

5You 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.

6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 11To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. 14Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

This little section is Peter's closing statements of encouragement and counsel to a group of christians who are living in times of duress.

We've set the context many times now. Nero burns Rome. And the christians who are already living apart from the world and who seem distant and somehow in opposition to the world around them, are blamed for all of the chaos and problems.

It's their fault. A **Them and us** attitude is held by the world around them. They started the fires. They talk about fire all the time. They burned down Rome. They are to blame. They are the haters. They hate our religion and they are the source of trouble.

And so a great persecution arose against christians. Loss of public life. Loss of a voice in the public marketplace. Loss of property, and sometimes even, loss of life . . . in this world.

Over and over Peter draws from ideas that seem to reach directly to the Sermon on the Mount. *Blessed are you when men revile you and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, for great is your reward in heaven.*

This life is 5 minutes long. We all live as if this is all there is. But this book reminds us over and over that our place in eternity with Christ and the Father far surpasses the here and now.

Suffering here for a short time for His names sake will equal an impossible harvest of glory in the next life. That has been Peter's theme throughout the letter.

Just before Christmas overcame us we looked at Peter's final words to the shepherds to come along side the sheep and help them in their trouble. Care, feeding of the Word, protection, encouragement, all of those things.

And Peter leads into this final section with a necessary word to a specific group. Younger men. *5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders;*

This is something built into fallen human nature. This constant need for the younger men to challenge and displace the older men who are in leadership.

It usually goes something like this. The old men don't get it. Their so called wisdom and bent towards conservatism is holding us back. We can't move forward until we remove and replace them. We need fresh ideas. The air is stale.

I recall listening to a young pastor who is sort of famous. Some of you would recognize his name, but I won't give it. He was speaking on a panel of men about music in the church, and he said something along the lines of how the old men who grate against the new music, that generation just needs to die off. And I haven't heard a word he's said ever since then.

In our world the parallels are striking. The problem is as old as time and the fall. Nothing new under the sun. And not a few times, there is truth to what the challengers are saying.

It is to be different in God's household. God raises up and calls His elders. His shepherds. And Peter just simply says, you young guys need to chill out and place yourselves under the authority of older men that God has graciously given as gifts to His household.

And the root cause is that same one that is as old as time and the fall. The natural tendency for the young to want to displace the old and be in charge is based in the root problem of the very fall itself in the garden of God.

Pride. Remember, in Isaiah 14:13 "*But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'* I will, I will, I will, I will, I will,

It was this very pride that caused Adam and Eve to sin against God. A false promise that they would be like Him. He hadn't told them the truth. There was more that they could have. If they disobeyed His voice, His commands. And so that same pride that caused Satan to be cast out, also caused the human race to be cast out of His presence.

So it's no small thing that Peter brings up this enormous topic. Pride. It is root cause analysis for most of what ails us. And here Peter uses this one topic of the younger men submitting humbly to the older men to launch this great axiomatic truth that is all encompassing for every one of us.

5You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with (gird on, put on like clothing) humility toward one another,

Peter says, this command isn't just for 2 groups of men. This is for

every single person in God's household. We are all to clothe ourselves with a true humility.

Peter simply singles out the most difficult situation, young men bucking against elder men, and the rest after that one, is relatively easy. *all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,*

Consider yourselves brethren. We are a group of nobody's who meet in a house not our own. We listen and do our best to sing along with canned music. We don't possess any accompanists. We have no say about this property we meet in, it isn't ours. You have a pastor who has absolutely nothing this world would recognize as necessary. No formal schooling. No letters. No ordination. No authority with the state to perform weddings or funerals.

Perhaps that's why this little struggling church doesn't seem to struggle with Peter's command here. I don't know of a single quarrel. Nothing. Our little quarterly board meetings are the height of boring. No one is struggling to have their way over someone else. We do a minimum of necessary business and the overriding concern always seems to be, let's finish up so these folks can go to bed. They have to get up early tomorrow.

There's a certain blessing in that lofty position of being at the very bottom. I commend you all. And I am most thankful and grateful to be honored by you to be in this pulpit *at all*. We are a humble lot. We almost aren't. And yet, week after week I'm always surprised. We plod forward, most humbly.

and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,

We think of each other as more important than ourselves. Why is that good. When the world around us says being humble is a negative thing. We should be clawing our way to the top. Using others to get there, then casting them aside. Collateral damage is acceptable in order to be number one.

God's family doesn't act like the world that surrounds it. And Peter will

give us an axiomatic truth that is our reason.

And here Peter reaches into the old testament and combines a couple of passages;

Psalm 138:6

For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly, But the haughty He knows from afar.

Proverbs 3:34

Though He scoffs at the scoffers, Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.

And listen to Ezekiel 26. A time will come when the tables will be turned and the powerful and the haughty in this life will tremble before their maker.

Ezekiel 26:16

"Then all the princes of the sea will go down from their thrones, remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble every moment and be appalled at you.

Peter simply condenses these ideas into a short axiom. *for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.*

God is at war with proud people and He graciously receives humble folk who seek His grace.

Proud people do not need grace. We see that from beginning to end in the gospels. God comes to earth and a war ensues. With who? Proud people. People who are good enough because of their own righteousness. Their own merit.

And just here we stop for a comparison of every religious system known to men and ask one simple question. And just to make it more easily understood, we'll ask it as if God were doing the asking.

This life is over and God says to every soul of every man, why should I

let you into my heaven. What is it that makes a fallen sinful human, fit for heaven. Fit to be in God's presence.

And there's going to be 2 answers, 2 categories. The Mormons will say, why, we lived righteously. On a scale of 1 - 10 we were all 8's or 9's while most of these christians are lousy 5, and 6's and occasionally a 7 or two. We lived better. Our righteous lives will gain us access.

And sadly, our catholic brothers and sisters will use a lot of words like faith and grace but their fallback will be their meritorious works they added to that so-called faith and so-called grace. Grace plus works. Faith plus merit. That's what gives access to God.

We could go on and on and make every single religion on the planet mad at us saying the same thing. We were righteous. We did our best to keep God's laws. We tithed mint and dill and cumin.

In every case, what you have is human pride offering human generated good works. Every religion in the world. Even humanistic secularism that denies the existence of God. Even they have a weird twisted concoction of righteous behaviour. A code of politically correct righteousness based in all their new rules they're making up even as we speak.

Sleep with whoever you want, as long as it's consensual and the person is not a child, and if somehow in some of the match up's, someone gets pregnant, kill it. Kill the baby. That's righteousness according to the world. That's their code.

Human pride is always always always at the forefront of every righteous system of behaviour. All of it, with all of the different names and labels is the religion of human achievement.

And then there's the other little group. And God says why should I let you into my heaven, and they will say something like this;

We read your book, your laws, and we were made as bankrupts. We were without hope to answer back. Hopeless bankrupts, and we did the

only thing we could do, we cried out for mercy. We agreed with the debt. WE couldn't pay. Our only hope is mercy. Forgiveness.

And God who responds to the humble says, not only will I forgive you, but I will send my Son to pay that debt, and His righteousness, which is spotless and perfect, I will give to you. He will remove our filthy garments and clothe us with a righteousness not our own. And then He will invite us into the feast. We will be a bride for His Son.

Unimaginable. Shocking. And all of that teeters on this word pride.

for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

I looked up that word opposed to see if I could get a little deeper into this most important concept.

It's an ancient military term. And it has most to do with how you array your forces of resistance so that your enemy cannot penetrate your position.

That's why many of the translators used the word resists. God resists the proud.

Proud people are trying to penetrate heaven with all of their proud human achievement and human generated righteousness and God is resisting the onslaught. They will not penetrate His heaven. They will not stand in His presence. Their self generated righteousness is sewage to God.

Isaiah 64:6 We've been there many times. *6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;*

This is the proud man standing before God with all of his human generated righteousness. He's like a man who swims against the current, up the sewer, he swims and swims and swims and then he reaches the portals of heaven and says, aren't you pleased with this

righteousness of my own that I'm clothed in.

The religion of human achievement. Pride. As opposed to the religion of divine accomplishment, where Christ pays the debt of the bankrupt and then graciously clothes him in **His** glorious righteousness.

6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Therefore. Since we've established that God loathes the proud of this world. He resists them. What does that mean for most christians who have trod the path of this world.

Usually, for most times and most places if you go back and study the church's long legacy, it means that this world is going to reject you as worthless baggage, at best, and enemies at worst.

In the case of these saints, history tells us they were hated and persecuted. Blamed for problems they did not cause. Seperate from the commonwealth of acceptable society for the most part.

Paul named it. *Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day*

We're the garbage. The scum. Christians are pond scum. Bottom feeders.

Peter says **therefore**, therefore what? *6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,*

Accept it, humbly. You are where you are because a sovereign God has allowed and designated that for you. You are under the mighty hand of God. If this world despises you, so be it. It despised Jesus before you. That's actually an easy place to be.

Far more difficult would be to be a christian that the world is in love with. A christian who has the world singing his praises is in a tough

spot. Keith and Kristin Getty are always walking on a tightrope it seems to me. Easier to just be pond scum, like Paul and Peter.

Every year I go to that conference at Grace Community Church. And I've been to other conferences also. The huge Together 4 the Gospel conferences in Louisville. I got to go twice.

But the Shepherds Conference at Grace is unique among all other christian conferences.

Just to give you an idea of why; in several places along some walls there are shoe shine stations like you used to see at train stations in the south. Anyone remember those. Old black men would shine your shoes for half a buck, and you'd be on your way.

That has become horrendously politically incorrect in our generation. It's a horrifying thing now that someone would shine someone else's shoes, even for the money involved. The old black men who couldn't get jobs serving the white passengers in the fancy train cars could shine shoes for a few pennies.

At the Shepherds conference there are men who are anxious to shine my shoes . . . for free. And it comes directly from John 13 where the disciples all were in the upper room and there was no one, no slaves present, to wash their feet.

And that same word we saw where Peter says *and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another* Literally gird on humility. The slave who washed feet would gird on an apron to enable him to not totally get his own clothes all soiled and filthy while he washed the dirt off others feet.

That would be the idea in the hearers minds. You gird on humility like that slave girds on that apron in order to wash feet. And that's what Jesus did in John 13. He set aside His garment and he girded on an apron like thing. And you use that apron to wipe the dust off the feet. You get them wet and you dry them off and remove the dust, using that apron or towel you're wearing.

Those young men at that conference are doing that same thing. You sit in that shoe shine chair and those young guys, most of them seminary students at the Master's Seminary, they'll clean and polish your shoes just like slaves and old black men used to do. And they do it for free.

Meanwhile, there's a literal army of beautiful women of all ages, men too, and their job is to set up these tables full of snacks. Fresh fruit and sweet rolls and orange juice and coffee. Anything you can imagine. But it's not enough to set that stuff out.

They want to serve you, so as the line goes along in front of the tables, these ladies are graciously putting the fruits and veggies and sweet rolls on your plate and pouring you coffee.

It's the only conference where the entire hosting church comes together to gird on humility and serve the folks who attend. And it's a big deal for them. They have to sign up and go through training. It's all wonderfully organized.

And like I said, compared to other christian conferences, where you're lucky to get a bottle of water out of a machine for 3 bucks, there's nothing else anywhere quite like it. It's unique. That's why I always sign up the first day that it becomes available and pay my fee to have a place.

And of course, the teaching is like the serving. There's nothing else anywhere that compares.

6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time

A day is coming when everything is going to be different. When Jesus comes charging out of heaven on a white horse with 10 thousands of His saints and takes back this world.

Satan will be locked up and evil will be crushed. And we will be exalted, with Christ. We have a glorious future, with our King, on this

earth, co-reigning with Him. Peter looks beyond the difficulties of the moment to the glories of our future. That's the proper time for exaltation.

I do think there is a reciprocal relationship. The folks who girded on humility here in ways that seem above and beyond, will also enjoy the exaltation later in a greater reward.

Those seminary students get this. They understand. Shine dirty nasty shoes on men that aren't half as smart and capable as you are, **now**, for a multiplied reward **later**. They're no dummies. They believe this verse, and they act on it.

And finally verse 7 is a precious promise to us. *7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

Again, we need to go back to the original context and original hearers because frankly, by comparison, our experience is pretty wimpy.

The evangelical church in 2018 in America has a hard time relating to what Peter's really saying here. These folks were under real duress. Real distress. Open persecution. Loss of property. Loss of citizenship. Loss of family, and sometimes, loss of life.

It was a horrendous time to be a christian. So when Peter says humble yourselves under the might hand of God; they had a much different idea of the mighty crushing sovereign hand of God allowing unimaginable to us, pressure on them.

We're wimps by comparison. Some little pressure or test comes and we think we're really suffering under the mighty sovereign hand of God. These folks actually were.

And by comparison this promise was of higher value to them because they were under much more pressure.

We look at these words and say, oh isn't that nice. *casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.* I can cast my cares on Him

because it says He cares for me.

These are words we need to commit to memory. This life does have it's cares, it's pressures. We should store these words away for when they really do come. Right now, we're not really enduring anything like these christians in Peter's day were enduring.

When those days do come, and some here have been through some difficulty recently, when the mighty hand of God seems to be crushing down on us, this is our relief valve. We cast our cares, our sorrows, our heartbreak, our fears, on Him. He will bear them up and make a path forward, no matter what the pressure, He doesn't require us to walk in that path alone.

We'll close this morning with some verses from Psalm 46. And I would preface these words by saying, this isn't hyperbole. This day will come when the things described here literally happen on this earth.

Unimaginable things. Beyond our thoughts or understanding. But even in this impossible scenario, God says, Cast your cares upon Him, for He careth for you. Listen to the Psalmist;

*1 God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.*

*2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;*

*3 Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.*

*4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.*

*5 God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.*

6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;

He raised His voice, the earth melted.

*7The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

That day is coming. Nothing we're going to endure, I don't think, will compare with this day. And yet, our troubles and those folks trouble, nothing is so big that God will not be able to carry us through.

Cast all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you.