

Articles and Sermons :: Standing Firm in the True Grace of God by Zac Poonen**Standing Firm in the True Grace of God by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2008/8/2 15:08****Standing Firm in the True Grace of God***by Zac Poonen*

"This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it" (1 Pet.5:12). Here at the end of Peter's first letter, he says that what he has written in his letter is all about the true grace of God. In these days when false grace is being preached so much, it is good to go back to 1 Peter to see what the TRUE grace of God really is, and to stand firm in it. The fact that Peter uses the expression "the TRUE grace of God" in the first century itself indicates that even in those days a counterfeit grace was being proclaimed by the agents of Satan, who had "turned the grace of God into licentiousness (licence to sin) (Jude 4). Right at the outset, Peter tells us that all believers are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that they may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" and for such believers, he prays that God's "grace and peace may be theirs in fullest measure" (1 Pet.1:2).

God chose us in order to sanctify us (make us holy) and to lead us to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the true grace of God is meant to lead us into; and so Peter prays that those who desire this in their lives may experience God's grace in fullest measure. Peter then says that "as to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry" (1 Pet.1:10). The grace that we experience under the new covenant was not experienced by anyone in old covenant times. Even the prophets could only prophesy about this grace as something that would come in the future. They could not experience it themselves. Peter then urges all believers to "fix their hope completely on the grace that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet.1:13). When Christ returns in glory, we will experience a special grace that will transform us totally into His likeness. From the beginning of our Christian life to the very end, God's work in us is entirely one of grace.

Peter also speaks of receiving grace for a happy married life: "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." (1 Pet.3:7). God wants Christian married couples to live together in peace and harmony. Their home must be an island of peace in a strife-torn world. And for this, abundant grace is required.

Peter then goes on to speak of spiritual gifts: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet.4:10) Every spiritual gift is to be used only to SERVE others, as a means of dispensing the true grace of God to them. The grace of God is many-sided. Therefore God has chosen people from different backgrounds and with different personalities and temperaments and placed them all together in Christ's Body so that each of them can display some unique aspect of God's grace through his/her life and ministry.

"You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Pet.5:5). Here Peter speaks about the importance of learning submission to spiritual authority in our younger days itself. If a young man is saved by the age of 20, it is usually God's purpose that he should have an effective ministry by the time he is 35 years old. But for this to be fulfilled, that man should learn the all-important lessons of brokenness and humility by the time he is 35. And those lessons can be learnt only as he submits to spiritual authority. Only thus can He receive grace to exercise spiritual authority later in his home and in the church. Young people who do not submit to spiritual authority invariably end up losing the ministry God had in mind for them. This does not mean that we don't have to humble ourselves once we are older!! Subjection to elders must be learnt when we are young. But following Jesus along the way of humility is something that we have to keep on doing until our dying day. That is the only way to keep on receiving grace until the very end of our lives.