

A HUMBLE PEOPLE

1 Peter 5:5-7

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Peter began this final chapter with a word for the leadership of the church, **“Shepherd the flock of God among you” (v. 2)**. The shepherd’s instruction, guidance, protection and care would be vital in the days that lie ahead for these who would face even greater suffering for their identification with Christ. Peter’s reasoning here as to how the flock of God should function provides the framework for the church’s organization as well as for its body life. As God’s undershepherds, who Peter calls elders, as they faithfully serve their Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and lead their flock to Him, then those who are truly their sheep and His will demonstrate it as they joyfully follow their undershepherds instruction and example. Peter’s concern here is to convey the truth that God’s sheep need faithful shepherds. Sheep need to be shepherded.

Having spoken directly to the shepherds, Peter concludes the letter with some words of counsel to help them all live with integrity in their sufferings. The shepherd/sheep metaphor serves as reminder to these of their witness both in the church and in the world. Next week we will see how this plays out in the world, a world that follows that god of this age. The verses we look at this morning serve as a transition from elders and leadership to the entire church. Peter addresses what following their shepherds entails in the church and suggests that it begins and ends with *humility*.

It is part of our fallen nature to be proud. Left to ourselves, we would always be the center of a universe that revolves around three persons: me, myself, and I. We lean towards trust in self and dependence on our own resources so that when from our perspective we succeed in this life, we boast. While we might profess to be different, we often live according to the words of the Mac Davis song:

Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble when you’re perfect in every way
Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble, but I’m doin’ the best that I can.

Davis was no theologian but he did get one thing right: Because of our pride, it is hard to be humble. We are stubborn and rebellious to the core of our being apart from a work of God in our lives. Peter certainly understood this. We have the written word of his experiences with our Lord that we know often reflects our own self-centeredness and self-reliance. When the heat was turned up, Peter’s pride was exposed and he denied Christ. But Christ intervened, and Peter was humbled. And it is the humbled Peter that gives us these words concerning *how those who are being shepherded well should respond*.

1. Respect for elders (v. 5a)

Peter began, **“You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders.”** How do you react in your mind and heart to these words? Your initial reaction is a true test of humility. Let’s face it, **“be subject”** to anyone is at the very least irritating to our pride. Submission does not fit with our fallen desire to be number one. That is why this theme of submission is prevalent in this letter (2:13,18; 3:1,5). Peter understood submission as the responsibility of believers to those in positions of authority. The word basically means “to place under; to subordinate,” and is a synonym to the verb *to obey*.

Therefore, Peter says, **“You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders.”**
(INTERPRETATION)

Younger men/older men (possible, but not likely because of “likewise”)

Young people may tend to be more independent and less likely to submit to those in authority. Those who are younger lack maturity in some areas and tend to rebel; they are sitting lambs for preying wolves.

The purpose is not to encourage obedience no matter what leaders might say. As we saw in Peter’s other teaching on submission, if one is led to go against God’s Word and will, they should not follow. The same is true here. If an elder leads in a way that disregards God’s moral standards or violates the gospel in any way, then they should not be followed.

Nor does Peter suggest that leaders are exempt from accountability before the congregation. Peter had just demonstrated how they were not to lead: slothfully, greedily, or pridefully. They are not to serve as dictators but are to serve those under their charge and prove to be examples to the flock. Again note the **“likewise.”** Only as undershepherds faithfully fulfill their role, submitting to the Chief Shepherd, then the sheep should follow.

Submission, properly understood, grows from godly humility.

2. Concern for others (v. 5b)

At the same time, there is a safeguard of humility that is to clothe the flock, **“And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.”** This instruction is not just for members of the congregation but for elders as well. The term **“clothe”** refers to a slave tying on an apron before going about his work. The apron was a sign of the humble position of the slave. So Peter reminds the entire church, shepherds and sheep, that humility is to be a mark of the church, something that is to be put on or girded by the entire body.

Philippians 2:3-4 – ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:5-8 – ⁵ 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 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Clothe in humility – Jesus in John 13:1-17

John 13:4-5 – ⁴ laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. ⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

John 13:12-17 – ¹² When He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. ¹⁴ If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

WARNING: GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD

PROMISE: BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Proverbs 3:33-35 – ³³ The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous. ³⁴ Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted. ³⁵ The wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor.

PRIDE attempts to be in control.

PRIDE is thinking more highly of yourself than you ought.

PRIDE is concerned only with self.

Luke 18:9-14 – ⁹ And He also told this parable to some people *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Those who think more highly of themselves than they ought become judgmental.

Luke 6:41-42 – ^{41,2} “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.” HUMBLE YOURSELF!

3. Dependence upon God (5:6-7)

COMMAND: Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God

PROMISE: that He may exalt you at the proper time.

When Peter said they are to humble themselves “**under the mighty hand of God**” he used an expression that is associated particularly with God's delivering Israel out of Egypt. His thought

is that just as the Lord delivered His people, so He would deliver them from the persecution they faced in Asia Minor. REMINDER: God's ways are not our ways.

Israelites – griped and grumbled

The image of the mighty hand emphasizes the power of God especially as it relates to His covenant relations with His people. His covenant name is “Yahweh,” literally, “I am; I will be what I will be for My people.” We can be assured that He will make good on His promise because He is the all-powerful One. We can depend on Him!

Then the promise associated with obedience to the command: Those who submit themselves to God, the Lord will honor and exalt in due time. This theme can be traced back to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 23:12, “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” The verse promises exaltation **“at the proper time.”** Peter does not promise vindication and exaltation in this life but in a time that is suitable to His purposes particularly in relation to His overall goal of redemption. This then would be in view of the Lord's return, that day when the believer will be exalted—if they have truly demonstrated humility that is borne out of a regenerate heart.

Then v. 7 – FLOWS FROM HUMILITY

ANXIOUSNESS manifests itself when control is lost.

ANXIOUSNESS comes from thinking too highly of man or a situation.

ANXIOUSNESS lacks concern for God or others.

Fear man rather than God – people and circumstances are big and God is small.

Little faith

Humble people realize their own insufficiency in dealing with the great trials of life; therefore, they will instinctively cast their burdens on the Lord and TRUST HIM.

Psalm 55:22-23 – ²² Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. ²³ But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.

Conclusion – HUMILITY marked by:

- 1. Willingness to submit to authority**
- 2. Willingness to serve others (+ cutting grass; – correction and rebuke)**
- 3. Willingness to receive constructive criticism (our longing to always be right is PRIDE!)**
- 4. Willingness to accept God's will**