

Hope When Life is Hard...



A VERSE BY VERSE
EXPOSITION OF
THE EPISTLE OF
FIRST PETER

Humility in Hardship 1 Peter 5:5-7 (708)

1 Peter 5:5-7...*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. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.*

The first thing I want to point out to you this morning is how radically God-centered these three verses are. Indeed, I think we can rightly conclude that this suffering, hardship, trials thing is ultimately about God. It is God who *gives grace* (5:5). It is God who *lifts up* (5:6, *exalt you*). It is God who *cares for you* (5:7). We humble ourselves by entrusting everything to Him. We entrust our relationships within the church to God knowing that He will give grace (5:5). We entrust our hard circumstances to God knowing that He will lift us up in His good time (5:6). We entrust our worries to God knowing that He cares for us (5:7). He cares more and better than any other.

With this God-centeredness a foundation, my thesis for the morning is this: Submission to one another is but the outward expression of true humility before God.

In verses 1-4 Peter describes the manner in which the elders are to carry out our shepherding ministry – voluntarily (5:2), eagerly (5:2), exemplary (5:3), and expectantly (5:4). Now he makes the point that you in the congregation have certain responsibilities as well to the men who faithfully discharge their duties as elders. This is what Peter means by his use of the word *likewise* – a word he used in 3:7 to point out that husbands, as well as wives, have responsibilities in the marriage relationship. The point is that the maintenance of harmonious and God-honoring relationships within the church is a mutual obligation. It is the responsibility of everyone for the Lord's sake. The proper attitude of the members of the church is humility (5:5, 6). And genuine humility works itself out in actual, real-time obedience (5:5, *be subject*) toward those ordained men who shepherd the flock.

In the first phrase of verse 5 Peter presses this obedience upon the *younger men* in the congregation. The terms *younger* and *elders* could refer to respective ages. In this case Peter would be saying, "You guys in your 20s, 30s, and 40s be submissive to the guys in their 50s, 60s, and 70s." However, given the preceding verses (5:1-4) I think *elders* in verse 5 still refers to officers in the church who probably, were, in fact, older in age. "Younger men" probably refers to younger men. Peter's mention of younger men does not mean that everyone else can act and speak as they please relative to the elders. Peter may single out young men because they tend to think they know *more* than they actually do know and to think they know *better* than their elders. It is important, as those who will

shepherd the flock of God in the future, that these young men possess an attitude of humility and learn the grace of submission. And so the command of Peter to them – *be subject to your elders*.

The writer of Hebrews says the same thing.

Hebrews 13:17 says, *Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

What does it mean for us to *obey our leaders*, to *submit* to the elders? Five things stand out. First, it means that we willingly comply with their instruction as it is founded in Scripture. Second, it means that we show them respect as is fitting in the Lord. Third, it means that we defer to their collective wisdom and counsel. Fourth, it means that we take to heart both their encouragement and their admonitions. Fifth, it means that we determine to be a source of joy to them and not a source of grief. *You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders.*

Peter now enlarges the audience to whom he speaks to include everyone within the congregation. He, as an apostle, passes on to them the will of God regarding their relationship with and attitude toward one another. *And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.* “The term *humility* speaks of an attitude, an inclination of heart which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one’s own. The Greek word used here is well defined by **Philippians 2:3-4**: ³ *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another*

as more important than himself; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Grudem, p. 194).

Peter communicates the will of God here using a very common and easily understood picture – that of putting on a piece of clothing. Peter has used this figure once already in **1:13**, *gird your minds for action*. The Bible often “compares appropriate Christian behavior to putting on garments” (**Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:11, 14**). **Colossians 3:12**, for example, says, *and so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*. “The verb *clothe yourselves* probably identifies a garment or apron a slave tied over other garments in order to perform certain menial tasks. It describes the act of putting on a garment appropriate for servile activities” (Achte-meier, pp. 332-333).

My grandmother, my mother’s mother, was a delightful woman. She was rarely down. Always smiling. As I think back on our visits to Lynchburg she was either sitting down in the kitchen talking *with* us or zipping around in the kitchen preparing food *for* us. I hardly remember her without an apron on over her dress. We have pictures of her in that characteristic attire. Looking back it was fitting that one who was so given to serving was always appropriately dressed for the task.

All of us are to put on the apron of submission, service, and deference. The attire that is always appropriate, indeed, required dress in the church is humility. Remember, submission to one another is but the outward expression of true humility before God.

Jesus spoke of this humility in **Matthew 5:3-4**. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" To be *poor in spirit* is to face God in all His perfection; to admit your own spiritual poverty, nothingness, and neediness; to recognize your need for mercy alone; and so to be emptied of self-confidence, self-centeredness, self-importance, and self-righteousness. Mourning is that godly sorrow that hates sin itself as a violation of God's law; that sorrow which yearns for atonement; that sorrow which prompts one's repentance; and that sorrow which God honors with restoration and refreshment. Such a humble disposition of heart is expressed in the following prayer:

"All my powers of body and soul are defiled. A fountain of pollution is deep within my nature. There are chambers of foul images within my being. I am utterly ashamed that I am what I am in myself. Destroy, O God, the dark guest within, whose hidden presence makes my life a hell" (*Valley of Vision*).

Submission to one another is but the outward expression of such humility before God.

Dr. Edmond Clowney recognizes this connection. He says, "The Christian knows that he did not make himself or save himself. His humility springs from his total dependence on the grace of God" (*1 Peter*, pp. 209-210). The old Scotsman, Alexander Nisbet, says the grace of humility is that adornment whereby a Christian has a low esteem of himself flowing from the sense of (1) his own sinfulness (**I Cor. 15:9**) and (2) of the undeserved goodness of God (**II Sam. 7:18, 20**) ... He considers whatever discipline he receives from God as less than he really deserves (**Ezra 9:13**) (p. 198). Submission to one another is but the

outward expression of true humility before God. *Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.*

Now there are two profound motivations for us to be diligent to cultivate this attitude of humility. The first motivation is because God hates the other thing, the other thing being pride. *For God is opposed to the proud.* Why does God set Himself to oppose pride in His people? Why is God willing to crush the proud man? Pride runs so counter to the gospel of the grace of God in Christ. You see, the very design of the doctrines of grace, of the gospel is to break the sinful pride of man.

The presence of pride in the man who professes the gospel is indicative of a deficiency in his understanding of that by which he was saved and of that which he professes. His pride indicates that he has greatly underestimated the vileness of the sin from which he was saved; that he has greatly undervalued the price of his redemption – the blood of Christ; that he has seriously miscalculated the gratitude he owes to God for His saving mercies; and that he has lost sight of the life of the One who redeemed him.

Philippians 2:5-8 *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Matthew 11:29, *"I am gentle and **humble** (tapeinos) in heart."*

Given this great deficiency in his understanding of the grace of God in the gospel is it any wonder that such a man should possess an arrogant and haughty demeanor? It is any wonder that such a man should be given to talking much about himself - his achievements, experiences, possessions, and his opinions. Is it any wonder that such a man should think highly of himself? Is it any wonder that such a man should think himself more important than those less educated, less experienced, less articulate? Is it any wonder that such a man should trust in himself? And it is at this point where pride flies in the face of God so directly.

“God hates pride and he opposes those who display it. In any case what have believers to be proud of? If we have achieved anything of lasting value it is for the Lord’s glory, not for ours. The reason we are able to do something valuable is because the Lord gives us the wisdom, the ability and strength to do it. *‘Where, then is boasting? It is excluded’* (**Rom. 3:27**), because all spiritual good is done only through the grace of God” (Bentley, p. 167).

The second motivation for us to be diligent to cultivate this attitude of humility is this: humility before God ensures the free flow of grace within the community of faith. *God gives grace to the humble*. Middle Tennessee is green. With over 50” of annual rainfall farmers don’t have to irrigate their fields very much. Things are a bit different in West Texas. Shortly after moving to Texas I had opportunity to fly to Midland on business. Annual rainfall out there is about 15 inches. From the plane I could look down and see these large green circles in the middle of an otherwise brown landscape that resembled a giant piece of plywood. The circles were islands of healthy crops in the middle of dryness and barrenness. The difference, of course, was due to the presence of water drawn from deep underground aquifers and distributed to bring life to the land. God’s design is

that local churches, irrigated as it were by His sustaining grace, should be islands of vitality, growth, productivity, and sweetness in a dry, barren, and sometimes hostile world.

And so Peter commands us, *humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*. This particular phrase occurs only here in the New Testament. It is, however, common in the Old Testament. Here in **verse 6** *the mighty hand of God* refers to His sovereign providence in our present suffering. God's *mighty hand*, in the words of the Shorter Catechism, speaks of "God's most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions" (SC Q#11). Indeed, Peter has made it crystal clear that our present circumstances are ordained and governed by divine providence (see **2:20; 3:17; 4:13a, 17; 5:10a**). So to humble oneself means "among other things...bowing to God's wisdom, accepting the twists and turns of his providence...though this may mean personal disadvantage in this life" (Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, p. 194).

We gladly do this knowing that the divine power under which we bow is the same power - indeed, the only power - that can and will raise us up (*that He may exalt you*). You see in the Old Testament God's mighty hand spoke of His power to deliver.

Exodus 13:3 says, *And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for **by a powerful hand** the Lord brought you out from this place."*

Of course, we will be exalted when Christ returns. This is one of the themes of 1 Peter (see **1:15**, *en kairo*, in due time). But God does grant relief; God does lift us

up in this life as it pleases Him (**2 Chron. 12:12, 32:26; Dan. 4:34-37**). God doesn't tell us the specific time of His delivering grace so it is best to understand verse 6 generally: that in the time God deems best, whether in this life or in the life to come. God doesn't tell us what shape His deliverance shall take. He lifts us up from our humble conditions and exalts us in the way that seems best to him. Perhaps we shall know increased spiritual blessing and deeper fellowship with God. Perhaps we shall be entrusted with greater responsibility, reward, or honor which will be seen by others as well" (Grudem, p. 195). It is for us to wait patiently for Him.

Now the question is how does one humble himself or herself. Peter answers this in **verse 7**. Genuine humility is attained by *casting all your anxiety upon Him*. *Anxiety* (merimna) is another word for what? Worry. In **Luke 21:34** Jesus speaks of the *worries of life*; in **Matthew 13:22** of *the worry of the world*. I like Jay Adam's explanation of worry. He says, "The Greek word in the New Testament means to divide, part, rip or tear apart. The word describes the effects of worry; that is what worry does to us. But worry itself is concern over the future. Worry is concern about something that one can do nothing about, and that he cannot even be sure about. That is why it tears us apart ... There is no way to grasp [the future], there is nothing to lay a hand on; there is nothing that can be done ... No one but God knows its true shape. So the worrier worries about what might happen. First, he imagines that matters will be this way. But then (he thinks), they might be that way. Because he cannot be sure and cannot control the future, he allows it to tear him apart if he dwells on it and becomes overly concerned about it. That is what worry is according to the Bible" (*What to do About Worry*, p. 3). It appears that the very words of Jesus bear this out.

Matthew 6:31, 34 *"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

So, what can be done about it?

We *cast* or throw those worries upon Someone else. We cast them upon God Himself. This word is used in **Luke 19:35**, *they threw their garments upon the colt*. In casting our cares upon Christ we acknowledge that our anxiety is sin. We admit that we cannot handle it ourselves. We accept God's providential ordering of our lives. Finally, we anticipate that He will work in, through, and for us. And, beloved, this pleases God. This pleases Him because such deference is our glad acknowledgement that He is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. In short, it honors Him for us to depend so upon Him.

Remember the proud in verse 5 are those who look out for their own interests first. Every fallen man resists placing himself in the position of vulnerability; putting himself in a position to be taken advantage of; in a position that means the forfeiture of his rights. His question when confronted with the command of God is who will defend me? Who will take care of me? Who will look after my interests if I defer to others? "[God] is able to do so far better than we are (His hand is mighty, v.6) and He wants to do so, for He continually cares for His children. Therefore, casting all your anxieties on him is the path to humility, freeing a person from constant concern for himself and enabling him or her truly to be concerned for the needs of others" (Grudem, p. 195). Truly, submission to one another is but the outward expression of true humility before God Himself, to whom belongs all glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.

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I think we can rightly conclude that this suffering, hardship, trials thing is ultimately about _____.

Big Idea: _____ to one another is but the outward expression of true _____ before God.

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.

The point in verse 5 is that the maintenance of harmonious and God-honoring relationships within the church is a _____ obligation.

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

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The term *humility* speaks of an _____, an inclination of heart which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one's own.

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First ... *God is opposed to the proud*

The very design of the doctrines of grace, of the gospel is to _____ the sinful pride of man.

The presence of pride in the man who professes the gospel is indicative of a deficiency in his understanding of that by which he was saved and of that which he professes ...

that he has greatly underestimated the _____ of the sin from which he was saved that he has greatly undervalued the _____ of his redemption – the blood of Christ that he has seriously miscalculated the _____ he owes to God for His saving mercies that he has lost sight of the life of the One who redeemed him (**Phil. 2:5-8; Matt. 11:29**).

Second ... *God gives grace to the humble.*

Humility before God ensures the _____ of grace within the community of faith.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.

The mighty hand of God refers to His sovereign _____ in our present suffering.

So to *humble oneself* means "among other things ... _____ to God's wisdom, _____ the twists and turns of his providence ... though this may mean personal disadvantage in this life" (Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, p. 194).

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

In casting our cares upon Christ we ...

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