

- I. I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
  - A. I 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] Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, [7] casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
  - B. Pray
- II. An Exhortation to Submission and Humility
  - A. This current exhortation concerning submission and humility is not a new topic in this letter, for Peter began exhorting us to humble submission back in I Peter 2:13, and he continued that topic through I Peter 3:12.
    - 1. In addition, the Old and New Testament have much to say about humility, as did the teachings and writings of the early church, the writings of most of the reformers from the fourth century down through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and some teachers and writers today. So though submission and humility may not be popular topics in the church today, they have been and continue to be important topics for the spiritual health of all Christians everywhere.
    - 2. Of course, the opposite of humility is pride, and the first known example of pride and God's judgment on pride is found in God's removal of Lucifer from his position among the angels, and God's condemnation of Lucifer to the eternal lake of fire.
      - a. And why does God respond so aggressively and strongly to pride? Because pride is a way of thinking about ourselves that turns us against God and toward the evil's of self-centeredness, just as it turned Lucifer against God.
      - b. You see, pride is more than a self-exalting way of thinking, it is a self-centered way of living that produces all sorts of evil and does all sorts of harm to the good God intends for all mankind.
      - c. For Lucifer, the evil of his pride driven self-centeredness is such that he is called the devil, and a murder, and a liar.
    - 3. Now you may be wondering how pride got linked to self-centeredness. The reason is because pride is a self-exalting form of self-centeredness and a motivating force behind the destructive evil and sins of self-

centeredness. In contrast to pride, humility is a self-abasing form of love and holiness.

- a. Take Lucifer for example. He loves himself, not us, and the proof of his self-centered love is in the fact that whatever fame or fortune or power or pleasure or possession or discouragement or depression or fear he brings our way, he brings it for one purpose only – to destroy us, and in destroying us to gain victory over God for himself.
  - b. In other words, the devil's purpose is never our good, but only his own. And in securing his own good, he is willing to harm us and destroy us and take us with him into the eternal damnation of the lake of fire. And as ought to be obvious to all of us, this kind of thinking and behavior is not the result of self-abasing love or humble holiness, but rather it is the result of pride driven self-centeredness.
  - c. By comparison, consider Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and was willing to be born into our world as one of us. As one of us, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And why did He do this? To save us from our sin and reconcile us to God. And why did he choose the path of suffering in order to secure our good? It was the combination of submissive humility and love (Philippians 2:5-8).
4. Just as pride breeds self-centeredness, so it breeds unbelief toward God and distrust of God. However, humility breeds faith in God and obedience to God. Peter affirms this truth by linking submission with humility in verse 5.
- a. Now the reason pride drives unbelief is because it turns our focus inward and it significantly inflates our sense of self-importance, which in turn leads us to believe that we are the knowledgeable ones, the capable ones, and the only one we can depend on.
  - b. In other words, pride leads you to believe that you not only know what is best for yourself, but that you are the only one able and dependable enough to reliably do what is best for yourself.
  - c. Therefore, it is prideful self-confidence that feeds unbelief and distrust of God. And when we act on our distrust of God by taking matters into our own hands, we turn against God and treat Him as unworthy of our trust.

5. My point in all this is that pride is our enemy, just as much as selfishness or the devil is our enemy. On the other hand, humility is our friend, just like love and God are our friends.
- B. I Peter 5:5a . . . You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders;
1. The question you might have here is why does Peter address the young men, or the young people within the church? Why not address everyone who is not an elder or in some position of leadership? After all, are we not all to submit to the leadership of the elders?
    - a. First, I want to clarify that submission to the leaders in any church is not to be blind submission, but prayerful, thoughtful, and discerning submission, lest in blind submission we get led astray.
    - b. And though every elder and pastor or any other leader who leads God's people astray will answer to God, those who follow will also answer to God for following a bad leader. God addressed the responsibility you, the people have, in keeping bad leaders out of leadership in several of the seven letters to the seven churches of Revelation. So, as important as it is to submit – and it is important, it is equally important to keep submission within the boundaries of true godliness and spiritual wisdom.
    - c. Therefore, make it your aim to humbly submit to those in church leadership, but also make it your aim to pray for godly wisdom in discerning to whom you should submit.
  2. Which brings us back to the question of why Peter addressed his submission exhortation to the younger people in the church.
    - a. Well, we do not know for sure, but if we look at the ways of young people, we know that –
      - (1) they are often inclined to think of themselves as more mature and knowledgeable than they are,
      - (2) they are often inclined to believe their way of looking at life is up to date and therefore should not be constrained by the old ways,
      - (3) they are often inclined to question many things – including those things that they are still too immature to discern the wrong in it and the harm that comes from doing it,
      - (4) and they are often inclined to look at the adults with some disdain because the adults appear to be both stuck in their ways and doing little or nothing to fix the obvious problems in the church.

- b. Added to these things is the fact that the youth of the church have a lot of energy, and they want to use that energy in ways that make them feel like they are making a worthy contribution, or in ways that help them feel important.
  - c. Therefore, it is the young people, first and foremost, who need to hear this exhortation – and so Peter addresses it to them.
  - d. But the rest of us need to hear and heed it, too. In fact, if those of us who are older do not heed this exhortation, how can we expect the young people to heed it?
- 3. Now this exhortation to submit is not just an exhortation to obey those older and wiser – as important as that is to the health of the church. This exhortation is also an invitation to use humble submission to grow stronger in faith, to develop godly thinking, to build valuable character qualities, and to nurture godly behavior – for such things are friends and treasures that will serve you well the rest of your life.
  - a. For example, to be submissive requires a good measure of humility, patience, and acceptance of what you may not think – at least at the time – is best for you and the church. In addition, willing submission requires a good bit of self-control.
  - b. But humble submission also requires learning to put your well-being into God's hands, and leaving it in His hands while another leads you, and the church, into places you have not yet gone or into things you do not yet understand.
- 4. To me, the spiritually profitable side of submission is an important truth, so I will say it again.
  - a. Everyone who willingly submits to those in authority are not only obeying God, they are gaining untold treasure in the form of spiritual growth, increased godliness, and greater Christian maturity.
  - b. And I want to emphasize that these spiritually profitable things are untold treasures, because they cannot be bought with money or gained from book knowledge or taught from the pulpit. These treasures are only gained from faithfully enduring the hard places of life, such as submitting to the church elders.
- 5. The last thing I want to say about this part of verse 5, is that if you will not willingly and cheerfully submit to those over you – trusting God to care for you as you submit – then you will not and indeed are not submitting to God.

C. I Peter 5:5b . . . and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another . . . ,

1. When Peter was speaking to the young people in the church, he exhorted them to submit. Here, he is addressing everyone, and so he changes the word from submission to humility. However, though Peter changes the word, the attitude of heart, the way of thinking, and the outward behavior of submission and humility is much the same.
2. For example, Jesus, clothed himself with humility – as proven by the fact that He left heaven, and left behind His rightful position of power and authority, and came to live among us as one of us, and ultimately died for us, before ascending back into heaven. Another example of His humility is when He washed his disciples' feet.
3. Paul speaks of this same combination of submission and humility when he exhorts us to be devoted to one another in brotherly love, and to give preference to one another in honor (Romans 12:10). And I believe we can say that Paul sums up Peter's words of submission to the young people and humility to all of us when he says: "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

D. I Peter 5:5c . . . for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

1. I am not sure how often or how carefully Christians in general consider these words, but we are wise to take them seriously, for they tell us God's conditions for either receiving His opposition or His grace.
  - a. When God opposes the proud, He confronts them, resists them, and takes action against them. Now I want to be clear that God does not treat everyone this way, for the condition for receiving this kind of response from God is pride.
  - b. When God gives grace to the humble, He gives them His help – such as salvation in its varied forms and from various things. He also gives strength, understanding, wisdom, and victory. Truly, it is God's grace that enables us to do our part in living a godly life, and that enables us to continue doing what needs to be done, or what the elders require of us, or what God wills for us to do.
2. Now you may be thinking that God's grace is free – which means there are no conditions attached to receiving His grace.
  - a. Well, it is true that God's grace is free. But what is not true is that God gives His grace, unconditionally, to anyone and everyone.

- b. Now if we think carefully about it, I believe we will see that we do believe in conditional grace, even though we may not admit it. You see, the requirement of faith in the saving work of Christ in order to be saved is nothing more or less than a condition. And we believe you must put your faith in Christ and His saving work to be saved.
- c. Now, do conditions change grace from being free to being earned? Never! God's grace is free because no matter how many conditions we meet, we are being given something we can never pay for or do enough to deserve.
- d. You see, God's grace has conditions because when God gives it, He gives it with the intention of accomplishing something good, for Himself, for us, and for eternity (Titus 2:11-14).
- e. Peter (I Peter 5:5), James (James 4:6), David (Psalm 138:6), and Solomon (Proverbs 3:34) all affirm this truth, and the one constant in their affirmation of this truth is the condition of humility.
  - (1) Why humility?
  - (2) Because humility is the one character quality that puts us in the right attitude of heart and the right frame of mind to willingly submit to God and the good He intends to do when He gives us His grace.
- 3. My final thought on this part of Peter's exhortation is this: given that life is hard enough, who of us needs to make life harder by adding God's opposition on top of it all by being proud in some way or another? May we wisely choose humility and a life filled with God's grace in its varied and numerous forms, for surely that both pleases God and makes our life here on earth easier!

E. I Peter 5:6 . . . Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time . . . (A very similar statement appears in James 4:10)

- 1. Depending on the purity of our heart and motives, we will take this statement in one of two ways. We will either see it as God's promised path to exaltation, or we will see it as an exhortation to do our part in humbling ourselves and leave God's part in His hands.
  - a. Those who see it as God's promised path to exaltation, will humble themselves with the expectation that God will make them popular or honored or considered important one day– because exaltation is what they want. Of course, using humility to gain a sense of

pride is not what God has in mind when He says to humble ourselves and wait for Him to exalt us.

- b. Those who value pleasing God, and who see the present and eternal value of humility, will humble themselves. They will leave it if, when, and how God exalts them entirely in His hands. Of course, they are confident God will exalt them sometime and in some way, but exaltation is not their goal – whereas humbling themselves under God's mighty hand is.
  - 2. The first point here is that humbling yourself is your part. If you do not do your part, God and circumstances may humble you from time to time, but you will neither gain humility nor the spiritual profit that comes from gaining humility.
  - 3. The second point here is that God's part is exalting you – at the proper time. Who determines the proper time? God does. Who exalts you. God does. Therefore, focus on your part and leave God's part to Him.
- F. I Peter 5:7 . . . casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
- 1. We will not talk any more about this statement today than to say that anxiety comes from the pride of self-sufficiency not knowing what to do or not having the outcome under control.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Pride is our enemy, just as much as the devil is our enemy. And pride will do as much harm to our character, to our relationship with God, and to our relationships with others as the devil can think of to do.
- B. So run from pride and pursue humility, for humility is your friend just as much as God is your friend. And humility will do the kind of good for your character, your relationship with God, and your relationship with others as God wants done.