



Humility Abounding

Series: Pursuing Christ in a Pagan World

1 Peter 5:5

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Introduction and Transition (v. 5a)

As we get into this text this morning, we need to remember what Peter was saying to us last week. Peter was calling elders to be faithful shepherds of the flock especially in the midst of rising persecution. Faithful churches were sure to face persecution for the sake of Christ and now was not the time for elders to seek to hide or to protect themselves, but instead for them to faithfully serve and shepherd the flock of God which God Himself had entrusted to them. Peter called the elders to feed the flock, to tend to their spiritual and physical needs, to do it not out of a sense of obligation, but willingly and out of love for the flock and for God. Moreover the faithful shepherd was to do this not for shameful gain, but eagerly, willing to sacrifice for the flock, and not abusing their authority, but serving as an example of godliness. And it is in that light that Peter is going to give an admonition to those who are younger in Christ and use that as a transition to speak of the virtue of humility. So look at the first half of verse 5 with me. Peter writes:

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Now I want you to see what Peter is doing here. Having set forth the responsibilities of the church elders, and having exhorted them at length to shepherd the flock of God faithfully – and that’s the key word here – faithfully, he is now going to address the flock and call them to submission to faithful elders and he does it by using the younger members as his example group. In other words, Peter singles out the younger group to instruct the entire flock. When Peter singles out the younger and tells them to be subject to the elders, he is not speaking necessarily of age as much as he is of spiritual maturity. The younger believers, the younger in Christ, have a tendency to need to be reminded to submit to leadership in the church. Those who are younger in the faith, in general, have the tendency to be impatient, to think they know more than they really do, to question leadership decisions and authority, to do their own thing. And so Peter is using them as representative of the whole church and saying to them: Be subject, follow the leadership of your elders. What does this mean? Does it mean that others are free to rebel against the elders? No, it is the exact opposite. If those who are most likely to be rebellious to godly authority are commanded to be subject to the elders, then it follows that all others are to be subject as well. The flock should follow faithful elders. Again that word “faithful” is the key. If

the elders go against a clear principle of Scripture, then the flock is responsible to address them with Scripture. An elder that violates Scripture should be cast from that office. But faithful shepherds who lead according to the Word of God should be faithfully submitted to in their role as elder.

What does faithful submission to the leadership of godly elders look like? First, it means showing respect and honor to elders and to their office. Second, it means a willingness to submit to their biblical instruction and counsel. Third, it means a willingness to follow their leadership as they follow Christ. Fourth, it means to receive both their encouragement and exhortation as well as their admonition and reproof. Fifth, it means to be determined to be a source of joy to them as we grow in the Lord and not a source of grief.

This sort of submission takes real humility and Peter knows that. That is why he uses this admonition to be subject to the elders as a springboard to talk about the heart of his message over these next few verses -- the vital necessity of humility. Make sure that we understand that Peter is speaking to those redeemed by faith in the Son of the Living God and His sacrifice on the cross to purchase a blood-bought, God-fearing, Christ-exalting, Spirit-instructed people of God, a faith springing from a sovereignly regenerated heart. This call to humility, just as the call to submission before it, is to the children of God. Notice that first Peter speaks of humility in the body of Christ. Look at the last half of verse 5 with me.

Humility in the body of Christ (v.5b) Peter writes: Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1Pe 5:5) Peter says "Clothe yourselves" – it is a word that means to tie on the apron like a servant, to put on the clothing of a servant. Humility is not something we put on as an external show, but is a characteristic of a grace-filled heart. You know where Peter is getting this picture from. He is thinking back to that amazing moment in the Upper Room that John records for us in John 13. (Joh 13:1-15) This picture of the humility of Christ is clear in Peter's mind when he writes these words.

What is humility?

It is not merely self-forgetfulness. In John 13, Jesus knew who He was and where He was going. Humility, instead, is the attitude, the bent and tendency of our hearts to put others before ourselves, to seek to serve others selflessly without acclaim, to think of the needs of others above our own, to honor one another in words and deeds without looking for benefit for ourselves, to lovingly and graciously serve others, to deal with one another in grace and making little of oneself. Maybe the best definition of humility is found in Phil 2:3-4: (Php 2:3-4)

Paul tells us that there are two things that war against humility, against humble, loving, gracious service of our brothers and sisters in Christ, two things that war against the unity that comes from mutual humility – rivalry and conceit. That word rivalry is a word that simply means selfish ambition. It is used to describe someone who strives to advance himself by using flattery, deceit, false accusation, contentiousness, or any other fleshly tactic to gain personal advantage or position. It is basically building yourself up as you tear someone else down. The word conceit is word that means empty glory. It connotes self-worship, an overinflated self-image, and exaggerated self-view. Paul would tell us to cast off rivalry and conceit in the body of Christ. Peter tells us: Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. How do we do that? How do we clothe ourselves in humility? Understand that humility is not something that you can labor for. It is not the result of determined effort and trying to be more humble. That is not the source of humility. Okay so,

What is its source?

Well, beloved, the fountainhead, the wellspring, the source of humility is a deep understanding of the profound nature of God's grace to us. Beloved, Christ loved us and died for us and forgave us and accepted us and justified us and gave us eternal life and made us heirs of the world when he owed us nothing. He treated us as worthy of his selfless service, when we were not worthy of anything but his judgment. He took thought not only for his own interests but for ours. He honored us when we were unworthy. (Rom 5:6-10)

Humility and the willingness to honor and serve others with our words and deeds springs forth from a heart that is gripped by the grace of God in Christ toward us. When we are overwhelmed by God's grace: His saving grace in the cross and His sustaining and forgiving and empowering grace for our sanctification in the present and future grace promised for eternity – when we are overwhelmed and amazed by the grace of God, we will be stunned into humble love and service toward God and toward our brothers and sisters in Christ who are equally recipients of God's grace.

But if we do not stay close to the cross, if you're not constantly surveying the wondrous cross, if you're not continually amazed at Christ's humility to suffer and bleed and die in your place, if you're not amazed by the wonder of His love, amazed by the wonder of His grace, you will not be able to combat pride in your life. Staying by the cross is the greatest weapon that the Christian has against pride. (Eph 2:8-9)

We are all equal at the foot of the cross. All equally in need of God's grace, His mercy, and His love – all equally unworthy. (1Co 1:28-31)

Humility can only survive and grow in the presence of God and in the atmosphere of the cross and the gospel. Reminding ourselves daily that we do not deserve the riches of God's grace, yet

reminding ourselves of His love and kindness and mercy to us makes us will liberate our souls to experience and enjoy the fullness of God's underserved love to us in Christ, and will make us love and serve other people out of a deep humility and gratitude toward God. It is the realization of God's incredible, incalculable grace to us that drives us to humility and love toward one another in the body of Christ. God is determined to have this spirit of humility present in His faithful church. That is why Peter says:

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Literally what that says is: God sets Himself in battle array against the proud; He sets Himself in battle order against the proud. Why does God set Himself against the proud? Why does God hate pride in His people? There are many reasons. A proud man is a self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-satisfied man. (Hos 13:4-6) A proud man sees himself as above instruction. (Jer 13:9-10) He is stiff-necked. When the people of Israel grew impatient with Moses and God as they met on Sinai and made the golden calf, God said to Moses: (Exo 32:8-9) This nation who had nothing of which to be proud, in their pride and arrogance turned away from God and rejected the right and authority of God to rule. A proud man or woman steals glory from God, taking credit for what only God can do. The best illustration of this is in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. (Dan 4:29-37) A proud man loves being made much of and loves adulation. That was the case of the Pharisees. (Mat 23:5-7) A proud man trusts in himself and not in God. A proud man or woman cannot humble himself or herself and trust God because trusting in God, in their eyes, is a sign of weakness. But above all, a proud man or woman denies the very heart of the gospel and shows a lack of understanding of grace by Christ's people are saved and gospel that he professes. Pride in a believer greatly miscalculates the wickedness of the sin from which he was delivered, deeply undervalues the infinite price of his redemption – the blood of Christ, grievously underestimates the thanksgiving he owes to God for His saving mercies, and demonstrates that lacks understanding of the character of Christ. That kind of pride destroys the unity of the fellowship of believers and God hates that. Pride brings strife, it tears at the fabric of unity and mutual submission and gracious service. It exalts itself and magnifies itself, it calls attention to itself and so obscures Christ and brings division as a result. Don't forget the context of what Peter is telling us. He is calling for humility in the midst of persecution and trial and there is a reason.

God is concerned that in the midst of persecution, in the midst of rejection, in the midst of trial for the sake of Christ that His church be an oasis of grace. God means for His church in the midst of an ungodly and hate filled world to be an oasis of grace. It can only be an oasis of grace, a place of grace and of joy and of spiritual renewal and safety if it is a church that is filled with humble hearts who delight in the grace of God given freely and abundantly to His people. It can only be an oasis of grace if we have the same heart of Christ. Just as He said to His disciples: (Mar 10:42-45)

This will only be an oasis of grace if it is a church that is filled with people who are willing to lay their lives down for the sake of Christ and for the sake of their brothers and sisters in Christ. God is concerned that grace overflow in His church. So within the body of Christ, we must clothe ourselves, all of us, in humility toward one another so that God may pour grace upon grace upon grace upon us! Beloved the promise of God is that in a fellowship that is marked by humility, there will be the overwhelming outpouring of God's grace, sweet, sustaining, sufficient, abundant grace -- the free flow of God's grace to His people and through His people to one another. Do you want a grace-filled church? Then we must be a people who are marked by humility, a people who dwell near the cross, and who delight in and who know the depth of God's saving grace toward us and a grace filled church is not a nebulous concept.

How is grace-centered humility manifested in the oasis of grace?

Grace-centered, Christ-exalting humility is clearly and unmistakably manifested in the reality of the one-another commandments given in Scripture being present in a church. Humility is shown when we love one another, be at peace with one another, show hospitality to one another, honor one another, do not judge one another, receive one another with joy, do not fight with one another, serve one another, do not envy one another, admonish one another, greet one another, care for one another, bear the burdens of one another, forgive one another, be kind to one another, submit to one another, do not lie to one another, encourage one another to good works, comfort one another, concern yourself with the interests of others, do not hate one another, do not speak evil of one another, pray for one another, be like-minded toward one another, do not hold a grudge against one another, highly esteem one another, have fellowship with one another, edify one another, teach one another, do good to one another, exhort one another, and minister spiritual gifts to one another because we understand that we are members one of another. That is one long run-on sentence but that is what humility manifested in the body of Christ looks like. But it is not merely doing unto others that is the idea here. Some of us need to here that It is as well, receiving those graces from others. Being served by others in the name of Christ. But I suspect for most of us, the great challenge is this – it is serving others freely without keeping score on how you have been served. Humility is the root of all of those things, all of those Christian graces. It is essential to the glory of God being seen in His church.

How does this become reality?

It is easy for us to say, "People in the church need to be more humble, as a church we need to pursue humility..." But we are the church, you and I together. We are not talking about some faceless, nameless mass that needs to be more humble. We are talking about you and me. How does this beautiful picture of grace showing humility become a reality in the body of Christ? These expressions of humility need to be seen in our homes, in our friendships, in our

ministry service. A grace filled church springs forth from homes and friendships and marriages and relationships rooted in the rich soil of true humility. To humble ourselves like this, to really lay down our lives, to truly requires Christ to even more greatly transform us. It requires a dying to ourselves and greater astonishment and awe at the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for His church. As I said before, this is not something that we can try harder and develop. It is not some skill that we can perfect. To act in a humble way and not be truly poor in Spirit is to be a hypocrite. Humility is heart work that can only be accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit making Christ more and more beautiful in our eyes. It is something that God must do in us and He will if we will mediate deeply and faithfully and honestly on the depth of His grace and mercy to us. Thankfully this kind of humility is fully personified in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why earlier in this message I quoted from Philippians 2. Let's close by looking at the context of the those couple of verses...(Php 2:3-11)

In order for the Father's redemptive plan to be accomplished Christ had to lay aside the rights to His glory as God and He freely and willingly did so. He did not count equality with God something to be grasped – he did not have to be begged or cajoled or stroked or coaxed – He did it. The Lord of Life, the Great I Am took on flesh, was humiliated and suffered for our souls and in due time was exalted by God and Paul is saying that selflessness by the glorious Son of God should serve to humble us and create within us a profoundly thankful and trusting heart, a humble heart.

Oh beloved, I pray that we would be so freshly affected by God's grace to us, freshly and continually amazed at His graciousness to us so that we might in humility, be conduit of grace to one another as we should. May we behold Christ and then live as He lived.

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