

## SILAS

**“With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly . . . “ (1 Pet 5:12 NIV)**

William Barclay in his introduction to 1 Peter quotes several scholars about the excellent style and grammar of this inspired letter. F. W. Beare calls it “the best Greek in the whole New Testament. Moffatt describes it as “plastic language and love of metaphor”. Mayor writes that “First Peter has no equal in the New Testament . . . “ Bigg compares it to the work of Thucydides and Selwyn and marvels at the writers ability to coin compound words. Since Peter is the inspired author of this book we have at least two ways to explain the excellent Greek it contains. (1) God inspired Peter to write that way. (2) Peter dictated his inspired words (probably in Hebrew) to a scribe who was skilled in the Greek language.

I believe the correct answer is # 2. There is certainly nothing wrong with inspired men dictating the words of God to a scribe. As you know, the Bible has much to say about “scribes”. The Old Testament Scriptures, for example, mention such scribes as Sheva, Shebna, Meshullam, Shaphan, Nethaneel, Shimshai, etc. Even Ezra was a scribe (Nehl. 8:1). Jeremiah dictated his inspired words to a scribe named Baruch (Jer. 36:32). Paul also dictated his inspired words to a scribe (Rom. 16:22). Certainly there would be nothing wrong with Peter also dictating his inspired words to Silas. It is generally believed that Peter also dictated or supervised the writing of the Gospel of Mark. Nothing wrong with that either!

Who was Silas? He is first mentioned in Acts 15:22 where we are informed that he was a leader in the Jerusalem Church. He was also a prophet (Acts 15:32; and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). It is generally believed that the name “Silas” is a contraction of the name “Silvanus”. The name Silvanus is found 4 times in the KJV of the Bible (1 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; and 1 Pet. 5:12). In each instance the NIV translates the name as “Silas”. I believe that the names Silas and Silvanus both refer to the same man.

Even though Paul dictated his letters he authenticated each one by his own personal signature (See 2 Thess. 3:17; Col. 4:18; 1 Cor. 16:21; and Gal. 6:11). Whatever other scribes he may have used, it seems that Silas was used to write both letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:1 and 2 Thess. 1:1). I think Paul also used Silas to write the Roman letter. According to Rom. 16:22 the writer was “Tertius” (Rom. 16:22), but Tertius is the Latin word for “third”, and “Silas” or “Shal-lish” is the Hebrew word which means the same thing.

With this background, let us again look at 1 Peter 5:12. Peter said that he wrote this letter with the help of Silas. Peter never claimed to be a scribe or a scholar, he was a fisherman. As a fisherman he had “partners” (Lk. 5:10) and also “hired servants” (Mk. 1:20). I assume, therefore, that he was used to giving orders and delegating responsibility. Since Peter was considered “unschooled” (Acts 4:13), with a thick Galilean accent (Matt. 26:73), I can easily understand why the Holy Spirit would direct him to use someone like Silas to help write the letter.

Peter’s lack of formal education, however, was probably an advantage. God has hidden some things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes (Matt. 11:25). God deliberately chose those considered as “foolish to confound the wise” ( Cor. 1:26 - 29). Remember! Peter was not chosen by accident. Jesus prayed all night before choosing men like Peter (Lk. 6:12 - 16). In spite of everything, however, Peter became a pillar in the early church (Gal. 2:9). He had such power with God that sick people even wanted his shadow to touch them (Acts 5:15).

One lesson that Silas helps us to learn is that even great men like Peter need the help of others members of the Body of Christ. As Paul would say: “The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don't need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don't need you!” (1 Cor 12:21) All the members of the Body not only need Jesus, but we also need one another.

This Biblical truth also applies to you and me. Remember! **“All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future-- all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” (1 Cor 3:21-23)**