

XLV. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“Humility and Unity”

I Peter 5:5–11

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In this study we will start in I Peter 5 in our series of I Peter. This study will be inseparably connected to the last one as we focus primarily on verses 5 and 6. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. I Peter 5:1–5 says *[1] So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: [2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. [5] Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you. (3:47)

One of the things I have attempted to do in this study is to show you that this is a real man writing this, empowered by the Holy Spirit and writing with all the context of his life. He is Peter, a fisherman, who was in business with his brother and others. He spent three years with Jesus and I have been constantly referring back to how that time with Him has effected Peter writing this epistle. And I think it’s really true in the passage we are looking at in this study for a couple of reasons.

I know we don’t remember everything that happens in our lives but there are key moments that are just indelible. Peter is writing this three decades after he had been with Jesus for three years. I think there are two events in Peter’s life that effect what we’re about to study from God’s Word that influences why he is saying it, how he is saying it and has never left his mind. I will give you one event now and one at the end of this study.

When I take people to Israel I love to take them to the road under Mount Hermon by Caesarea Philippi. In Matthew 16 Jesus is there with His Disciples and He asks them two questions. Matthew 16:13–17 says *[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” [14] And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” [15] He said to them, “**But who do you say that I am?**” [16] Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” [17] And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”*

When He asked the first time He wasn’t looking for that kind of answer so He asked again for this was personal. You are either going to say ‘yes’ that Jesus was who He said He was or you are going to say ‘I don’t believe it.’ And up speaks Peter, the one writing this epistle. Peter didn’t come up with his response on his own. God the Father enabled him to have eyes to see and ears to hear. Then Jesus says to Peter in the very next verse, Matthew 16:18, *[18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* What is Jesus saying here? This is referring to Peter representing the Apostles

confessing the truth of who Christ is which is the rock and foundation of the church. Then Jesus says ‘I will build My church’ so God has designed His church for His people. God builds His church for His people.

So far in this study Peter has had three objectives that he keeps driving home to us. One is he keeps telling us who we are in Christ because of Christ. You are the elect of God and covered with the blood. You are filled with the Spirit and have an inheritance. You are an inheritance and God is keeping your inheritance. Peter gives us 15 Gospel blessings that Christ secured on the cross which makes us who we are in Christ, not because of anything we do. Secondly, he tells us what we are to do for Christ because of Christ. We are sojourners on a journey. Our roots are not in this world but in the Kingdom of God. You have a mission, a message and a ministry. Up to this point he has given us 9 Gospel commands that have been sprinkled through the first four chapters.

The third objective is how he takes 40 to 45 percent of this epistle to tell those in Christ how to suffer for Christ. Jesus tells us that because they have persecuted Him the world will persecute us. Peter is reporting to us what he heard from Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says in Matthew 5:11–12, [11] *“Blessed are you **when** others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Peter now tells us that those who are true Christians to some degree, at some time, in some way will suffer for Jesus Christ. It may be verbal suffering, being marginalized, an attack on your livelihood and some with even their lives, which we call martyrs. Peter tells us not to be surprised when this suffering comes and he is going to get us ready for it. When this suffering happens God is growing you, framing you and giving you a platform. Paul does the same thing in his writings. Paul says in II Timothy 3:12, [12] *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* All the Apostles consistently tell us this.

So now that Peter has given us all this we come to I Peter 5 and he tells us he is a pastor, an elder, a shepherd to the flock of God. He tells us that Jesus built His church for His glory for us so when we suffer we never suffer alone. You are with His people. God has designed an office in His church called elders. In Ephesians 4:11–12 it says [11] *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*

Peter emphasizes in I Peter 5 for elders to shepherd the flock of God among you. Elders are not to do this for gain or personal attention or to exalt themselves but to lay down their lives for the flock as they submit and subject themselves to God and one another. The flock of God need elders to be a model and a mentor to them to help them know who they are in Christ, to follow Christ, how to suffer for Christ and how to grow in Christ. As the elders are examples to the flock of God they are not to look for their reward on this side of eternity for they will get it when the Chief Shepherd comes in the form of an unfading crown of glory. Their joy is your joy in Him, even in the road of suffering.

Peter heard Jesus say ‘I will build My church’ and that is why it says in Ephesians 5:25–27, [25] *Husbands, love your wives, **as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,** [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* That’s why it also says in Acts 20:28, [28] *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.* I dare not

treat the church of Christ with triviality or banality for it is the one institution in this world sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus that is headed to eternity. Some of us have been called to shepherd that flock among those whom Jesus has purchased.

His church will be under assault and if the church is under assault that means there will be personal casualties. Elders are called to be there for Christ as His under shepherds on behalf of the Chief Shepherd to minister to them. Now that Peter has said that he turns very quickly to something else that is very interesting.

Growing up my mom and dad had a hard time getting up in the morning and there were times that my mom would poke her head in my room and say ‘Ike, wake up the bus is coming down the hill.’ There were times we had more time to get ready for school but after school me and my sister Vicky would get a list of things we had to do when we got home and I knew my list was coming after Vicky got hers because then my mom would say ‘oh yeah...’ and I knew my list was coming. For me this passage in Peter is similar to that with my mom for it’s as if Peter said ‘elders here is your list and oh yeah here is for the rest of you...’ What is he going to tell the rest of us?

I Peter 5:5 says [5] *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* That word ‘likewise’ means corresponding to so Peter says corresponding to what I just said to the elders in I Peter 5:1–4, he wants the rest of us to live corresponding to that. He has just told the elders to shepherd the flock of God among you and so likewise the rest of us are to be shepherdable (I’ve just made up a word, I know). If the elders are called to shepherd then the rest of us are to allow them to shepherd us. If the elders are called to model then the rest of us are to be an imitator of them. You follow them as they follow Christ. As they instruct you, you learn from them.

Elders cannot and will not shepherd the flock for Christ for His glory with persistence unless they are first humbled to submission to Christ and to the flock. They won’t be office bearers if they don’t humble themselves and submit themselves to the people of God for their well-being, yet they will be office wearers, something they can put on their resume. Now Peter, likewise, looks at the rest of us. So as we get to the rest of this study I want to answer four questions – who, what, how and why.

Who is Peter talking to? He says, you, who are younger... Every single one of you who are not elders because he just talked to them is who he is talking to, the entire fellowship. I know some of you are thinking you are older than the elders you submit to but elders many times are people who are older chronologically but ultimately it’s not a chronological maturity, it’s a spiritual maturity. For instance, when Charles Spurgeon started his ministry do you think it would have been okay for him to minister here? Yes, it would be and he would have been 19 years of age. About a year and a half later under his ministry revival cuts loose in London. George Whitfield was 23 when he started in his ministry.

Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 4:12, [12] *Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* So he is looking at spiritual maturity and most of the time it takes years to get there, but not all the time. Who would the rest of us be that are not elders? We would be people at some maturation therefore we are spiritually younger. So he is speaking to all of the membership of the church.

So here is the answer to the question what, what is Peter telling the rest of us to do? We are to subject ourselves to our elders. This is the seventh time Peter has used the word *subject*. He has talked to wives who have unbelieving husbands about how to win them through

submission. He has talked to citizens about how to submit in government. So time and time again he has used this term and here he is telling us as members of the body of Christ that we are to submit ourselves to our elders.

This does not mean that the elders can pontificate to us whatever they want and we have to do it. No, anytime you are in a God-ordained authority structure – marriage, government, church, business, etc. – whoever is in authority is there by God’s appointment and they have delegated authority in which they are always in submission to the one who delegates it and can never supersede the one who delegated it to them. God calls us to be submissive to those in authority over us and to one another but it does not mean that whoever is in authority is infallible or inerrant or that they now own you. It means you are in an ordered relationship and you’re submissive unless they cause you and call you to be disobedient to the authority of Christ in your life through disobeying the Word of God.

Then you have to do what Peter and John did in the book of Acts to the authorities in Jerusalem as it is recorded in Acts 5:27–29 which says [27] *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, [28] saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” [29] But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”*

So it is not a relationship that doesn’t have its parameters, but it is a relationship that we embrace – to be in submission to our elders because of our love to Christ who has designed and ordained the office, even with their imperfections. Our statement of subjection is ultimately our statement of trust, not in them but in the Lord who has implemented it and will work through them in our lives. It doesn’t mean I’m going to agree with every single decision.

There was a man in a church I used to pastor where we had made a decision about a capital campaign and this man who was an elder told me afterward that he was going to have to resign because he thought the decision we made was a dumb decision. The elder didn’t think he could be in subjection to this man we had agreed to hire for this building campaign. I asked him if thought we had been disobedient to the Word of God and he said no but he still thought it was a dumb decision so he was going to divorce himself from the church because he thought it was a dumb decision. I said to him ‘I know you wife. Can I call her in and ask her if you have made any dumb decisions? Are dumb decisions grounds for divorce in your marriage?’ He hadn’t thought about that and that is what I was trying to get him to think about. This is how we learn to trust one another in difficult situations.

The third question is how do you do that? You do this by clothing yourself in humility toward one another according to I Peter 5:5. Some translations of the Bible have in place of ‘clothe yourself’ as gird up your minds or apron yourself or clasp yourself. I liked the way one preacher said about the translation of this word clothe here because it was liken to a word with six syllables. It is two Greek words that has been compounded into one word that is six syllables and it literally means ‘with lowliness of mind.’ It’s a term for an article of clothing that does two things. It is an article of clothing that is designed for your work and it is telling people your position.

Here is an example. Periodically in our church we have a time of honoring the Reformed tradition where we preach wearing a Geneva gown, which is a black robe. The black robe was designed for preaching for it would block out the preacher to tell you the importance of preaching but not the preacher. I Corinthians 1:21 says [21] *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach*

(not the preacher) *to save those who believe*. Romans 10:17 says [17] *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*. So the Geneva robe was designed to block out the preacher and highlight God's ordained means of grace of preaching. It also said the man preaching didn't come preach on his own but he has been tested and tried by the church concerning his gifts and graces in life. So the robe was a statement of identity and fashioned for the very job they were doing.

This is what Peter is referring to by using this phrase 'clothe yourself' in humility. This Greek word is literally a smock that is clasped (buttoned) together and the only people that wore the smock were servants. You were not a master. The smock was fashioned so you could do servant work and that is what Peter is saying here in I Peter 5:5. Put the smock on of servanthood. Clothe your mind. Where does humility begin? It begins with your mind. How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as sovereign or submissive, over or under? This is the great work of the Holy Spirit who finally breaks us so that we see ourselves under God, therefore we are willing to trust Him by being under authority. Clothe yourself with humility of mind, lowliness of mind.

Here is another 'oh yeah,' everyone clothe yourselves with humility toward *everyone*, not just the elders. We're going to walk around, not as masters, but as servants. It will begin by thinking right about who we are, who God is and how we relate to one another. So we are to put on the smock of a servant to do the work of a servant and this brings me to the last question.

Why do we do this? A man asked me if he could ask me a question but told me not to worry because it wasn't a theological question and I said 'then it's not a question.' All of life is theology. R.C. Sproul said in one of his last books 'Everyone is a theologian and everything is theology.' Peter now gives us a theological reason to be in submission in the last part of I Peter 5:5 which is because "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*" How do I know He gives grace to the humble? It is because you wouldn't be humble if grace hadn't brought you there to begin with. We start off with pride and there is none who seek Him, no not one.

When God bring you to Christ and breaks your heart He brings humility. Now he says oh yeah have that humility to Christ toward your elders and toward one another. That is how He wants us to live. Some translations use the word resist in place of oppose and both are good translations for the word in the original language is a military term that means 'a raid in marshal formation.' Can you imagine coming up to a battle and seeing this formidable force, a raid, against you? Whenever we decide to live with arrogance, God is a raid against us. It is God Himself who will resist you and who do you think will win?

I love the story about Teddy Roosevelt with all that was happening in the Spanish American War. He went out for a walk one night with a chaplain as they were listening to all that was going on around them and they looked up in the sky and saw stars and stars and stars. He said to him 'Do you know how far away they are? Do you know how big they are?' Teddy was telling the chaplain all about them and then said 'Look how glorious, massive, wonderful and big that sky is and then look at us. What are we compared to that? Yet the God who spoke and flung them out is the God who made us in His image and gave His Son to save us.'

I want Him a raid for me, not against me, by His grace. I don't want to position myself for Him to be a raid against me in my arrogance, pride, individualism, autonomy, and my cynicism. I want to surrender to Him and evidence it by my submission with humility with God's people to one another, in His church and in relationships. The amazing thing is that the God who made these stars and shows us who we are is the same God who has given His Son in

order to redeem us from all that is a raid against us to destroy us through His redeeming work in Jesus Christ.

So here is the command and the takeaway for this study. Here is the tenth Gospel command to go with the other nine. Intentionally and continually clothe yourself with humility, the God-given virtue which employs and enjoys the intimate and enduring blessings of God's grace and mutual submission. Everything that happens in your salvation God did for you on His own alone. He gave you a new record, a new heart, a new family, a new life and a new home but the living of your life He tells us to work out what He is working in so you can't do it without His strength. You need to be one hundred percent dependent on Him and a hundred percent committed to living out what He is putting in.

Philippians 2:12–13 says *[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* We take membership vows at our church that say in humble reliance upon Divine grace and the power of the Holy Spirit I will endeavor... The Christian life and dependence upon the grace of God is not evidenced by passivity but by God-dependent activity.

Snap on the smock of servanthood and the mentality of servanthood, instead of arrogance. God draws near to those who draw near to Him (Psalm 145:18). He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). You don't get humility on your own for it has to be by His power so clothe yourself with humility and you will employ and enjoy His intimate blessings. What does it look like when you clothe yourself with humility? I will show you a couple of things.

One is you become a servant. You have a servant's heart. You don't think 'what are people doing for me?' but for Christ you begin to seek what you can do for others. You have a learner's mind. Those who have humility are verbafores, for they just eat knowledge. They can't get enough of it. They want to learn the Word of God. They have a doxological life. Life is about God and not themselves. I Corinthians 10:31 says *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Who is the greatest man who ever lived? According to Jesus it was John the Baptist. Jesus says in Luke 7:28, *[28] "I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John (the Baptist). Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."* What was the greatness of John the Baptist? Here is the greatness. John the Baptist said in John 3:30, *[30] He must increase, but I must decrease.* Many of us are ready to say 'He must increase' but are we ready to say 'I must decrease'? Humility of mind is the precious gift of God in the life of a believer.

Why do we do it? There is a severe threat in the Bible. God is a raid in marshal formation against the proud, but there is a glorious promise for He gives grace, abundantly, marvelously and gloriously to the humble who His grace has already humbled. This God-given virtue is a glorious promise that is found in Jesus Christ.

I told you I would give you two events in Peter's life that perhaps he had in mind as he was writing this part of the epistle. I think the other event is when Peter came to a Passover Supper and as he is sitting there Jesus gets up and clothes Himself with a towel of a servant. He kneels to wash the Disciples feet. Here is what Peter said in John 13:6–9, *[6] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" [7] Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." [8] Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." [9] Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"*

We are told in Philippians 2:5–8, [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* [6] *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* [7] *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Jesus was submissive and subjected to the Father's will to save us by the virtue of humbling Himself in His Incarnation and His crucifixion and then God exalted Him. We see this in the following verse of Philippians 2:9–11 which says [9] *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,* [10] *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* [11] *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

When I graduated from seminary and I walked across that platform the President of the seminary gave me two things – one was a diploma and the other a towel. He told me to hang the diploma on the wall but he showed me the towel and said ‘but this is how you minister. Go wash feet for that’s what you’re qualified and privileged to do.’ Clothe yourself with humility for the marvelous and by the marvelous grace of Jesus. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer. I love God’s grace for it’s relentless, glorious, marvelous and it grants us a right perspective of ourselves so we can clothe ourselves. Put on the accoutrements that allow us to submit ourselves, serve and tells the world our Lord is our life. May we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, knowing He is opposed to the proud but He gives marvelous grace to the humble. Perhaps you want to humble yourself and come to Christ as Lord and Savior please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you. Perhaps you have already accepted as your Lord and Savior but you would like to pray with someone about learning how to humble yourself before the Lord, please call us as well for we would love to pray with you about that and help you in your walk with Him. Father, with joy help us adopt the posture of a servant, a learner and living life to the glory of God. As Peter has told us, clothe yourself all of you with the humility of mind that lifts us praise and glory to God and gives us the joy of learning, serving and praising Him forever, for I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

HUMILITY AND UNITY

Who? – What? – How? – Why?

An Overview

A Closer View

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Gospel Command #10

Intentionally and continually clothe yourself with humility, the God-given virtue which employs and enjoys the intimate and enduring blessings of God’s grace and mutual submission.