

FIRST PETER 5:5-7 "Lord, You Brought Us Out Of Darkness And Keep Us With A Mighty Hand"

Last week we got a taste of what the responsibilities of the elders in a church are and also the attitude the leadership must have in serving Christ as they serve the flock with eagerness, as they strive to be the examples for others to follow.

All of this must be put in the context of how our Lord commands the leadership to submit to Him and follow Him and be humbled before Him so as to do the work totally dependent on His strength.

And as the leadership demonstrates this attitude those in their charge will not only see the example, but will be motivated to do the same. It's one thing for leaders to give commands, it's entirely different for leaders to do the very thing they ask of others.

If you go back in military history and note some of the great leaders you'll find that in many cases the most successful armies were armies whose leaders were willing to get into the fight with them.

Alexander the Great; Napoleon; George Washington; Rommel of Second World War fame and Gen. George Patton, who commanded an armored division for the Americans in W.W.II. These men lead their troops into battle. In a sense they fought side by side. They lead by example. Their example was to always move forward and not to sit in lofty towers hundreds of miles from the war, but rather to be among the men and therefore be in their midst to encourage them when the battle got hard.

And in some cases when the troops were not willing to go forward these leaders literally took the lead and rallied the troops behind them and gave them the courage to do battle even when the odds seemed to be against them.

This is what Christ has called His leaders to do. But only as those leaders humbly follow Jesus and derive their strength from Him will they be able to lead and be the example.

And so as Peter moves on in our text he reminds the church that their leaders, in this case the elders who would primarily include the Pastors and the elders who assist him in shepherding the flock, are men who have been called by Christ to help them grow and be useful for our Lord.

And as such, they as the Body of Christ, must recognize the role of their leaders and respect what Christ has given them as those leaders are faithful to serve them. And so Peter continues by addressing a group of people in the Body.

1PE 5:5 "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
(Prov. 3:34)

Peter starts with the young people. Our text starts by saying, young men. However the Greek language would not necessarily limit this phrase to only males. Dr. Hiebert makes the comment: "The term young men was commonly used of young people of both sexes."

And so Peter at that time was referring to those young people in the church, who today would be comprised of teen-agers and people in their twenties. And the reason he addresses them is probably for the same reason young people need to be addressed today when it comes to being in subjection to authority.

Most young people don't like to be under authority when they feel it's going to cramp their style or restrict them in some sense. I remember as a young person how I used to rebel against authority. I grew up in a time where rebelling against authority was vogue. In generations past young people still rebelled but their culture still insisted on conformity to authority.

You go back to the sixties and seventies and you'll find that a large segment of our society lived and breathed anti-establishment sentiments. It was cool to be a rebel, grow your hair long, wear torn jeans, put flowers in your hair or love beads around your neck. And the more the adults said it looked stupid the more excited you got about doing those things.

This is an age-old dilemma for those in authority. Whether you're a government leader, a parent or church leader, it seems that young people have this innate attitude of wanting to challenge that authority. You parents remember when you're little one got old enough to start walking that one of the first things he or she did was to try and reach all of those things they couldn't reach when they could only crawl.

More often than not those things they wanted to reach are things you told them to stay away from. And though your children may not remember the first word they learned from you in those days you parents remember the word. NO!

But let's not pick on just the young people when it comes to rebellion. Rebellion is something all men have a problem with and it started in the Garden of Eden with two adults who were created perfect and were given a choice to love God above all in their obedience or to rebel as they sought self-motivated choices.

And let's not forget what that rebellion was called. It was called sin and it's still called sin. And the word of God tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Our culture today wants to candy coat sin by calling it everything but sin. In calling it what it is it enables us to have real hope because Christ came to die for sinners.

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. Peter realizes that young people in the church are sometimes wanting to flex their wings and fly in directions that could be harmful when those who love them, who happen to be in authority, are only trying to guide them in ways that are for their good as God has revealed it in His word.

God knows what's best for young people and all people because He's the One who created us. That's why He instructed His people way back in DEU 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Now as we go back to our text in first Peter we read 1PE 5:5 "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older." The NAS puts it: "You younger men likewise be subject to your elders."

The idea of being submissive or subject is the idea of being obedient even during those times when you may not feel like it. Now the word elders or older person has two senses in our text. It can mean those who are elder by age and those who are elder by function.

Young people are to show respect and submissive attitudes to those who are older in the church whether they are family or not. It should be common courtesy for a young person to be kind and considerate of their elders. But there's another sense here indicated in that the text has been talking about elders who are leaders in the church and young people are to show respect and submissiveness to them as ones who have been appointed by Christ for their spiritual well-being.

But, of course, as Peter continues, this is not limited to young people. Vs.5b "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
(Prov. 3:34)

Everyone in the Body of Christ is to be practicing humility toward one another. Peter uses a unique phrase, "clothe yourselves with humility." Dr. Kistemaker makes this comment: "The word clothe means to tie a piece of clothing to oneself. For example, slaves used to knot a white scarf or apron over their clothing to distinguish themselves from freemen. The suggestion is that Christians ought to tie humility to their conduct so that everyone is able to recognize them. Peter exhorts the readers to fasten humility to themselves once for all."

Some people have the idea that being humble is being someone's doormat. The word humble is an interesting one. Dr. Wayne Grudem points out that the term humble or "humility speaks of an attitude which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one's own."

Paul put it quite clearly in PHI 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

But the reason we should have this attitude is not some self-pious ambition but rather an understanding that this makes our Lord and Savior happy when we desire to serve others, knowing that His ultimate service to us was to die for the penalty of our sins. This is why Paul says in EPH 5:21 "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

And keep in mind that this is not just some N.T. teaching. Our Lord tells us in MIC 6:8 "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

It is when we walk humbly with our God that we will be able to show humility toward one another. And so Peter continues in verse 5... "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (Prov. 3:34)

Now whatever else this portion of God's word means one thing is clear. God doesn't like it when people, especially His people in Christ, are haughty or self-righteous. In fact it says, He opposes them or is against them in that kind of behavior. And the Lord in His grace may feel obliged to teach us how to be humble.

But by contrast, He gives grace to the humble. For those who are seeking to be servants to others, our Lord will strengthen and equip to better serve. This is true humility; putting others first and seeking their best in the process. This takes the focus off of self, and believe me you need God's grace to live with that kind of attitude because self always wants to be number one.

And what Peter is teaching is that elders, deacons, older people, younger people, all must show humility toward one another. But true humility toward one another will only manifest itself in a godly way as we humble ourselves before God.

1Pe.5:6 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Now, this is in reverse of how the world often tries to obtain exaltation. In the world it's how many people you can step on to climb up to this elevated position in life.

In God's economy it's how many people you can serve as your main desire is to serve Christ as you humble yourself under His authority. Humbling ourselves before God is an attitude of total dependence on Him.

Dr. Kistemaker puts it this way: "[Peter] wants the readers to subject themselves to God in such a manner that they put their confidence in God alone. They should know that God cares for them and wants them to be completely dependent on Him.....

..... In the presence of God, man ought to be fully aware of his own insignificance. Indeed, Jesus teaches that when a person humbles himself like a little child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven (Mat.18:1-5). Jesus himself demonstrated true humility when he, a king, entered the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. He fulfilled the prophecy, "See, your king comes to you ... gentle and riding on a donkey." (Zec.9:9; Mat.21:5).

Christ's humility gained for us our ultimate exaltation. If Christ can humble Himself before the Father for our good, then to follow His example would be to humble ourselves before our God for the good of others and to help them in their walk with Christ.

1PE 5:6 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Humbling yourself before God in this world can be a scary thing because it can sometimes leave you vulnerable and open to those who would take advantage of you. But God says you are humbling yourself under My mighty hand.

This phrase mighty hand is reminiscent of God's working with Israel. This phrase is not to be confused with the idea of being under God's thumb as though He were trying to squash us. Rather it's a beautiful picture of how God is always there for us with the kind of strength to deliver us and protect us.

EXO 13:9 "This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand."

DEU 3:24 "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and Your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?"

DEU 9:26 "I prayed to the LORD and said, "O Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

William Barclay makes the comment: "The idea is that God's mighty hand is on the destiny of His people, if they will humbly and faithfully accept His guidance. After all the varied experiences of life, Joseph could say to his brothers who had sought to eliminate him: "As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen.50:20). The Christian [should] never resent the experiences of life and never rebel against them, because he knows that the mighty hand of God is the tiller of his life and that [God] has a destiny for him."

And as we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand He will exalt us at the proper time. But the proper time will be His time. It may be in this world, it may not, but it will be the perfect time under the perfect conditions according to God's perfect will. To humble ourselves before Him is to trust He knows what is perfect for us.

I like the way Dr. Kistemaker puts it when he says, "Because of the trials the readers endure, the danger is real that they may lose courage to persevere. Even though God will not test Christians beyond their endurance, they realize that human fortitude has limits. Therefore Peter encourages the readers and tells them that God responds to their humility with exaltation. God never forsakes His own, but often in the nick of time he lifts them up and gives them the victory.....

..... The believer who puts his trust in the Lord knows that God upholds this world and is in full control of every situation. Accordingly he sings, 'This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.' " ---Maltbie D. Babcock.

And so, God realizes that this world carries with it all sorts of trials we have to contend with. And He wants us to know that He's aware of them even as He was aware of Joseph, who was betrayed by his brothers who meant evil, whereas God ordained a bad situation and used it for good.

And so Peter continues 1PE 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Now the NIV makes this a separate sentence, therefore making it a separate and distinct act. But in the Greek it's all one thought and so what precedes in verse 6 is connected to verse 7. And so the thought goes as the NAS puts it..... "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you."

The idea here is that as you humble yourself before God you are able to cast your anxiety on Him. It's all one action. One follows the other. And so when the cares of this world cause us anxiety we don't have to invent a new way to get past the anxiety, we must humble ourselves before God trusting He has the mighty hand to take us through.

Casting our anxiety on Him in the Greek literally means to throw whatever we have that we can't deal with on someone else, namely God, who can deal with it and then to trust that He can deal with it. At that point it can cease to be an anxiety though it may not cease to be a problem.

The word "anxiety" defined by the Random House College Dictionary is: "distress or uneasiness caused by danger or misfortune." Having to live in a state of distress is a life of stress and a life that is crippled in a way where you cannot serve others effectively because the only concern in your life is what you're experiencing.

Now we might call that selfish, and technically it is. But it's the reality we all face when God does not seem big enough or has a mighty enough hand to bring us through. It can be hard to live by faith, which is what Peter is addressing, and that's why we need to be connected to each other in the Body to help each other when we become weak so that we aren't crippled by such anxiety.

That help is not meant to be a commiseration in our trials which usually takes the form of comparing how bad we each feel and then sharing in each other's misery. Rather, we should be there for one another, to lift one above such trials by reminding them of the truth of who God is and the mighty hand He does in fact have.

Sometimes we forget that even the strong in Christ have anxious moments. Paul said on one occasion in PHI 2:28 "Therefore I am all the more eager to send him (Timothy), so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety."

David said in PSA 94:17-19 "Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. 18 When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O LORD, supported me. 19 When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul."

Both Paul and David were human beings who were prone to have days where faith in God was a hard thing, but God knew this and He was always there for them in their times of distress.

And this is why Paul, who admitted of anxiety in Phil.2:28, could say in PHI 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

This is what Peter was conveying when he said at the end of verse 7, "because He cares for you." That little phrase should mean more for you and me than anything else in this world. Consider that for a moment. Your Creator who has stretched out the heavens with a word, created man and woman, who sent His son to redeem us from the penalty of our sin, truly does care for you and me.

We are His children in Christ, and as such He has a personal love for you and me and will do everything to help us grow and walk after Him so that we may faithfully love and serve Him in this world. That's why we don't have to be anxious in the midst of turmoil. He controls the wind and the waves and has the ability to help us ride on the tops of the waves if He doesn't make them subside all together.

This is what the psalmist had in mind when the Holy Spirit recorded these words in PSA 55:22 "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall."

The writer of proverbs, Solomon, who was regarded as the wisest of all men as he submitted to God and gained wisdom from God said in PRO 16:3-4 "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. 4 The LORD works out everything for his own ends -- "

Jesus tells us in MAT 6:25-34 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly

Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Jesus is saying that He has every day under control and that He has each one of us in His care and that He knows what our needs are and He is willing and able to meet those needs as we look by faith to Him.

It's sometimes hard for us to imagine how much God cares for us and yet we know that the greatest expression of His love for us was how He chose to die for the penalty of sin we deserved to pay for. He said I care too much not to step in to bring them to Me and be with Me forever.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Paul put it this way in ROM 5:8-9 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"

Does God care for you? You better believe it. Is He concerned with everything that's going on in your life? Yes! But He's a loving Father who wants us to care for Him and love Him as the loving Father He is, by trusting Him and following where He leads as we humble ourselves before Him.

God has a mighty hand and a hand that reaches out to us with the desire to lift us up and to comfort us and strengthen us. Reach out to him in thanks and let Him lift you up.