

The Power of Humility

- 1 Peter 5:5-7
- There's a paradox even in my title today, isn't there? We usually think of humility as weakness, just as we think of meekness in the same way. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness is not weakness but strength under control. Humility is not weakness but a master principle in relationships that is powerful in its application. Peter has taught us in this book that we can submit to every human institution because we are free! And that we use our freedom not as a cover-up for evil but to live as servants of God. He said a servant can freely submit to his master even if he suffers unjustly because this suffering is a gracious thing in the sight of God. He taught us that Jesus freely submitted to the cross as he entrusted himself to his Father who judges justly. And he taught us that wives can submit to their husbands who also honor their wives because there is great freedom in that submission and humility. Peter continues that theme in this text which we will look at under three main points: Clothing, Perspective, and Relinquishment.
- **Clothing (verse 5)**
- The people in England like to say to Americans who complain about the rain and the dreary days, "There is no bad weather in England, only improper clothing." But there's something we all need to wear every day that is much more important than a raincoat. Annie said in her musical, "You're never fully dressed without a smile." I like that but the Bible tells us you're never fully clothed without humility. Peter follows his encouragement to elders with a "likewise." In the same way that the elders are to submit to God's calling on their lives, likewise you younger ones are to be subject to them. "Younger" is less about age as it is about spiritual maturity. The word means "recent" or new. The exhortation is especially for those who are younger in the faith to come under the leadership of the elders. "Place yourselves under, or place yourselves in order" is the meaning of that word "be subject." Again, this is a master principle that applies to all relationships and flows from the fountainhead of the Trinity, where Christ the Son subjected himself to the will of his Father. It is the same word Paul used in Ephesians 5 for wives to be subject to their husbands, the same word in Luke 2 where Jesus was subject to Joseph and Mary as he grew up, the same word in Romans 13 for all citizens to be subject to the governing authorities. Humility is the operating system for believers.
- That's why Peter does not stop with younger Christians here but expands this admonition to all of us. "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" This is a powerful encouragement and warning that is repeated by James and is an adaptation from Proverbs 3:34. God holds the proud at arms-length. He opposes them. Sam Storms writes, "To think that the omnipotent God of the universe might 'oppose' a mere finite, human being, is cause for serious reflection and a commitment to humility at all costs." Amen!
- We are not fully dressed in the morning to go out and greet the day unless we have first put on humility. Peter saw this in the upper room in Christ himself, who tied on a servant's apron and stooped down to wash his disciples' feet. He who was perfect humility showed us who are imperfect what humility looks like. Don't leave home without it. Don't *go* home without it! Maybe we should get in the habit of saying to our spouse, "Don't forget to put on humility, dear!" Edmund Clowney writes, "The humility of those who serve Christ is not merely an absence of pride or the awareness of limitations. Christian humility is realism that recognizes grace." Paul wrote, "I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:6-7) True humility recognizes grace.
- David Guzik writes that some marks of humility include, "The willingness to perform the lowest and littlest services for Jesus' sake, consciousness of our own inability to do anything apart from God, and the willingness to be ignored by men."

- Humility is not self-loathing or thinking poorly of yourself. It is thinking of others first. As Paul wrote, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4) How do we do this? That leads to...
- **Perspective (verse 6)**
- “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.” How do we humble ourselves before other men and women? By humbling ourselves before God. Acknowledging his mighty hand should move us to humility. We saw his mighty hand in moving Joseph from the pit to the prison to the palace. We saw his mighty hand in delivering his people through the Red Sea when there was no possible escape in human terms. We saw his mighty hand in delivering the three Hebrew boys out of the fiery furnace that was so hot it killed the men who threw them in there, but the only thing burnt on the Hebrew boys were the cords that had tied them up. We saw the mighty hand of God on that Sunday morning when Jesus burst forth from death and the angels roared. We saw the mighty hand of God on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached and the Spirit applied salvation by faith through grace to 3000 souls and the church was born. And we saw the mighty hand of God working in Peter who, in his pride, had denied the Lord three times and was cast down. Was there ever a morning for the rest of his life when a rooster’s crow did not bring that moment to his mind? But the mighty hand of God restored Peter. Even the most self-willed of us, Peter in the courtyard, Paul on the road to Damascus, me or you in our rebellious youth, can be chastened, humbled, and restored. And when that happens, there is no limit to what God can and will do through his servants. That leads us to...
- **Relinquishment (verse 7)**
- Catherine Marshall wrote a book years ago called “Beyond Ourselves.” It was a powerful book that made an impression on me and Cindy when we read it. Here’s an excerpt where Marshall is talking about the concept of a prayer of relinquishment. “I got my first glimpse of it in the fall of 1943. I had been ill for six months with a lung infection, and a bevy of specialists seemed unable to help. Persistent prayer, using all the faith I could muster, had resulted in—nothing. I was still in bed full-time. One afternoon I read the story of a missionary who had been an invalid for eight years. Constantly she had prayed that God would make her well, so that she might do his work. Finally, worn out with futile petition, she prayed, *All right. I give up. If you want me to be an invalid, that’s your business. Anyway, I want you even more than I want health. You decide.* In two weeks the woman was out of bed, completely well.”
- Relinquishment is a letting go, but with hope. Not a fatalist approach where we sigh and say, “Whatever is going to happen is going to happen.” But a relinquishment, a giving over, of our cares, concerns, fears, and worries to God, trusting in Him alone for the outcome.
- Peter tells us to cast all our anxieties on him, on God, because he cares for us, The word literally means to throw. It is an act of the will to take your anxieties and cast them, throw them onto the Lord. And it is total relinquishment. **All** your anxieties. Not just the ones you don’t think you can manage in your own strength. Because the truth is, we cannot manage ANY of our anxieties in our own strength.
- Martha is an example of a woman who was anxious about many things and was resentful that her sister Mary was not anxious at all! And she came and told the Lord about it in no uncertain terms. Jesus rebuked her gently and pointed out that the way Mary was serving the Lord was the way that was most important. Clowney wrote, “Martha’s many concerns grew from her pride, pride in many dishes that made her a servant of the dinner. When we cast our cares on the Lord, we often find that they were the concerns of our pride, not the cares of his kingdom.”
- Jeremy Troxler gave a powerful illustration at the men’s retreat of going to the Lord a few years back because he was overwhelmed with his many responsibilities to the point that he said, “Lord, this is too hard.” Then he heard from the Lord one day, “It is not too hard, Jeremy. It is impossible.” And he

understood that the source of his anxiety was that he wanted to control the outcomes of his many responsibilities. And he couldn't do that. None of us can. He found peace in hearing the Lord say that he had only called him to do two things: "Work hard at the things I have called you to do and trust Me with the outcomes." And it changed Jeremy's life. I remember hearing Neil Anderson years ago say something similar about the difference between goals and desires. If we have a goal to have family harmony where everybody in the family gets along all the time, who can block that goal? Every person in the family! Even people outside the family can block that goal. So if family harmony is a goal, we will likely be frustrated or anxious all the time. It is fine to have a *desire* for family harmony, but your goal would be better suited for something only **you** could block. For example your goal might be to speak with kindness to your family and not use anger to manipulate or get your own way. That's a goal that only you can block! And a worthy goal to work towards, understanding you will fail at times, and God will give grace.

- We cast our anxieties on the Lord knowing that he cares for us. Peter learned this, even at the point of his greatest failure. When Peter uttered his third denial and the rooster started crowing, Luke reports that "the Lord turned and looked at Peter." Think of that. Peter looked at Jesus looking at him at that moment. And now as he writes his letter, humbled and restored, he urges all of us to cast our cares on the Lord, knowing that he cares for us. He cares about you. Not just when we do the right thing, but like Peter, even when we do the unthinkable. Look at Jesus looking at you. Not with disdain or disappointment or disgust. But with unfading and unconditional love. Then cast those anxieties on his shoulders. He can carry them so you don't have to. His yoke for you and me is easy and his burden is light.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another