

1 Peter 5

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"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord"

[For those online, there is the text of Scripture at the end]

INTRODUCTION

I have a hard time when the Bible gives me opportunity, or dare I say, requires me to speak on humility. Why, you ask? It's a biblical doctrine and therefore should be simple enough. All I have to do is find some other references, and a story or two to illustrate what I'm saying, and voilá, I have a sermon. Right?

But that's not so easy. You see, I'm one who believes that what you say is what you should be living. The modern term is 'practice what you preach.' And anytime the Bible asks of me to preach to you about kindness or love or in this case humility, I feel badly. Not that I don't want to live in such qualities. Not that I don't believe them to be proper for all believers, actually for all people. Of course I do! But it's that I haven't yet gotten there and thus, how can I possibly teach you about this?

Or would you rather hear me say, "I have a wonderful sermon on humility but am waiting for a large crowd before preaching it?"

OK, let me tell you the story of Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, who was an outstanding example of humility. Shortly after he

took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. "It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend." She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

OK, so how can I teach you about humility? Let's listen to the apostle Peter's final words to the believers in chapter 5 and maybe he can share his victories. That should help. And I'll just be listening along with you.

I. Shepherds should care for the sheep (1-4)

The information about families and governments and slaves is all in. Now Peter turns to the community of faith, which will experience judgment before the rest of the world, and says it's for the elders to rule well and to keep the flock. He uses various terms, like pastor, shepherd, overseer and elder. They all describe

the same person. One is about function and another about office and another about enterprise, but really it's all one person. And the shepherd is to care and not to dismiss. The shepherd is to bring food and attention to the flock. The pastor is to prevent evil from hitting or attacking the sheep under his charge. And the shepherd is to visit the flock and to bring God's kindness to the sheep.

This is certainly a humble calling and one that requires great amounts of time and love. And Peter would well have understood this from his time with Y'shua.

So often Jesus demonstrated this kind of attention and care. He sat with a woman at the well or with another caught in adultery and personally taught them the Bible and gave them words of eternal life. Y'shua had time for Peter, among others, and by himself, in a word in due season.

II. We should all be humble (verses 5-9)

Here we go again. The Bible tells me to be humble. Actually this is now universalizing what Peter has already taught us in the earlier sections. He told slaves to submit to masters. He told wives to submit to husbands. He told us to submit to governmental authorities. Now he is telling all people to submit to God and to each other. Listen to how the inventor of the Morse code teaches this.

Wakefield tells the story of the famous inventor Samuel Morse who was once asked if he ever encountered situations where he didn't know what to do. Morse responded, "More than once, and whenever I could not see my way clearly, I knelt down and prayed to God for light and understanding."

Morse received many honors from his invention of the telegraph but felt undeserving: "I have made a valuable application of electricity not because I was

superior to other men but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone and He was pleased to reveal it to me."

M.R. De Haan used to say, "Humility is something we should constantly pray for, yet never thank God that we have."

The Handbook of Magazine Article Writing contains this illustration by Philip Barry Osborne; "Alex Haley, the author of Roots, has a picture in his office, showing a turtle sitting atop a fence. The picture is there to remind him of a lesson he learned long ago: 'If you see a turtle on a fence post, you know he had some help.'

"Says Alex, 'Any time I start thinking, WOW, ISN'T THIS MARVELOUS WHAT I'VE DONE! I look at that picture and remember how this turtle--me--got up on that post.'"

George Washington Carver, the scientist who developed hundreds of useful products from the peanut: "When I was young, I said to God, 'God, tell me the mystery of the universe.' But God answered, 'That knowledge is reserved for me alone.' So I said, 'God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.' Then God said, 'Well, George, that's more nearly your size.' And he told me."

Corrie Ten Boom tells the following story. When I saw Sadhu Sundar Singh in Europe, he had completed a tour around the world. People asked him, "Doesn't it do harm, your getting so much honor?" The Sadhu's answer was: "No. The donkey went into Jerusalem, and they put garments on the ground before him. He was not proud. He knew it was not done to honor him, but for Jesus, who was sitting on his back. When people honor me, I know it is not me, but the Lord, who does the job." [[Corrie Ten Boom, Each New Day.](#)]

This week I was in Forster for a couple days and met some family of a friend. We observed the whales splashing in the sea on their way home to the Antarctic after successfully bearing their young up north. The couple sat in a gorgeous house and I tried to witness to the husband by reminding him of the smallness of his life. Although a builder by trade, and thus a creator, he is insignificant compared to the ocean just outside his house. Similar to President Roosevelt and the story about him.

William Beebe, the naturalist, used to tell this story about Teddy Roosevelt. At Sagamore Hill, after an evening of talk, the two would go out on the lawn and search the skies for a certain spot of star-like light near the lower left-hand corner of the Great Square of Pegasus. Then Roosevelt would recite: "That is the Spiral Galaxy in Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our sun."

Then Roosevelt would grin and say, "Now I think we are small enough! Let's go to bed."

The Bible says we should be humble and humbling ourselves under God's mighty hand. This almost sounds threatening, doesn't it? But it's actually comforting. It's designed to help us know the Shepherd and His care.

Jesus is called the Good Shepherd in John 10. He's the Chief Shepherd in this chapter who is coming back for the people under his care, and he is the Great Shepherd in the book of Hebrews who lives for the sheep (13.20ff).

Peter is hearkening us to humility like a sheep responds to his shepherd.

III. We should all be watchful

The apostle turns his attention to another matter. He says we should be watchful. Or of sober spirit as our version says. In other words, we have a duty not to dismiss the realities of Satan, but to guard ourselves and one another, like a shepherd guards his flock from the attacking wolves. Listen to these thoughts.

1) Respect Satan/ he's real and really dangerous. (He is a destroyer (Rev. 12.11, and accuser of God's people). His purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. (John 10). He seeks whom he may devour. This is not someone with whom we can have a meaningful relationship. This is an enemy. You don't discuss with this enemy. You war and battle.

Satan's mission is to deceive as well. He sows tares among the wheat and false believers among the true. 2) So he needs to be recognized for his fakery and chicanery.

3) Satan should be resisted Peter says. We don't pretend he doesn't exist and we don't exaggerate the bounty of problems in the world or in our lives with "The Devil made me do it" or "It's the enemy...it's the enemy" always on our lips. Remember Screwtape in the CS Lewis classic who told his young nephew Wormwood that one of Satan's tricks was to get us so caught up with blaming Satan that we don't take any personal responsibility for our sins or we deny Satan's very existence. Both are wrong of course. So Peter tells us to think rightly, that's what sober means, and to respect, recognize and to resist Satan.

IV. We should all be hopeful (10-11)

Finally Peter ends his letter with hope. He tells us to be humble and to resist Satan, watching for God to send Messiah for us, and then ends with the note

of confident hope. This next week there will be holocaust memory days, specifically related to the Kristalnacht memorials as this is the 55th anniversary. But it's not the UN that is our Jewish hope. It's not the creation of the state of Israel and all that follows such a creation that established hope for the Jewish people. It's the Saviour, and He alone who will make it all to His glory at the end. He is the reason I'm hopeful. And only He. Winning in the races today or on Tuesday at the Race that stops the nation will not give us hope. Only hope is found in Y'shua. And his soon return. Your side winning the Rugby Union World Cup...? I've got something better. The Messiah is coming to restore the world, not just some temporary pride of a nation or a horse jockey. It's the world and my world God is after and he wants me to be hopeful about it.

Why? Because Peter says we have God's grace and we are going to glory. Our present suffering is only temporary and what we do experience is building something of character in us. That's why he ends with peace. He started with a greeting of shalom and ends similarly. How Jewish!

But it's not the Jewishness, but the Jewish messiah who gives us peace.

Summary

Here are some things I see as we conclude, and you can add your thoughts to your own list.

- 1) Suffering is normative for all people, but only the believers in someone outside them will see it as an opportunity to grow by it
- 2) Satan is a real enemy of God's people and of you, and you must resist him

- 3) Humility is never something achieved but always something to desire
- 4) Better to be on God's side than in his opposition

Invitation

Dear friends, God wants us all to be born again to a living hope. If you are without that hope, despairing for your soul or for the disrepair of the world, or of your family or friends, God wants you to have true hope. This hope will not disappoint; it's alive and supportive. And that hope is found in Y'shua. He is the anchor of our souls, and the evidence is in. He rose from the dead, just when all hope was apparently lost. That resurrection powered him from the grave and into the seat of authority in heaven. He is there for you, risen over our circumstances and risen to new meaning and life. Open your heart to him today. Receive Y'shua as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world for you.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside this relationship with God, then pray with me. I'll say a few words in prayer and if these words are your words, that is, if you agree with this prayer, then say it with me. In this prayer I will ask God to forgive us of our sins, whatever they might be and to make us born again. If that's what you want, then pray this prayer with me. Lord forgive me in the name of the Messiah Y'shua. Forgive me for all my sins, and make me clean again. I believe you died and rose again. Give me eternal life in the name of Y'shua, and make me born again. I trust you. Amen.

Actual Text

1Pet. 5.1 ¶ Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

1Pet. 5.2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

1Pet. 5.3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

1Pet. 5.4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1Pet. 5.5 You 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.

1Pet. 5.6 ¶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

1Pet. 5.7 casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

1Pet. 5.8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1Pet. 5.9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

1Pet. 5.10 And after 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.

1Pet. 5.11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1Pet. 5.12 ¶ Through 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!

1Pet. 5.13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

1Pet. 5.14 ¶ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.