

1 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 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

The first thing that is evident in this text is how radically God-centered these three verses are. Indeed, I think we can rightly conclude that this suffering, hardship, trials exhortation is ultimately about God. It is God who gives grace (5:5). It is God who lifts up (5:6, exalt you). It is God who cares for you (5:7).

The main point of this text is that we are to be a humble people.

“The basic reason for this is not hard to find: humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes humility goes. In fact you might say that humility follows God like a shadow. We can expect to find humility applauded in our society as often as we find God applauded—which means almost never.”

John Piper.

We humble ourselves by entrusting everything to Him. We entrust our relationships within the church to God knowing that He will give grace (5:5). We entrust our hard circumstances to God knowing that He will lift us up in His good time (5:6). We entrust our worries to God knowing that He cares for us (5:7). He cares more and better than any other.

True submission to one another is in its essence the outward expression of true humility before God. It is an expression of our incurable love of Christ.

In verses 1-4 Peter describes the manner in which the elders are to carry out our shepherding ministry – voluntarily (5:2), eagerly (5:2), exemplary (5:3), and expectantly (5:4). Now he makes the point that you in the congregation have certain responsibilities as well to the men who faithfully discharge their duties as elders. This is what Peter means by his use of the word likewise – a word he used in 3:7 to point out that husbands, as well as wives, have responsibilities in the marriage relationship.

The point is that the maintenance of harmonious and

God-honoring relationships within the church is a mutual obligation. It is the responsibility of everyone for the Lord's sake. The proper attitude of the members of the church is humility (5:5, 6). And genuine humility works itself out in actual, real-time obedience (5:5, be subject) toward those men who shepherd the flock.

In the first phrase of verse 5 Peter presses this obedience upon the younger men in the congregation. The terms younger and elders could refer to respective ages.

In this case Peter would be saying, "You guys in your 20s, 30s, and 40s be submissive to the guys in their 50s, 60s, and 70s." However, given the preceding verses (5:1-4) I think elders in verse 5 still refers to officers in the church who probably, were, in fact, older in age. "Younger men" probably refers to younger men. Peter's mention of younger men does not mean that everyone else can act and speak as they please relative to the elders. It is important, as those who will shepherd the flock of God in the future, that these young men possess an attitude of humility and learn the grace of submission. And so the command of Peter to them – be subject to your elders.

The writer of Hebrews says the same thing.

Hebrews 13:17 says, Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

What does it mean for us to obey our leaders, to submit to the elders? Five things stand out. First, it means that we willingly comply with their instruction as it is founded in Scripture. Second, it means that we show them respect as is fitting in the Lord. Third, it means that we defer to their collective wisdom and counsel.

Fourth, it means that we take to heart both their encouragement and their admonitions. Fifth, it means that we determine to be a source of joy to them and not a source of grief. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders.

Peter now enlarges the audience to whom he speaks to include everyone within the congregation. He, as an apostle, passes on to them the will of God regarding their relationship with and attitude toward one another. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. “The term humility speaks of an attitude, an inclination of heart which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one’s own.

The Greek word used here is well defined by Philippians 2:3-4: 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Grudem, p. 194).

Peter communicates the will of God here using a very common and easily understood picture – that of putting on a piece of clothing. Peter has used this figure once already in 1:13, gird your minds for action. The Bible often “compares appropriate Christian behavior to putting on garments” (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:11, 14). Colossians 3:12, for example, says, and so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. “The verb clothe yourselves probably identifies a garment or apron a slave tied over other garments in order to perform certain menial tasks. It describes the act of putting on a garment appropriate for servile activities” (Achteemeier, pp. 332-333).

Remember, submission to one another is but the outward expression of true humility before God.

Jesus spoke of this humility in Matthew 5:3-4. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." To be poor in spirit is to face God in all His perfection; to admit your own spiritual poverty, nothingness, and neediness; to recognize your need for mercy alone; and so to be emptied of self-confidence, self-centeredness, self-importance, and self-righteousness. Mourning is that godly sorrow that hates sin itself as a violation of God’s law; that sorrow which yearns for atonement; that

sorrow which prompts one's repentance; and that sorrow which God honors with restoration and refreshment. Such a humble disposition of heart is expressed in the following prayer:

"All my powers of body and soul are defiled. A fountain of pollution is deep within my nature. There are chambers of foul images within my being. I am utterly ashamed that I am what I am in myself. Destroy, O God, the dark guest within, whose hidden presence makes my life a hell" (Valley of Vision).

Submission to one another is but the outward expression of such humility before God. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.

Now there are two profound motivations for us to be diligent to cultivate this attitude of humility. The first motivation is because God hates the other thing, the other thing being pride. For God is opposed to the proud. Why does God set Himself to oppose pride in His people? Why is God willing to crush the proud man? Pride runs so counter to the gospel of the grace of God in Christ. You see, the very design of the doctrines of grace, of the gospel is to break the sinful pride of man.

Pride opposes the very existence of God.

Psalm 10:4 The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek [God]. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

Pride knows that the simplest solution for its own survival would be that there be no God at all.

It doesn't come as any surprise then that pride refuses to trust in God.

Proverbs 28:25 contrasts arrogance and trust:

**An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.**

Pride cannot trust God. The posture of trust is too weak. Too dependent. It

calls too much attention to the strength and wisdom of another. Trusting God

is the heartbeat of humility, the opposite of pride.

When pride keeps us from trusting in God to take care of us there are two possibilities: one is that we feel a false security based on our own imagined power and shrewdness to avert catastrophe. The other is that we realize that we cannot guarantee our security, and so we feel anxious.

The presence of pride in the man who professes the gospel is indicative of a deficiency in his understanding of that by which he was saved and of that which he professes. His pride indicates that he has greatly underestimated the vileness of the sin from which he was saved; that he has greatly undervalued the price of his redemption – the blood of Christ; that he has seriously miscalculated the gratitude he owes to God for His saving mercies; and that he has lost sight of the life of the One who redeemed him.

**Philippians 2:5-8** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.  
**Matthew 11:29**, “I am gentle and humble (tapeinos) in heart.”

Given this great deficiency in his understanding of the grace of God in the gospel is it any wonder that such a man should possess an arrogant and haughty demeanor? It is any wonder that such a man should be given to talking much about himself - his achievements, experiences, possessions, and his opinions. Is it any wonder that such a man should think highly of himself? Is it any wonder that such a man should think himself more important than those less educated, less experienced, less articulate? Is it any wonder that such a man should trust in himself? And it is at this point where pride flies in the face of God so directly.

“God hates pride and he opposes those who display it. In any case what have believers to be proud of? If we have achieved anything of lasting value it is for the Lord’s glory, not for ours. The reason we are able to do something valuable is because the Lord gives us the wisdom, the ability and strength to do it. ‘Where, then is boasting? It is excluded’ (Rom. 3:27), because in the end even the best that we do for

God is still tainted because we are bound in the flesh and we are still sinners and even our best intentions may not be as pure as they a they should be.

God gives grace to the humble and as we recognize with humility our failing it will keep us humble.

And so Peter commands us, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.

This particular phrase occurs only here in the New Testament. It is, however, common in the Old Testament. Here in verse 6 the mighty hand of God refers to His sovereign providence in our present suffering.

Indeed, Peter has made it crystal clear that our present circumstances are ordained and governed by divine providence (see 2:20; 3:17; 4:13a, 17; 5:10a). So to humble oneself means “among other things...bowing to God’s wisdom, accepting the twists and turns of his providence...though this may mean personal disadvantage in this life” (Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter, p. 194).

We gladly do this knowing that the divine power under which we bow is the same power - indeed, the only power - that can and will raise us up (that He may exalt you). You see in the Old Testament God’s mighty hand spoke of His power to deliver.

Exodus 13:3 says, And Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the Lord brought you out from this place.”

Of course, we will be exalted when Christ returns. This is one of the themes of 1 Peter (see 1:15, en kairo, in due time). But God does grant relief; God does lift us up in this life as it pleases Him.

God doesn’t tell us the specific time of His delivering grace so it is best to understand verse 6 generally: that in the time God deems best, whether in this life or in the life to come. God doesn’t tell us what shape His deliverance shall take. He lifts us up from our humble conditions and exalts us in the way that seems best to him.

Perhaps we shall know increased spiritual blessing and deeper fellowship with God.

Perhaps we shall be entrusted with greater responsibility, reward, or honor which will be

Now the question is how does one humble himself or herself. Peter answers this in verse 7. Genuine humility is attained by casting all your anxiety upon Him.

Anxiety (merimna) is another word for what? Worry. In Luke 21:34 Jesus speaks of the worries of life; in Matthew 13:22 of the worry of the world. I like Jay Adam’s explanation of worry. He says, “The Greek word in the New Testament means to divide, part, rip or tear apart. The word describes the effects of worry; that is what worry does to us. But worry itself is concern over the future. Worry is concern about something that one can do nothing about, and that he cannot even be sure about.

That is why it tears us apart ... There is no way to grasp [the future], there is nothing to lay a hand on; there is nothing that can be done ... No

one but God knows its true shape. So the worrier worries about what might happen.

First, he imagines that matters will be this way. But then (he thinks), they might be that way. Because he cannot be sure and cannot control the future, he allows it to tear him apart if he dwells on it and becomes overly concerned about it. That is what worry is according to the Bible” (What to do About Worry, p. 3).

The very words of Jesus bear this out.

**Matthew 6:31, 34 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

So, what can be done about it?

We cast or throw those worries upon Someone else. We cast them upon God Himself. This word is used in Luke 19:35, they threw their garments upon the colt.

In casting our cares upon Christ we acknowledge that our anxiety is sin. We admit that we cannot handle it ourselves. We accept God’s providential ordering of our lives.

Finally, we anticipate that He will work in, through, and for us.

And, beloved, this pleases God. This pleases Him because such deference is our glad acknowledgement that He is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. In

short, it honors Him for us to depend so upon Him.

Remember the proud in verse 5 are those who look out for their own interests first. Every fallen man resists placing himself in the position of vulnerability; putting himself in a position to be taken advantage of; in a position that means the forfeiture of his rights. His question when confronted with the command of God is who will defend me? Who will take care of me? Who will look after my interests if I defer to others? “[God] is able to do so far better than we are (His hand is mighty, v.6) and He wants to do so, for He continually cares for His children. Therefore, casting all your anxieties on him is the path to humility, freeing a person from constant concern for himself and enabling him or her truly to be concerned for the needs of others” (Grudem, p. 195). Truly, submission to one another is but the outward expression of true humility before God Himself, to whom belongs all glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.