, with the enemy that we have, we can’t operate in our own power, in our own wisdom. We need to humble ourselves. Humbling myself under the mighty hand of God will also look like casting all my fears and anxieties onto the Lord. Then, He will exalt us.

Listen to this. This is from David Helm. He said,

The Christian’s future inheritance and exaltation — our eternal share in the glory of Christ — will be awarded to us on the day of his appearing.

Which Peter has mentioned in every chapter – 1:13; 2:12; 4:13; 5:1, 4, 10.

But that promised day only comes *after* this brief season of present-day sufferings. Suffering always precedes subsequent glories. It was so for God’s Son. It will be so for us as well.

Jesus, himself – as we’ve seen through Peter’s letter – Jesus, himself, is the ultimate example of suffering and humility but that is suffering giving way to exaltation and glory. I encourage you to meditate on Philippians 2 again when you have time.

Moving on to verse 7, he says,

… casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Casting all your anxieties on Him. So, the anxiety, or the fear, or the care that Peter has in the crosshairs are not just any random kind of anxieties. He has specifically in the crosshairs the anxiety that comes from real persecution, from living in a world where people want to imprison you, fire you, disown you, torture you, kill you for your allegiance to Jesus. That is the specific fear he is telling these believers in Asia Minor to cast onto the Lord. But I would say that within the scope are any anxieties, any fears, real or in our own minds that we create ourselves from some broken part of us living in a broken world. The application would be the same—we’re to cast those anxieties, we’re to cast those fears, onto the Lord.

Sinclair Ferguson points out that the word for ‘cast’ here – I keep doing this because in my mind I see how he pointed out that it’s the same word in Luke where the disciples take their cloak and they cast it on the donkey for Jesus to sit on—it’s that picture of taking off that anxiety and casting that on the Lord. Why? Because He’s mighty to save. It’s His arm that’s strong and He can bear up underneath that burden that I can’t. He can handle our fears, our cares, our anxieties, all of them. He can bear up underneath that so we cast it on Him.

Sinclair Ferguson went on and he said this,

He (Peter) doesn’t say that if you were a real Christian you wouldn’t have anxieties, he tells us what to do with the anxiety that we do have. We have action to take here….we must respond in and with faith. Taking those thoughts captive, preach the Gospel to yourself.

He referenced Psalm 42 and 43, which I’ll just mention. Make a note of it as you wrestle with your own anxieties and fears. It’s an awesome place to go. Psalm 42 and 43.

So, what does it look like? Pause. It says He cares for us. I love this. He is not beating us over the head saying, “Get over yourself. Get over it. What do you have to be anxious about? Look at everything that’s been given to you.” He doesn’t treat us that way. He cares for us. He doesn’t bust our heads for having anxiety; He tells us what to do with it. How gracious is that? How understanding? He knows our frame, He knows our weakness. So what does it look like to cast our anxieties? Is this going to be a weird, New Age, “Let’s all visualize our anxieties, ball them up….”? No, I’m not going there; I don’t know what that means. So, what does it mean to cast? Do you just do this? What does it mean to cast our cares? Here’s what I believe he’s teaching us.

Pray. Pray. Jesus’ greatest temptation to be anxious was that night in the garden. He knew what was coming. The weight of what was coming was so intense that He was sweating blood. And what did He do? Prayed. He prayed. He told God everything that was happening, what He was thinking, and what He was feeling. He went to the Father. How much more should we stop and pray when we experience this anxiety? Pray.

Preach. Preach the Gospel to yourself. I love it that even in Jesus’ prayer – He already had, but then He comes back and asks, “What should I do? Pray that you would take this from me? No, this is the very reason I came.” What’s He doing? Jesus is preaching the Gospel to himself. He’s reminding himself of the Gospel. How much more should we, when we’re faced with anxiety and fear, whether real or imagined, preach the Gospel to yourself?

Believe. Believe. Not the *Indiana Jones Last Crusade* belief. Awesome movie; horrible theology. Not that kind of belief. Not that I muster it up myself and if I just believe enough the invisible bridge will appear. If you haven’t seen the movie it’s your fault. It’s classic. How have you not seen that movie? But not that kind of faith. Pray it, preach it, believe it. What do I mean? Live it out. We are meant to live out our faith. Put your faith into action. Let what you believe dictate how you live and your feelings will eventually catch up to that truth.

The last thing—Confess. Confess. Share it. Have at least one person in this world, in the Church, who you trust and who you know loves you, and get those fears out in the open. Talk about it. Talk about it and have accountability. He cares for you.

John 16:33, Jesus is speaking and He said,

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Verse 8,

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

He says be sober-minded and be watchful. Here I picture Peter flashing back to Jesus coming to him. Remember, they were in the garden and Jesus said, “Watch and pray with me.” And Jesus goes a little ways off and He prays and He comes back, and what is Peter doing? He’s asleep. Jesus wakes him up and He says, “Could you not even watch for an hour?” Whew. He’s telling us to be vigilant. Be vigilant. Jesus had warned Peter, “The devil has asked for you. He wants to sift you like wheat but I prayed for you.” Then He tells Peter, “You, pray and watch,” and he fell asleep. He could visually see Jesus and he nodded off. How much more should we be mindful of our need for vigilance in this world, this world that is hostile against the Gospel and that does not love us because we align ourselves with Jesus?

Thomas Schreiner said this,

Believers must remain vigilant and alert until the end because the devil seeks to destroy their faith. The devil inflicts persecution on believers so that they will deny Christ. Peter portrays the devil as a roaring lion seeking to devour its prey. The devil roars like a lion to induce fear in the people of God. In other words, persecution is the roar by which he tries to intimidate believers in the hope that they will give up at the prospect of suffering. If they deny their faith, then the devil has devoured them, bringing them back into his fold.

So, let’s learn from Peter’s example to be vigilant. We know. We have the same warning that Jesus gave Peter—the enemy is trying to destroy you. He wants to destroy your faith. He will use fear and persecution to try to do that, so be vigilant, be watchful.

Don’t be drunk on fear or self-reliance…Don’t be drunk on you, your feelings, your thoughts, your desires, your strengths, your accomplishments, your failures, your shortcomings. Think of yourself less. Be humble. Don’t be drunk on comfort and safety the way the world defines comfort and safety. See yourself in light of the grace of God. That will have a sobering effect and prepare you for the attack of the enemy.

Listen to Sanchez,

The devil is a real foe, but he is a defeated foe. He is a real threat, but he is a limited threat. He is on a leash, and he can only do what God permits him to do. And God has granted us the grace to resist him.

Verse 9,

Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Stand fast in the faith. This is how we resist—our trust in the goodness, and power, and wisdom, and promises, and grace of the Lord. Where does Peter want us right now as we even hear this verse? If you picture this verse in your mind, the powerful hand of the Lord, the hand of salvation, the hand of perseverance over us, and us bowing our heads underneath it in a posture of humility and submission, this is how we resist. We trust Him. We trust Him. We believe His Word. It says, “Resist him, firm in your faith.” This is why our pursuit of doctrine, of sound doctrine, of loving theology, is so essential. I’m not talking about the gathering of information. Doctrine is good. It’s the teaching of the Bible. It’s doctrine and theology that is informed by Scripture that allows us to see and to know God, to see who He is, and how we’re to respond to Him; to see ourselves for who we are in Christ and to know how to live and to know how to submit, to know how to serve. It informs everything. He’s saying to stand fast in that. Stand firm in it, know it, love it, drink of it often, meditate on it, and memorize it. Share it with one another. Stand firm in the faith.

These are Doriani’s comments here. He says,

Peter’s counsel aims at a faithful life more directly than a long life.

I’m going to read that again because I think it’s important. I put it in bold and underlined it in my notes so that I would remember that it’s important.

Peter’s counsel aims at a faithful life more directly than a long life. He commands the church to “humble yourselves,” “cast all your anxiety on Him,” “be self-controlled and alert,” and “resist” the devil. Peter’s commands rest on a theological foundation, as his last passage begins and ends with God. His hand is mighty, He cares for us, and He is gracious. He has called us to glory and promises to restore us. He can make good on His promises because He possesses eternal power. Clearly, the character of God is the basis for our faithfulness and confidence.

As we will be reminded of in a second, God has sovereign rule over everyone and everything. The suffering of believers, the roaring and persecution of the cowardly lion, all fall under His, Yahweh’s, sovereign rule. Christians alone in the world can know that all suffering, no matter how unjust or seemingly unnecessary, holds eternal value. God is using all things for His glory. God is using all things for His glory—the same glory He is preparing us to partake in for eternity.

Stop and think about that. People are suffering. Period. People suffer. We alone know—we can know—that there is not only purpose for suffering but there is eternal purpose for any suffering that we go through, any affliction, any trial, any tribulation. There is with any suffering eternal purpose. We know this, we can believe this, we have to remind ourselves of this. Why would we go through temporary suffering? Because it’s preparing for us an eternal weight of glory, God’s glory. We can’t comprehend that yet. The absolute going public of God’s holiness, of God’s goodness, the sum of His divine attributes on full display for you and I to enjoy forever. Are you kidding me? We don’t have a clue yet. Peter got a taste of it on that mountain. We each had a taste of it when we came to Christ and experienced salvation. You’ve had a taste of it when you’ve shared the Gospel with somebody. You have a taste of it when we are unified, of one mind, worshipping the Lord together in here. We get tastes of it, but one day we’re going to see face-to-face, and we’re going to see God’s glory in the person of Jesus. That’s our hope. We get to share in that glory forever and we can know that whatever we suffer now, not only do we compare it to the glory that’s to come but we can bear up underneath it and know that the safest place for me to be is to humble myself, not trust my own feelings, but trust myself to the wisdom, and the plan, and the power of Yahweh, of God, of Jesus.

Peter says,

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

He’s reminding them, “You’re not alone in this. You’re not alone in this.” What Brody preached, I think it was last week, that Blair referred to in our time of prayer, that we are the body of Christ, and when there’s a part of the body suffering we all suffer together. We’re not isolated from what our brothers are experiencing in Africa, and China, and North Korea, and Afghanistan, and all these places where there is intense persecution. We all experience that together. But he’s saying to this church, to these churches in Asia Minor, “You’re experiencing that kind of intense persecution personally but know that you’re not alone.”

Again, this is just so timely knowing what our brother, who we love, though we’ve never seen him in the flesh outside of some goofy pictures—we know what he’s going through to a degree and we’re burdened for him and we pray for him and so many believers around the world. My mind went to a book I read years ago now—hold on—I lied to you—a book I listened to years ago now by Nick Ripken. That’s not his real name but I don’t know his real name or remember it. It was called *The Insanity of God.* And in that book what Nick Ripken does is he was a missionary for years and he experienced suffering for the Gospel and he was so close to throwing in the towel on his faith, but what he realized was that there are so many believers suffering worse around the world, so many believers who are persecuted worse around the world. So, he began to go around and interview these believers, these Christians, who had suffered for the Gospel. It’s definitely worth your time to read or listen to. But I remember there was one guy who said something so close to what we heard Blair lead us in and to how our persecuted brother asked for prayer. He was interviewing this guy who has given decades of his life, separated from his family, because he would not renounce the name of Jesus. He suffered and languished in prison for years. So, he ends the interview and he asks him how people in churches in the West can help him and pray for him and he said, “Absolutely, pray for us,” but he said this. I’m going to read what his comment was to us who aren’t, maybe, personally experiencing this same intense persecution in our own individual lives and in this specific church. He said this,

Don’t ever give up in freedom what we would never have given up in persecution! Don’t ever give up in freedom what we would never have given up in persecution! That is our witness to the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

So, should we pray for the persecuted church? Absolutely, consistently. Absolutely. And what else should we do to support them? Support them however we can. In Hebrews 10, he commends that church. He says, “Yes, you visited people, you identified with people even though they were suffering for the Gospel, you were there for them in whatever way we can minister to them tangibly. Let’s do that. But ultimately, let’s do this. Let’s join them in the cause. Let’s be faithful to the same cause. Don’t give up in freedom what we never would have given up in persecution.” What’s he saying? Preach the Gospel. Just tell everybody about Jesus. Join them, identify with them, have solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are suffering in this. In what? Telling people about Jesus.

Verse 10. This has become my favorite verse in the letter.

And after you have suffered a little while,…

“And after you have suffered a little while,…” This life is but a vapor. It’s here for a second and it’s gone. And Jesus could return at any time. Do you believe that, Red Oak? You’d better; that’s what the Bible says. Yes, Jesus could return at any time. We are at some time between the times when He ascended and when He’s coming back. He rode the cloud chariot into Heaven and He’s going to ride it back down and we’re going to meet Him. I don’t understand how any of that works. It doesn’t matter; that’s what we’re looking forward to. It’s a little while. Either way, even if Jesus tarries for another 700 years, you and I still only have a little while. In 80 years from now, we’re gone. Maybe some of us will still be here but you’d be really old and you wouldn’t even remember I said that. We have only a little while. Whatever sufferings we experience are temporary. Listen to what he says.

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.

Humble yourself, cast your cares, resist the devil, stand firm. Absolutely, we have responsibility, but unless we get it wrong, remember, the God of all grace… How are we going to be faithful to the end? What keeps us faithful to the end? Stay underneath that mighty hand. Why? Because that’s the hand that saves and He is full of grace toward us. He is not just a gracious God. He’s not a God of some grace. He’s a God of all grace, because it’s one of His divine attributes and God is infinite. He doesn’t have to measure out a little bit of grace for you, a little bit of grace for me, and say, “I hope I have enough to get everybody safe at the end.” He is the God of all grace, and it is He that has called us to eternal glory in Christ Jesus. And each part of this phrase is amazing, and deep, and rich. It’s by His grace and because of His calling.

Now, listen, in the Bible there is a general call that people can reject and many do. There is a general call to salvation that many people reject. That’s not this call. This is the call of God on His elect, on His chosen people, and it is a call that will not be denied. He has called us in Christ.

Listen to this. I got excited. Here we go. Sarah wrote this out for me from her notes in another study. This week, we had time to work through it together. These are some things in Scripture that we are called to.

1 Cor 1:9 – We are called…into fellowship with the Son

1 Tim 6:12 – We are called…to eternal life

1 These 2:12 – We are called…into God’s kingdom and glory

1 Peter 2:9 – We are called…out of darkness, into His marvelous light

1 Peter 5:10 – We are called…to His eternal glory

2 Peter 1:3 – We are called…to His glory and excellence

This will be in the notes later.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 – He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.

He’s calling on us and nothing can keep us from it. Nothing, absolutely nothing. He’s called us to an eternal glory in Christ Jesus. This calling is in Christ. Don’t miss that phrase. It’s not an add-on or an afterthought, it’s everything. It’s everything. We’re called in Christ, who himself humbled himself, took on the form of a servant, and suffered and died in our place. He humbled himself underneath the mighty hand of God and He suffered…for a little while…and He was raised, and more than raised, He’s exalted at the right hand of God and He’s returning for us to join Him, to partake in His glory. That’s our example and that’s our hope—that we are in Christ. Because Jesus identified with you in your sin and in our suffering, we now get to identify with Jesus in His glory.

1 Peter 2:9 – I’m going to read it again,

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

It gets even better. It says,

... will himself...

Do you see it?

... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Flashback to Jesus on the beach with Peter. He denied Him three times, deep betrayal, and Jesus restores him, confirms him, accepts him, loves him. Are you kidding me? Yahweh is going to do this. He, himself, will do it. He will keep us and He will give us the grace we need every step of the way no matter what we face. That’s what we’re praying for our brother, right? Keep him. Keep him. Yeah, protect him, protect him from the enemy that wants to devour his faith, keep him steadfast in his faith as he faces that persecution, teach him to take those anxieties and to cast them on Christ, and to hold fast and preach the Gospel to himself, and trust in the promises and the strong arm of the Lord. He will see us through by His mighty hand and outstretched arm. Why? Because He’s mighty to save forever.

This is from David Helm,

The divine principle of true grace is this: our future inheritance arrives by way of present sufferings. Exaltation follows humiliation. Eternal glory comes after earthly sufferings.

Peter, knowing this—he’s experienced it and he knows there is more to come—breaks out into song and he says in verse 11,

To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

He worships and he gives us his final greeting,

By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him,...

Most people think this is another spelling of Silas whom we saw a lot in Acts.

I have written briefly to you,...

It looks like Silas delivered the letter.

... exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God.

What’s the true grace of God? The whole point of the letter—He has chosen us. Yeah, you’re rejected by the world and you will suffer in the world but all we have is hope in the Gospel and God will see us through. That’s the true grace of God.

Stand firm in it. 13 She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen,...

Babylon mosts likely refers to the church in Rome.

... 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.

It’s amazing. Humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and He will see us through. I love it. “The kiss of love“ is a cultural thing. I get nervous with the cultural things; I don’t like to just default to that but I’m going to employ it here pretty swiftly because even then, in that culture, which still exists today, it was a cheek-to-cheek thing, man-to-man, woman-to-woman. But it was cheek-to-cheek. That’s what they meant by a kiss of love—greeting each other with a kiss. I truely believe that in our culture that we can fulfill this command with a hug, with a handshake, with some of you just knuckles is sufficient, to let you know that yes we are family. We love one another. Because that has been the strong theme that has followed all of this. You are going to suffer in this world. We all have the same hope. We should love one another. We need to remind each other of the hope that we have.

Pray with me.

Lord Jesus, God, we love you and we thank you for your mighty hand to save, your perfect work, Lord Jesus, to save us to rescue us; that you suffered in our place and rose in victory and sit enthroned in glory. You have called us to it. I pray that we would not only see that and rejoice in it but that we would be faithful to follow your example in the times that we suffer and are called to suffer for the sake of the Gospel; that we would finish strong, finish well. Lord, I pray that if there are those who don’t know you that in your kindness you would lead them to repentance and faith and that you would rescue them tonight. I pray this in Christ’s name. Amen.