

INTRODUCTION

Depending on your allegiance, you may or may not enjoy this story. For all of you who are Aggies, Longhorns, or Sooners, please allow me to offer this qualification: The following joke does not represent nor infer consent to either personal favoritism or personal disdain toward the University of Oklahoma, the University of Texas, or Texas A&M University. All characters are fictitious and any similarity between them and persons now dead or living is coincidental. I’ll just retell it exactly as it was told to me by an avid Aggie. (is there any other kind of Aggie?)

Three oil workers, a Sooner, a Longhorn, and an Aggie were working in a Middle Eastern country where consuming alcohol was against the law. They smuggled some whiskey in and they were discovered drinking it. The three were immediately arrested, tried, and found guilty. The punishment for their crime was a public beating where each was to receive fifty lashes with a whip on their backs.

When punishment day arrived, they were brought before the citizens. The local sheik was in charge and he said, “Today is your lucky day. Because it is my first wife’s birthday, I’ll grant each of you one wish.

The Oklahoma guy thought about his wish for a few minutes and said, “Please tie a pillow to my back before you whip me.” So they tied the pillow to his back, but it wasn’t thick enough and after only 10 lashes, it was ripped apart. The poor Okie had to endure the awful pain of the next 40 lashes.

The Longhorn saw what happened and said, “My wish is this: Please tie TWO pillows to my back.” They granted his wish, but after only 20 lashes the two pillows were shredded and he had to endure the agony of the next thirty lashes.”

The Aggie was next. He turned to the Sheik and said, “Sir, in honor of your kindness and the birthday of your wife, I humbly request that you grant me two wishes.” The Sheik said, “I cannot promise you two wishes. Make your first wish, and then I shall decide if I will grant you another.” The Aggie said, “Sir, I am sorry for my crime, so my first wish is that you give me not 50 lashes, but 100.” The Sheik said, “You are an honorable man, if 100 lashes is what you desire, so be it. And because you are a brave man, I will grant your second wish as well. What will it be? The Aggie said: “Tie the Longhorn to my back.”

As we’ve been studying the book of I Peter over the past year, we’ve seen ourselves in a similar scenario. We have all violated God’s rules, and we stand guilty before Him. We deserve the punishment for our sin, but because God loves us, He has offered us a plea bargain. He allows us to choose to let Jesus absorb our punishment. Now, we’ve never done anything to deserve this favor—it’s His grace.

The title of this series is “Aliens.” Because we are followers of Jesus Christ, we are like aliens who are living here among the normal people. The theme for the book is found in I Peter 2:11-12 which says, “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world...live such good lives among the pagans (normal people) that ... they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the

day he visits us.” We are different from the earthlings who don’t know Jesus. Some of our church members went to the Oil Palace not long ago to hear a popular comedian. They found his monologue so vulgar and crude they felt uncomfortable, so they left. Why did they feel uncomfortable when everyone else was laughing? Because they are aliens. When the Holy Spirit lives and rules in you, any kind of unholy talk or action makes you uncomfortable; it’s call conviction.

Today as we complete I Peter we’re going to consider the topic: True grace produces true grit. Let’s read Peter’s final words in I Peter 5:10-14:

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for 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 to 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, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

The Bible teaches our God is the God of all grace, and Peter writes about the true grace of God. He finishes his letter by summarizing some of the main themes he has already addressed. In these final verses, you can discover three things God’s grace can do for you.

I. THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD ENABLES YOU TO ENTER INTO HIS GLORY

In verse 10 Peter writes: “and the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ.” The official hymn of Southern Seminary, where I graduated, is based on this verse. It was written by the great pastor, Harry Emerson Fosdick. The song begins, “God of Grace and God of Glory, on Thy people, pour thy power...” God *is* a God of grace and glory. The word “glory” in the Bible is a word that means “brightness” or “brilliance.” Peter writes it is eternal glory—that means God’s light never burns out. The sun at the center of our solar system is burning away with a heat and brightness we can see and feel 93 millions miles away, but one day, it will be snuffed out like a candle—not so with God’s glory. It will shine forever. When the Apostle John had a vision of the heavenly city he wrote there is no need for a sun or moon in heaven because the “glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb (Jesus) is its lamp.” The Lamb (Revelation 21:25) In addition to being eternal glory, that glory is found in Christ.

You can enter God’s glory *now* as you place your life in Christ. Then you will experience eternal glory when you die and go to heaven. To see Jesus is to see God’s glory. And when you see His glory, you’ll be filled with joy. That’s one thing that makes us like aliens; we bask in the joy of the glory of Jesus. Peter had written earlier about this in his letter: “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world... Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.” (I Peter 2:11; 1:8)

Think about God’s glory as a spotlight. Even in our language when we talk about someone receiving honor or recognition we talk about them being in the spotlight. He won’t share His

spotlight with anyone. But when you make surrender your life to Him, He invites you to enter into His glory. Imagine you’re standing in a dark room and there was a single spotlight illuminating a part of the floor. The spotlight isn’t on you, because there is nothing in your fallen, depraved condition that makes you deserving of the spotlight. But you understand this spotlight is representing God’s glory. And He invites you to enter into His glory. You say, “Oh no, I don’t deserve the spotlight of your glory.” He says, “Of course, you don’t deserve it, that’s what grace is.” So, the way to enter into God’s glory is to “Turn your eyes on Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

One day when I die, I’ll move toward the light, which is the glory of God. But until then, I can still enter into the joy of the glory of God! And you can, too. Hallelujah! It is the true grace of God that enables us to enter into His glory!

II. THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD ENABLES YOU TO ENDURE TEMPORARY SUFFERING

Verse 10: “After you have suffered a little while, (He) will restore you, and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” Suffering has been a recurring theme in this letter. Remember, the recipients of this letter had been suffering severe persecution from the wicked ruler Nero. They were arrested, burned to death, and thrown to wild animals in the coliseum. Peter signs off this letter by reminding them to hang in there because there are blessings ahead after they’ve suffered a little while.

Yes, this life is filled with tears, but they are only temporary. The Bible teaches us that our tears are like telescopes that enlarge our understanding of the cross. When we’re hurting, we look to Jesus as our example to endure suffering. Peter had already written: “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world...If you suffer for doing good and you endure it this is commendable before God, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (I Peter 2:11, 20-21)

The title of this message is “True Grace Produces True Grit.” Do you know what true grit is? It’s not just the kind of dirty sand that is half of what we call “grit and grime.” One of the dictionary definitions of grit is: “Courage, toughness and determination needed to face a difficulty.” True grit is the attitude and belief that you can endure whatever difficulty or problem you are facing. True grit is a valuable quality—and not everyone has it. True grit keeps you going even when your world is collapsing around you.

History tells us British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had grit, but his predecessor, Neville Chamberlain, didn’t. You can see it in a comparison of two of their speeches. When Nazi Germany was invading most of Europe, Chamberlain said: “Since I assumed my present office my main purpose has been to work for the pacification of Europe, for the removal of those suspicions and those animosities which have so long poisoned the air. Through dialogue, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity.” But Hitler wasn’t interested in dialogue, he must have laughed as Chamberlain stood aside as his blitzkrieg swept Europe.

Compare Chamberlain’s words to those of Winston Churchill. When England was faced with the threat of being invaded by Germany. “Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’” That’s a man with true grit. And as America faces the threat of terrorism, I thank God we have a President with some good old true grit as well!

True grace produces true grit. In 1969 John Wayne starred in a movie called “True Grit.” He won an Academy award playing a grizzled old lawman named Rooster Cogburn. He goes after the men who killed a young girl’s father. In one of my all time favorite movie scenes, John Wayne finds the villain, Ned Pepper and his gang of bad guys. He’s outnumbered four to one, yet he tells Ned, “I mean to kill ya’ in one minute, Ned, or see you hanged in Ft. Smith, which’ll it be?” Pepper laughs and says, “That’s bold talk for a one-eyed, fat man.” No, that’s true grit. True to his word, John Wayne holds the reins in his teeth and rides in with guns blazing, and when the dust cleared, he had survived.

That’s true grit. And Peter says God’s true grace produces that kind of true grit in His children. Joshua had true grit. When the other spies were saying there were giants in the land, Joshua and Caleb said, “Yeah, our obstacles are big, but our God is bigger, let’s go for it!” Little David stood before a nine-foot tall giant and said, “You come against me with a sword and a spear, but I come against you in the name of the Lord God of Israel, prepare to die!” That’s true grit. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego told King Nebuchadnezzar, “If you throw us into the burning furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us, and He will rescue us, but even if He doesn’t, we still aren’t going to bow down to your image of gold!” That’s true grit.

A guy from up north stopped at a little mom-and-pop restaurant in Alabama to have breakfast. He ordered eggs and bacon. The waitress brought him a plate with eggs and bacon and a big pile of creamy white stuff. He said, “What’s that?” She said, “Them’s grits.” He said, “Well, I didn’t order grits.” She said, “Don’t matter. Grits just come with it.” Friend, when you have God’s true grace, you also get true grits...it just comes with it!

III. THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD ENABLES YOU TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS WHO SUFFER

Five chapters may not seem brief to you, but Peter summarized his purpose for writing in the words found in verse 12, “I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.” The main reason he wrote them was to encourage them to stand firm in the true grace of God. The body of his letter ended with that verse, but then Peter added some additional remarks found in verses 13 and 14. When many people study these kinds of letters in the Bible, they skip over these final verses, but, to me, they are rich in meaning.

Five chapters may not seem like a brief letter to you, but Peter tells us *why* he wrote them—to encourage them and to testify that this is the true grace of God. That’s why we gather together as well—to encourage one another. The love we show is another quality that sets us apart as aliens. Peter already touched on this theme when he wrote: “Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world...Love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (I

Peter 2:11; 4:8) We can learn two important things about encouraging others from Peter’s last statements.

1. It must be personal encouragement

Peter mentions three individuals. Silas, who was in prison with Paul in Philippi was helping Peter with this letter. Perhaps Peter was dictating it and Silas was writing it down. Next, Peter mentions a female, “she who is in Babylon sends you her greetings.” Some people think this is some kind of secret, apocalyptic reference to the church in Rome, because Rome is sometimes called the spiritual Babylon. Because Peter doesn’t use any apocalyptic language in this letter, I think he’s referring to a literal woman: his wife. It’s possible she was in the area of Babylon, which is modern day Iraq. We know Peter was married because in Mark 1, Peter’s mother-in-law was sick, and Jesus healed her. I often say that’s why Peter later denied Jesus three times! I Peter was simply saying, “My wife, who is in the Babylon area sends you her greetings.”

Then Peter mentions another individual, Mark, whom he calls his son. He’s also called John Mark, and he would later pen the second gospel account. He wasn’t Peter’s biological son, but that reference reveals Peter considered Mark as a spiritual son.

The fact the names of these three individuals are in the Bible gives us proof that individuals matter to God. Although the church is the body of Christ, God is interested in the individual members.

In the old song, “Home on the Range” there’s a line that says, “Where seldom is heard a discouraging word.” Wouldn’t it be wonderful if that could be said of every church? But sadly, there are some Christians and some churches that dispense more discouragement than encouragement. They think you haven’t had a real encounter with the Lord unless you leave church feeling miserable!

I once saw a person wearing a pin that said, “God, please save me from your followers!” It’s a sad fact that sometimes Christians don’t reflect the love of Christ. Mahatma Gandhi was a great leader of the nation of India. He read the four gospel accounts and was impressed with Jesus. He visited a church, and was turned away at the door because it was for a “higher caste” and for “whites only.” He later made the famous statement: “I’d be a Christian if it were not for the Christians!”

Church should be a place where you are energized by encouragement! In a big church like this, it’s impossible for one person to know everyone’s name, but if you get involved in a small group Sunday Morning Bible Study, somebody *will* know your name, and they will be willing to encourage you personally. The fact that all the epistles end with a list of names indicates individuals are important to God, so they should be important to us.

2. IT MUST BE AFFECTIONATE ENCOURAGEMENT

Peter’s last words are instructions for the Christians to greet each other with a kiss of love. He is not referring to a long, wet, romantic kiss. This was a chaste kiss on the cheek. I believe we

should restore the early Christian custom of kissing each other. Five of the epistles end with those exact instructions. Maybe you've heard that a kiss on the cheek was the common custom of that day and it was as common as when we shake hands in our culture. That information is NOT correct. The Romans and Greeks were standoffish and rarely displayed emotion or affection. This was a result of the Stoic influence among them.

When two Romans greeted each other, they never kissed. You've seen the movies; they grab forearms and say, "Greetings, Marcus!" The origin of the handshake was to reveal you weren't concealing a knife in your hand!

The only place where affection was displayed was among immediate family members. That's what made these believers *appear* as aliens; they hugged and kissed each other as if they were all members of the same family! And of course, we realize they *were* family members.

God designed His church to be a place of intimacy and fellowship. In the early church, the members treated each other as family members and greeted each other with a holy hug and a chaste kiss. They knew each other by name and encouraged one another. Through the years, as Christianity spread, and then became legal under Constantine, this friendly kiss was replaced by a formal kiss on the forehead after communion. Then it evolved into kissing religious icons or the vestment. During the Dark Ages, few people could read, and those who could seldom did read the Bible, and the church lost more of this sense of intimacy. The priests built an iron rail to separate the "professional Christians" from the common people, and Christianity sank into a spectator sport where the people watched as the priests performed behind the rail...and since that time, the church has had a hard time recovering this sense of intimacy. It needs to be restored!

Giving someone a hug doesn't come natural to me because I grew up in a home where I don't ever recall my dad giving me a hug as a teenager. If you grew up in a home where affection was not shown, it will be hard for you, too.

We don't want to have forced affection because that is false affection. But on the other hand, we ought to have the freedom to show affection to each other. Maybe when you come in the usher should say, "Would you like hugging, or non-hugging?" "Kissing, or non-kissing?" While we're at it, "Perfume, or non-perfume?" Amen?

People are looking for a place where they can be loved and encouraged. Dr. Paul Tournier, wrote: "The most devastating malady of our day is loneliness. There is no human condition so acute and so universal. Up and down the pews of every church are lonely people who have a desperate need to be loved and to show love in return."

We need to show people that Green Acres is the place to be...for encouragement. It's a place where people can know your name and encourage you personally. It's a place where you can find non-threatening hugs and you can give and receive affectionate encouragement.

CONCLUSION

One of the most colorful events of the year is watching the Tournament of Roses Parade from

Pasadena on New Year's Day. A few years ago during the parade, one of the largest floats suddenly sputtered and stopped. Every float behind that one had to stop as well. The vehicle under the float ran out of gas. The ironic thing is it was the float sponsored by Standard Oil Company. The company had millions of gallons of gasoline at their disposal, but they failed to appropriate the available gasoline to power the truck under their float.

In a similar way, the God of all grace offers you an unlimited supply of His wonderful grace. But unless you receive His grace by faith, you'll sputter and stall spiritually. You may run out of gas, but you never have to run out God's grace!

True grace produces true grit, and true grace comes only from God. If you don't have a relationship with Him, He offers you illuminating grace to lead you to Him. If you're guilty and need forgiveness, He offers you saving grace. If you're grieving, He offers you comforting grace; if you're struggling He offers you strengthening grace; every day He offers you living grace; and when it comes time for you to die, He will give you dying grace. He truly is the God of all grace.

OUTLINE

THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD ENABLES YOU TO:

I. ENTER INTO HIS GLORY

"Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world...Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." *1 Peter 2:11; 1:8*

II. ENDURE TEMPORARY SUFFERING

"Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world...If you suffer for doing good and you ENDURE it this is commendable before God, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." *1 Peter 2:11, 20-21*

III. ENCOURAGE OTHERS WHO SUFFER

"Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in this world...Love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." *1 Peter 2:11; 4:8*

1. Personal encouragement
2. Affectionate encouragement



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes