



1 Peter 5:5-7

“Christians are Humble”

5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Last week we saw the heavy responsibilities that are given to the Elders of the church, how they were to act as Christ's undershepherds and to oversee His sheep, but to do so willingly and without Lording it over them, but rather leading by their example. And part of the way that they were to be examples to the congregation was in their humility and their self-sacrifice, in that they were to be able to say with Paul in 1 Col. 11:1, ***“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”*** Because, of course we could pick any number of humble men past and present, and none of them would come close to the humility of Christ, that is why Paul exhorted us in Phil. 2:5-8

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

I don't know about you, but I never cease to wonder at what Christ did for us. Here He is the Second Person of the Godhead, eternally reigning with the Father in Heaven, and yet he makes that infinite stoop and takes on our nature, becomes a man like you and me, but not to be born and reign in the greatest palace on earth – even that would have been pigsty compared to heaven – no he comes to earth to be born in a stable the lowly and impoverished son of an oppressed people. You would think that you couldn't humble yourself more than that, and yet he did. For our sakes, and for our sins, he suffered humiliation and the death of a common criminal on the cross. God's love was so great, that the Son literally became a bondservant, or a slave, in order to save us. Christians it was humility not pride that saved us and therefore no man can out-humble Christ.

Well if Christ was the most humble of men, you would expect people who call themselves his followers would be striving to imitate that quality wouldn't you? How I wish that was the case, but the fact is that we Christians sometimes act as if God should be following us, and not the other way around. Instead of being humble, we manifest our pride in a hundred different ways. Which is particularly ironic, because while it was HUMILITY that saved us, it was PRIDE that caused our fall in the first place. How did Satan tempt our first parents in the Garden? First by getting them to doubt the goodness of God and then with an appeal to their pride – eat this Apple and ***“you will be like God.”***

From that point on, man has been a consummate rebel at heart, and remember that sin at its root is rebellion against God. ***I know best, and you're not the boss of me.***

Now we can understand how the unregenerate sinner, who is still in open rebellion against God would say that, but the Christian? Surely not! But yeah we do, we seek to limit God's authority, ***well we'll call you Lord, but we what we really want is more of Constitutional Monarch, there is no way we are going to accept this "Sovereignty over everything" idea, and there are a few of these commandment thingees that frankly we are going to need to be able to veto. For instance, when your "law" gets in the way of my personal happiness, then I'm afraid the law is going to have to go, because you wouldn't want me to be unhappy. So for those of you familiar with Willie Wonka, what we are looking for is for God to be Mr. Salt, and for us to be able to be Verruca.***

As a general rule, if we have problems submitting to God, then we are going to have even more trouble submitting to his undershepherds, even though they are God's ambassadors. And generally speaking the younger you are the more difficulty you have submitting to authority, because when you are young you still have no idea how much you don't know. How does that gag sign for teenagers go: ***"Tired of being harrassed by your parents? ACT NOW!! Move out, get a job, pay your own way while you still know everything!"***

Well, Peter of course knew that would be the case, he had been a young Turk himself, the Gospels are literally full of his ***"Not So, Lord"*** replies to Jesus, and so he tells the younger people in particular, "submit yourselves to your elders" – that is submit to the elders of the church. Because he knows that the harmony and the peace of the church and the success of those elders in fulfilling their own commission is going to depend upon that. Those elders were given authority to serve the church, just as the husband was given authority to serve his wife and family, if their authority is denied, their ability to serve as they ought is eliminated.

If a doctor prescribes a course of treatment, and the patient rebels against it, the doctor can do him no good. It is the same for a physician of souls, if you will not listen to your elders or heed their biblical advice, then it doesn't matter how many times they bounce it off your head, it will do you no good. ***And I've met people who actually think hearing the diagnosis and receiving advice again and again but never acting on it will do them some good.***

So Paul tells the younger people, submit to the elders, but not just the younger people, everyone. What we need to do is culture an air in the church of mutual submission. But if that is going to happen, then you all will need to take off the garments of pride and clothe yourselves with humility. And the word Peter uses there rendered "be clothed" is the same word used for a slave putting on his work apron. It is only after we have done that, that we will be able to serve. It is an action in every way like what Christ did at the end of the Last Supper, when he took off his outer garments, put on a towel and did the work of the lowliest slave by washing the apostle's stink, dirty feet. And remember he said I, your Lord and teacher, am doing this so you'll know what to do.

Think about it this way, every natural man thinks of himself as a king. In our unregenerate state we imagined that we went about dressed in royal robes of purple and ermine, referring to ourselves as we, and expecting everyone to bow to our will. Now that you have been saved, you need to think of yourself as having taken off those robes, and put on that work apron, because that lowly apron is in fact the robe of Christ's righteousness – that is the mantle of true humility we must have if we are saved.

Now it may be that even now you are still resisting God, still claiming your own authority, making yourself the God of your own universe. What you are really doing is rebelling against your creator, and as long as you do it, things will not go well for you. That is why Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 here and warns "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

If that isn't enough to convince you then I beg you to hear what Calvin wrote regarding this verse: ***"All who seek to elevate themselves, shall have God as their enemy, who will lay them low. But, on the contrary, he says of the humble, that God will be propitious and favorable to them. We are to imagine that; God has two hands; the one, which like a hammer beats down and breaks in pieces those who raise up themselves; and the other, which raises up the humble who willingly let down themselves, and is like a firm prop to sustain them. Were we really convinced of this, and had it deeply fixed in our minds, who of us would dare by pride to urge war with God? But the hope of impunity now makes us fearlessly to raise up our horn to heaven. Let, then, this declaration of Peter be as a celestial thunderbolt to make men humble."***

Keep that in mind it is not merely that you should be humble and submissive in order to escape God's wrath, Christian you are given God's assurance that in due time you will be exalted. Peter has told you again and again that if you are a Christian you will have to go through the furnace of affliction to burn away all your dross, and some of the most pernicious and foul dross that needs to be melted and skimmed away is our proud. I know that all too well. I have struggled with stupid pride all my life, but it has been my experience that whenever I have gotten cocky in the ministry, this has immediately been followed by a trip to the furnace. But it has taught me like Nebuchadnezzar never to look upon the church and say ***"Is not this great Providence, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"***

But be assured, in due time when the furnace has done its work, when you have been shaped and crafted, by affliction and humiliation, the Lord will favor you and lift you up and exalt you. But you will find that he will only give you honor when he knows that the receiving of that honor will not hurt you and when you will be like the 24 elders in heaven and will casting your crown before his throne and say: ***"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power"***

You will find if you look at Christian history, that the saints most worthy of honor, were also the most humble men: As Ryle put it: ***"I am persuaded that the more light we have, the more we see our own sinfulness; the nearer we get to heaven, the more we are clothed with humility. In every age of the church you will find it true, if you will study biographies, that the most eminent saints-men like Bradford, Rutherford and M'Cheyne-have always been the humblest men."***

God clothed these men with humility, and they served him better than all the would be kings the world can produce.

Finally, brothers and sisters, please understand this, the great key to achieving this humility is found in verse 7 you must be ***casting all your care upon Him***, realizing ***He cares for you***.

The reason we have most of our trouble becoming humble is because we figure if we do become humble, the unregenerate will take advantage of us.

"Doormats"

Not taking into account Divine Providence

Don't you believe that God really is working all things for your own good?

I'm not surprised that with the increase in Arminianism and the American "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality in the church we've seen a massive growth in pride and rebellion against authority and weakness in the church

If we don't believe in God's sovereignty and that we have to do it all ourselves our lives are going to be full of turmoil and totally lacking peace.

referring to Cripps Chancellor, 'there but for the grace of God goes God'

Christians as Spurgeon said *Here is a cheering word from the throne. We shall be exalted by the Lord if we humble ourselves. For us the way upward is downhill. When we are stripped of self, we are clothed with humility, and this is the best of wear.* – Spurgeon

Phil. 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.