

## 1Peter 5:1-7

### Clothing Ourselves With Humility

*...be clothed with humility – v. 5;*

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God – v. 6*

The exhortations in vv. 5,6 place a strong emphasis on a very important Christian virtue. Beginning specifically with those that are younger they are exhorted to submit themselves unto the elder. This is followed by a broadening of the application to include everyone when Peter next writes *Yea, all of you be subject one to another* and the way this mutual submission is accomplished is that the Christian must *be clothed with humility*. There's the virtue I have in mind – humility.

And in order to drive home this point with even greater force Peter then repeats the exhortation in v. 6 by writing *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God*.

*Be subject one to another; be clothed with humility; humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.*

Do you see the emphasis on this virtue of humility? Humility could certainly be classified under the heading of essential Christian virtues. Every virtue is, of course, important – but there are some virtues that may be classified a step higher as being essential. Holiness, for example, is an essential Christian virtue. *Follow peace with all [men], and holiness*, the author of Hebrews writes in Heb 12:14 *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord*. To fail with holiness is to say in effect that gospel power has failed. Gospel power, however, does not fail. Those who have no desire for holiness and who don't see fit to pursue holiness have never been the recipients of gospel power and are therefore lost and still in their sins.

Righteousness is another essential virtue. *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Christ said in Mt. 5:20. If you are going to gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven you must gain righteousness – and mere righteousness but righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. In other words – you need righteousness that will measure up to the perfect standard of God's law. Such righteousness, of course, will never be attained by the efforts of any sinner. The kind of righteousness that gains heaven is the perfect righteousness of Christ.

So you see two essential virtues in holiness and righteousness. What I'm now suggesting is that the virtue of humility can be added to this list of essential virtues. And just as it is impossible in and of ourselves to earn the righteousness that qualifies us for heaven so is it equally impossible for a sinner to gain the humility he needs to enter into heaven.

The antithesis to humility, you see, is pride. And the reason lost sinners will stubbornly cling to their sins and hug their sins all the way to hell is because of their unwillingness to set aside their pride. They think that they're much better than what they really are. By comparing themselves to other men they convince themselves that they're no worse than

others – that they’re even better than many. Unfortunately for them they’re utilizing the wrong standard by which to measure themselves. They should measure themselves by the standards of God’s holy law but in many cases (especially in our day) they take issue with God’s law and the extent of their pride is evident when they think that they can decide for themselves what’s right and what’s wrong.

We know, of course, that the Bible teaches the inability of man to respond to the gospel. Rom. 8:7 *Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* And in 1Cor. 2:14 *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.* And the reason the carnal mind is enmity against God and unable to subject itself to the law of God and the reason the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God is because of his pride which absolutely forbids him to humble himself under the mighty hand of God.

This is why salvation is nothing short of miraculous – because nothing short of supernatural power is necessary for man’s pride to be set aside so that a sinner submits to the terms of salvation. An effectual call to salvation is a call to come down – down from every form of self-righteousness – down from anything that would lead a man to think he possesses something to commend him to God.

We see the importance of the virtue of humility, then. And we should note regarding Peter’s epistle that the humility that is gained in regeneration is a virtue that needs to be tended to by the child of God. You’re aware, I’m sure, from your experience and from the teaching of Scripture that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17).

And so fleshly pride is ever trying assert itself even in the life of the Christian and where pride goes unchecked the Christian loses out with God – is even resisted by God, according to our text. And if pride goes too long being unchecked then a hard heart results, and the credibility of a Christian’s profession of faith becomes subject to doubt.

I hope you can begin to see, then, the importance of Peter’s exhortation:

*Be clothed with humility and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.*

I want to analyze this singular exhortation which receives a double emphasis today in order to magnify the importance of this exhortation in the Christian’s life. Would you consider with me first of all how:

## I. This Exhortation Makes Our Relationships Functional

Note again in v. 5 the statement *Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.* We recognize, of course, that the Bible establishes a very clear system of order when it comes to families, when it comes to church, and when it comes to society in general.

Our shorter catechism answers the question about what's required in the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment this way: *The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.*

We recognize, then, that the Bible teaches us the validity of the roles of husbands and fathers and wives and mothers and children and elders in the church as well as civil magistrates. In the immediate context of the statement in v. 5 we find reference made to elders in the church {**Cf. 5:1-4**}. Church members are to submit to the church elders. Whenever I think on this particular aspect of the subject I'm drawn to that text in Heb 13:17 *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.*

It is a frightful thing to contemplate having to give an account for those under the care of this church. But as the text also indicates so plainly it ought to be a frightful thing for you as well. The verse makes it quite clear that it's in your best interest for those who have the rule over you to be able to give a good account for you with joy.

But would you note where the principle of humility enters into the exhortation to elders. In v. 3 elders are instructed *Neither as being lords over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.* That phrase *being lords* could be translated *exercising lordship* or as another version renders it *lording it over those allotted to your charge.* This relationship, you see, between church members and church elders functions through mutual submission.

Christ Himself, of course, set the primary example for this when He washed His disciples feet. So we read the words of Christ in Jn. 13:13 *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* Christ Himself exercised His authority with humility and service.

You are aware, I'm sure, that wives are commanded to submit to their husbands and husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church. You can see by comparing the exhortations to husbands with the exhortations to wives that there is a clear authority structure established in the home but that this structure of authority functions through each party being clothed with humility. Husbands cannot love their wives as Christ loved the church apart from this virtue of humility. And wives will not submit to their husbands apart from humility.

You begin to see how tension and strain develops in a marriage. It's when one or the other spouse fails to humble himself or herself under the mighty hand of God. Instead of being clothed with humility a man or a woman becomes clothed with pride. Pride wrecks marriages – the failure to esteem others better than ourselves as Paul puts it in Rom. 12:3 is what leads to strain and tension and the breakups of families.

I am thankful that in my years in ministry the amount of marriage counseling I've ever had to do has been minimal. I do remember from my days in the Chicago area we saw a marriage destroyed in our little church planting venture. And the thing that strikes me about that marriage in retrospect that I'm afraid may be all too typical is that each spouse had no trouble seeing so clearly all the problems in the other person. Their own problems were so minimal that they were hardly worth mentioning but the problems in the other person were gigantic and plain for all to see, or so they thought. The absence of humility, in such cases, and the presence of pride makes such marriages impossible to rescue.

And then there's the relationship between children and their parents. Parents have God-given authority over their children. And where that parental authority breaks down is either at the point that the parent abuses that authority because of failure to be clothed with humility or it breaks down when a child, often times in his teenage years, lets his pride get the best of him and he or she in their pride no longer feel that they have to subject themselves to any authority. I have bad news for teenagers engulfed in their pride. There will never come a day when you won't be under some form of authority. We are all under some form of authority all the days of our lives.

Even in the realm of Civil Government humility is what allows a government to function smoothly. I'm reminded of that scene in 1Kings 12 where Rehoboam, the son of Solomon sought counsel on how to rule. His elder counselors who had advised Solomon in his day say to him in 1Ki 12:7 *If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.* This was good advice and could be applied today in the realm of civil government or in the realm of employer to employee relationships. Rehoboam missed a golden opportunity to gain the loyalty of his subjects. In his pride he took the advice of the counselors of his own generation and he thought a heavy hand would be more appropriate and the result was a split kingdom that would never be united again.

I hope you begin to see, then, how important the exhortation is to be clothed with humility and to humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. This virtue is essential to any and every relationship we know under the sun. May God empower us, then, to be clothed with humility so that we don't find ourselves in our pride bucking against God's authority structures to our own demise.

Would you consider next how:

## II. This Exhortation Bears Serious Consequences

The consequences of heeding this exhortation are presented to us in our text both negatively and positively. Notice the negative consequence in v. 5 and how it is connected to the exhortation to be clothed with humility. We might well ask – why be clothed with humility? To which the text answers: *for God resisteth the proud.*

One lexicon defines the term *resisteth* as ranging in battle against. Another meaning given to the term which may more accurately reflect the meaning in this particular text is *to oppose one's self*.

And so the picture emerges of the believer being in a position where God must oppose him. Isn't that the essence of ironic tragedy? God, who has been for you – God who sent His Son to die for you – God who has expressed His love with unsurpassable excellence now must position Himself against those who refuse to be clothed with humility. And the reason God must so position Himself is because to do otherwise would find God opposing Himself.

God, you see, in His plan of redemption never intended to cater to man's pride. Salvation is designed, rather, to deliver you from pride. As a sinner saved by grace you have been led to recognize that there's no place for you to lift yourself up. You ought to be burning in hell but instead you've been rescued. And the practical ramification of this truth should be that no matter how sorely you, in your pride, think you've been mistreated – you don't begin to come close to the way Christ was mistreated. And you don't begin to come close to receiving what you truly deserve. And you don't begin to come close to being mistreated the way you've mistreated God and Christ. It was, after all, your sins that drove the nails into His hands and feet and your sins that pressed the crown of thorns into His brow. Where, then, do you find room to harbor the notion that you can lift yourself up or complain about anything?

But alas, pride seems to die hard and it seems to assert itself often even among Christians. So much of the rivalries between Christian ministries or Christian colleges or Christian churches spring from the same kind of pride you find in the dog eat dog world of corporate America – except in the church it can be even worse.

And so the negative consequence to failing to be clothed with humility is that God Himself must contend with you and sometimes utilize stringent measures to bring you low again. We must be brought low in order to be prepared for the blessing of God. You certainly find that in revival men and women are brought very low under deep conviction of sin in order to pave the way for the nearness of God and of Christ.

What a strong argument, then, is found for being clothed with humility. I hope you would abhor the notion that you're positioning yourself in such a way that God Himself must resist you. The way to avoid this kind of positioning of ourselves is to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

But then notice with me the positive consequence to heeding the exhortation for not only does God resist the proud but by way of contrast we read in our text that *He giveth grace to the humble*. And what amazing grace He gives! He gives us grace to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He gives grace that is greater than all our sins. He gives grace that is so bountiful in measure that Christ Himself is the only standard by which such grace can be measured.

Now there are a number of Old Testament narrations that show us just how high a premium God places on a man being willing to humble himself. We read of King Ahab in 1Ki 16:30 *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that [were] before him.* And again in 1Ki 16:33 ... *and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.* And a little later in 1Kings near the end of Ahab's life we read in 1Ki 21:25 *But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.*

And yet even the case of an Israelite King who brought Baal worship into the land and whose wife persecuted the prophets of the Lord we find the Lord Himself saying to Elijah in 1Ki 21:29 *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: [but] in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.*

The same thing can be said for the most wicked King of Judah. King Manasseh is the King in the South whose sins took Judah to the realm of no return regarding God's judgment. He made judgement inevitable. Of this King we read in 2Ki 21:16 *Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD.*

And yet even with this wicked ruler we're able to read in 2Chron. 33:12,13 *And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.*

What great grace, then, is obtained by being clothed with humility! What a powerful argument for humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God! It is when we're low that grace is ministered to our souls. It is when we are low that we become useful to God. It is when we are low that we're able to enjoy in greater measure the presence of God. And so we read in Ps 138:6 *Though the LORD [be] high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

May the negative and positive consequences that spring from the exhortation of our text become strong forces of motivation to compel us to be clothed with humility. And then consider with me finally that:

### III. This Exhortation Can Only Be Accomplished by a Right View of God

It is interesting to note the theology that is closely connected to our exhortation to be clothed with humility. In v. 4 Christ is referred to as the *Chief Shepherd*. And in v. 6 we find reference made to *the mighty hand of God*. And v. 7 we find reference made to the love of God – *casting all your care on him; for he careth for you.*

In these references we are able to see the power and the sovereignty of God. Christ is the Chief Shepherd and God's hand is mighty. We know, of course, that apart from God's sovereignty and apart from God's almighty power salvation would not have been accomplished or applied to our souls.

In the beginning of this epistle Peter addresses himself to those that are *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* (1:2).

Elect – there's the sovereignty of God in salvation; Sanctification of the Spirit – sanctification begins in regeneration – there's the power of God's mighty hand. And lest some get the wrong idea about election through the foreknowledge of God would you note that this election is *unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood*. Obedience doesn't lead to election, the way some Arminians would want to interpret the verse but election is what leads to obedience.

I have come to believe over the years that it is very important for the child of God to be able to affirm what we sometimes refer to as the doctrines of grace. Too many portions of God's word have to be set aside or else twisted and distorted to deny the sovereignty of God in salvation.

But I have also come to believe that every bit as important as these plain doctrines are – it is equally important to know why these doctrines are revealed to us. They are not revealed to us in order that we may draw conclusions from them regarding man's responsibility or our duty to pray and witness. The purpose behind the doctrines of grace, in other words, is not to make us fatalists.

Their purpose, rather, is to humble us and they humble us by teaching us to glory in Christ alone. It is the triune God that is responsible for salvation from start to finish. God the Father planned it and God the Son executed it and it's God the Spirit that applies it. I love the way this is expressed in a hymn in our hymnbook.

*I sought the Lord* – the hymn begins. And the problem with some Christians is that they think they can glory in that as if to suggest that they can take exception to Rom. 3:11 that tells us *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God*. But don't I know intuitively, we ask, that *I sought the Lord*. The hymn goes on to say *I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me; It was not I that found, O Savior true; No, I was found of Thee*.

And the revelation of such plain truth is designed that Christ might increase and that you might decrease. This is why a right view of God is essential to being clothed with humility. A right view of His love is also essential to being clothed with humility. When it was revealed to David, in the Old Testament, that his throne would be established forever David's response is given to us in 1Ch 17:16 *And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who [am] I, O LORD God, and what [is] mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*

That's a good response for any and all of us when it comes to our salvation – *Who am I, O LORD God that I should gain salvation? Who am I that I should escape the damnation I deserve? Who am I that I should be blessed with Christ's righteousness and that I should be exalted with Him to be a joint-heir with Him?*

The majesty of God humbles us to the dust when we know the contrast between His splendor and our sinfulness and the love of Christ, while it lifts us from the dust, it leaves us humble still, but with our hearts full because we marvel that we should be the recipients of so great salvation.

Being clothed with humility, then, is accomplished by a right view of God. You see, I trust, how practical and even necessary sound theology is. And you see, I hope, how essential it is for us to manifest this virtue of humility. It's what makes our relationships function and it's what keeps us in a position to be the recipients of God's grace. May the Lord guide you, then, to an exalted view of God and Christ in order that you may be clothed in humility and in order that you'll see fit to humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.