# 1 Peter 5:5-7 Humility for the Flock July 18, 2010

# Text Diagram

5 Likewise

you younger people,

**submit** yourselves to your elders.

Yes, all of you

be **submissive** to one another,

and be clothed with **humility**, for

*God resists the proud,*

*but gives grace to the* ***humble****.*

6 Therefore **humble** yourselves

under the mighty hand of God,

that He may exalt you in due time,

7 [do this by] casting all your care

upon Him,

for He cares for you.

The key terms of submission and humility rise to the top as subject matter of Peter's discourse at this point.

# 1. Humility In Relation to Your Pastor, v. 5a

The verse starts out with *likewise* which means *in the same way*. This connects the exhortation of verse 5 to verse 1. Peter dealt with leaders in the congregation earlier; now he addresses those who are not elders. The *elders* are those who are pastors. These men are generally older in terms of chronological age, and certainly “older” in spiritual maturity. The *younger* are those who are not pastors, and generally who are younger in terms of chronological age. As such, the term is basically the opposite of presbuteros, elder=pastor=overseer as we learned in 1 Peter 5:1-4.

There are pastors, and there are non-pastors. This distinction should not be pressed too far as in a laity-clergy type of arrangement, where the laity are seen as somehow second class or not ministers. Every believer is a minister of God's grace.

The younger are to *submit* which refers to subjecting or subordinating themselves to the authority placed by God. It is seen as something you do to yourself, not something that is pressed from the outside. External compulsion will never work. The idea is to willingly accept the authority of the pastors of the congregation because that is how God has set things up, and to put yourself under their ministry (Heb. 13:17).

Some people feel they cannot do this with a particular pastor and that becomes a reason for them to leave the church. You need to think long and hard if that is truly the case. If the pastor is not following the Scriptures or is disqualified in some way, then you have a case. But you MUST make sure you are not just being disrespectful and rejecting authority.

# 2. Humility in Relation to Your Fellow Church Members, v. 5b

Peter then turns to our relationship to each other. The word *submissive* is the same word as earlier in the verse. It is in the majority text, but it does not appear in the NIV or NAS or ESV because the Greek word is not in the so-called eclectic text (alternatively known as the NA, UBS, or NU text). The idea, if it were not taught here, is found elsewhere (Eph. 5:21).

Peter tells us to *clothe* ourselves with humility. This means to put on “clothing” in a figurative sense to denote how one looks from the perspective of their behavior. *Humility* is lowliness of mind; modesty, an attitude of having a low station in life. This word is usually used in the NT in a positive sense (see Col. 2:18, 23 for negative examples).

Verse 5chas as the key idea God's response to pride and humility. It forms the reason or motivation for being clothed with humility, because God does not like any other style of clothing ☺. The text is an allusion to or loose quotation of several Old Testament passages.

* Psalm 18:27
* Psalm 138:6
* Prov. 3:34, but the proverb uses mock or scorn instead of *resist*
* James 4:6

To *resist* means to oppose. One dictionary has it as “range in battle against.” God is the enemy of all proud people. Such people are arrogant or haughty. The Greek word is only used in a negative sense.

In English we can use “proud” in a positive sense sometimes as long as it is not overdrawn to a sinful extent or thought (I'm proud of my son or my church...). This would have to be somehow in relation to God, apart from a focus of your own measurement of self-worth. That is, if you are proud of your son, perhaps you are measuring your self worth by how your son does—that would be a bad kind of pride.

The idea of sinful pride is that someone has in themselves inflated thoughts of importance or brilliance or expertise in a certain area. God hates pride (Prov. 6:16-19) and so should believers (Prov. 8:13).

To be *humble* is the opposite of pride; unpretentious (not claiming importance or distinction that is unwarranted), not ostentatious (not trying to attract notice to yourself), not letting something to go your head; thinking of yourself as lower than you are.

God gives grace, unmerited and unsought favor, to those who are humble. Meekness and gentleness and related traits such as contriteness over sin are all highly prized by God. Pride resists grace, like God resists the proud. See Isaiah 57:15.

# 3. Humility in Relation to Your God, v. 6-7

# A. The Command to Be Humble, v. 6

*Humble* is the verb form of the same word we saw above in the noun and adjective form. It means to treat oneself as having low prestige or status. It is an attitude of lowliness. It is logical that if God gives grace to such people that Peter would tell us to be that way. We ought to want to be humble to receive such grace!

I hate to break the news, but you, my friend, are nothing. I say so with a little caveat—we are created in God's image and He loved us and Christ died for us, and these things give us value. But in reality, compared to God, we are dust. He is mighty. This is the basis for treating ourselves and thinking of ourselves as having low status.

The key idea is one of lifting up the humble at the right time. The opposite is implied, that God will bring down the proud as well. There are a lot of other Bible passages that teach this thought:

* Matthew 23:12
* 1 Samuel 2:7-10
* Ezekiel 21:26
* Luke 1:52
* Luke 14:8-11
* Obadiah 1:3-4

The proper path to honor from God is through humility. The result of being humble is that God will honor you at some later time. This uplifting means to enhance someone's honor, fame, position, or power. The time of exaltation is totally up to God (Matt 24:45, Luke 12:42). At his appointed time He will do it. Generally speaking, this will be after the judgment seat of Christ at which rewards will be given for faithful service.

# B. One Way to Be Humble, v. 7

This verse is very familiar. This familiarity can dull us to the meaning of the verse in its context. Let’s define some terms first.

Definition: care = anxiety, worry, burden; it is the same word as Greek translation of Ps 55:22, the thought of which is on Peter's mind. We could think of a *care* as a matter of concern, a “lot” or a situation.

Definition: cast = throw, transfer; propel something from one place to another. See Luke 19:35 of the garments thrown on the donkey that Jesus would ride, and 1 Kings 19:19 of Elijah throwing his mantle onto Elisha.

This verb *cast* is a participle form, which could pick up the imperatival flavor of the previous verb and become a stand-alone command (Greek: as an attendant circumstance participle or independent imperative). Many translations put it this way.

However, it seems to be related to the main command “to humble.” This is, in a sense, a shocking realization. I stumbled upon it while reading the text in English a few weeks ago and wondering if casting our cares was related to humility. Then I noticed this Greek construction could be translated to support that notion. Then I saw a key grammatical source (Wallace’s *Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*) had the same interpretation.

We may be accustomed to thinking about the casting verse as a stand-alone exhortation, a statement that stands on its own. But couldn’t it be the means of humbling ourselves? That is, we actually humble ourselves by throwing our anxieties upon the Lord! I believe this is the best way to understand the verse. As such, it does exhort us to cast our cares (like most translations have it). But it does far more than that—Peter enhances both ideas (humbling and casting) by connecting them together.

We demonstrate humility not *only* by self-denial or working really hard to keep arrogance and self-importance pushed down, but by giving our burdens to God because we recognize that God can help us with them and we cannot do so on our own.

On the other side of the equation, when we think about casting our burdens on the Lord, we have to think in terms of humility. Said the opposite way, we are not humble if we hold onto our cares and do not give them to God. We would be, in that case, not showing dependence on God but on ourselves. Think of your anxious thoughts. By hanging onto them, what are you saying? Are you acknowledging, “**God** will take care of this” ? Or are you saying “**I** have to figure out how to take care of this” ? To say “I can handle this” is pride, the opposite of humility! This highlights the sinful character of not actively depending on God for help.

Throwing our worries upon our God in trust that He will take care of us is not a new teaching. Consider Matt 6:19-21 and 25-34. The short explanation of this passage is that you treasure what you worry about. Anxieties show what your real motivations are. Worry shows a small measure of faith. Christ says do not worry about your life! God will care for you. Seek first the things of God and God will see to the other matters. In reality, everyone is dependent upon God; but God wishes for us to bring that dependence to conscious expression through faith in order to please Him. Any other kind of reaction (self-reliance, selfishness, etc.) is dishonoring to Him because it does not acknowledge the truth. The truth is that you cannot add an inch to your height or a day to your age by worrying. In fact, you might subtract an inch and take off a day with what anxiety does to your body!

Throwing our concerns on God also frees us from sinful reactions that we may have when we are worried about something. We may be upset with a person; we may say things we should not; we may try to “fix” the problem using means that are insufficient or even sinful. Turning ourselves into God-dependers will redirect our paths to more spiritually fruitful thoughts and activities.

What about those pesky anxious thoughts that keep coming back and bothering us? You know you have had those from time to time. They are an indication that we need to always be casting our care upon the Lord. In other words, they are an indication that we always need to be consciously dependent upon God. There is no time in life when it is humble to keep our worries and hold them back from God; there is no time in life when we should be independently-minded. We must always be God-dependent. Take the recurrent anxious thoughts as recurrent reminders of the need to depend on God all the time.

So, this care-casting is a means of humbling yourself. You humble yourself by (among other things) casting your care upon him.

You should do this because he cares for you! You have a place to put your anxious thoughts, and there is no better place to do so than in God. The phrase is interesting in the original language: “to him it is a care concerning you” which contains the ideas “you matter to him” and “you are a care to God.” Psalm 145:9 teaches this notion from the standpoint of God as creator, among many other passages (Matt 5:45). But God also has a special relationship with believers as his adopted children and knows them in an even more caring way.

No one ever cared for me like Jesus;

There's no other friend so kind as He.

No one else could take the sin and darkness from me;

O how much He cared for me.

*Living Hymns* #362

# Conclusion

Humility is obviously a very important characteristic. God wants us to exercise it in all our relationships—toward pastors, toward fellow believers, and especially toward God Himself. It reflects an eternal reality, namely that God is high and holy, and we are lowly sinners. He has, through Christ, lifted us up to Himself, but that is based on none of our own merit whatsoever. Humility reflects a servant’s type of heart in which we consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3) and worthy of our humble attention. And humility is shown when we cast our burdens upon the Lord, who is ready and willing to help us with them.

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