

## **Holy Humility**

We come this morning to the end of our series on I Peter. Much of this letter is about holiness. That is, living a godly life, infused with Christ's spirit. It's the better way to find stability and contentment, joy and eternity in your life and your family's life. Last week I spoke of holy suffering ... I mentioned the persecuted church noting the suffering of believers in China, Nigeria, Eritrea, Korea, Pakistan, the Sudan, and Indonesia. Most of us have never suffered persecution for faith in Christ. Maybe a few of us have made some sacrifices, maybe some have suffered ridicule or been excluded from the "cool kids" circles. Yet the time will come when the Lord may cause us Americans to be truly challenged in our faith. St. Peter provides us with guidance for that time so that we will be faithful and strong.

In the last chapter of his letter Peter covers several important topics that applied to those Christians who face pressures to conform and water down their faith in Christ. We might call this Peter's survival kit for Christian churches facing tough times. Let's take a look.

### **1. The Church Needs the Right Kind of Leaders**

The first thing that Peter advises is this: get the right people in leadership. It is not enough to have nice buildings, effective programs, and a good pastor. For a church to flourish over a long period of time, and in order to withstand the pressures of a humanistic culture, it needs a continual supply of godly men and women in leadership, both clergy and lay. Criterion for good church leaders isn't always the same as that for leaders in business or politics. Peter is talking about the spiritual leaders of the church; people who were wise, mature, and faithful.

Their work is summarized in one word: shepherd. They are shepherds of God's flock. They oversee the flock and give the flock what it needs: if teaching, then teaching; if guidance, then guidance; if comfort, then comfort; if correction, then correction. The leaders represent the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd (v. 4), to the congregation.

We can say the same is true for families: they need the right kind of leaders. Dads first need to love the moms. Then dads need to draw boundaries for their families: *But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD*, Joshua 24:15. This would mean following the Lord yourself, guys, and guiding your family to know and act on what is right and wrong, even in small things. But to be able to do so with gentleness and humility: that is to be strong yet gentle.

**Jesus said the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd and follow him (John 10:14-15, 27). In a healthy flock, the shepherd loves the sheep, and the sheep gladly follow the shepherd. When it comes to spiritual leadership, it's not what position you hold but what you are. Are you one through whom God's grace and truth flows, even under stress? Leaders must serve willingly, eagerly, and as good examples to the flock. God bless those who serve that way. A great reward awaits them in heaven.**

## **2. Good Leaders Need Good Followers**

**Moving from the shepherds to the sheep, Peter shows that this second principle is joined with the first. Peter writes: *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older*, 1 Peter 5:5a. Why young men? It is because they typically tend to be headstrong and impulsive. Yet all congregations need members who pray for and support the leaders as they live and lead according to the Scriptures. In stressful times support the leaders. It is not in the still calm of life that great character is formed. Adversity brings forth virtue. Without good Bible-believing leadership and unity around those leaders the church will fracture. And I think we're seeing that in the church in America today.**

## **3: All Need to Practice Humility**

**Did you hear about the minister who said he had a wonderful sermon on humility but was waiting for a large crowd before preaching it? *All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'* Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time, 1 Peter 5:5b-6. Humility comes from a proper understanding of the grace of God. Humility is not running yourself down or hiding your talents or feeling embarrassed about your gifts, abilities or accomplishments. Sometimes that's just false humility. True humility is recognizing that whatever you have could have been given to someone else. And someday you must give it all back and give an account of what you have done with what you were given. Everything is a gift from God.**

**When Peter says, "clothe yourselves with humility," he literally says, "wrap yourself with humble-mindedness." The word translated as "clothe" is a Greek word that means to tie around oneself most often describing an apron or towel that a slave would wear. Peter is reminding us of the kind of apron Jesus tied around his waist the night he washed the disciples' feet (John 13:4). We might say to us it means, "In your dealings with others, put on the apron of humility and be ready to wash dirty feet."**

**Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Booker T. Washington 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 attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward thousands of dollars were donated to the Tuskegee Institute, as a result of the woman persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in supporting the school. (From *Our Daily Bread*).

Leaders remember this: a lot of good things can happen if you don't care who gets the credit. M. R. De Haan (doctor, pastor, Bible teacher) used to say, "Humility is something we should constantly pray for, yet never thank God that we have."

St. Paul is a great example: *I am the least of the apostles, 1 Cor. 15:9. I am the very least of all the saints, Ephesians 3:8. I am the foremost of sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15.*

#### **4. Give It Up To God**

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" 1 Peter 5:7.* One translation says, "Give all your worries and cares to God." The word "anxiety" comes from a root that means "to divide." Anxiety produces a divided mind, pulled this way and that way, constantly distracted and disturbed. I recall what one woman at a previous church told me: If you're going to worry, why pray? But if you're going to pray, why worry? In our kitchen at home we have a little plaque on the wall with an image of a rocking chair. Words surrounding the chair say, "Worry is like a rocking chair. Keeps you busy but gets you no where."

Either He carries the worry or we do. If we do, we'll be divided, distracted, disturbed, confused, frustrated, and burdened. If He carries the load, we may still have trouble and difficulties, but no consuming anxiety, no dominating fear, no undue concern, and no hopeless despair.

#### **5. Beware the Enemy**

Maybe many of us don't think about this one much, but maybe we should. *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith,*

***because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings, I Peter 5:8-9. We are to cast our cares upon the Lord, but not be careless. We must be vigilant for Satan seeks to destroy Christ's church, he prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. When we lack self-control we are more prone to temptations. If you know your strengths and weaknesses, the devil does too. He knows just how to attack and when and where. So be on the alert.***

**Peter advises Christians to resist the devil by standing firm in the truth of Scripture. Do what Jesus did when the devil tempted him in the wilderness. Fight back with the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11). In your own strength, you are no match for the devil, but when you "stand firm" in "the faith" revealed in the Bible, you will not be defeated.**

**Then remember ... our brothers and sisters who have stood firm in the faith and doing so now, even under severe persecution. [I remember the three Vietnamese men who were my students when I taught at CST. They had spent years in communist re-education camps in Viet Nam because they were Christians. They survived, came out stronger in faith, and laughed with joy as they recounted their experiences to me.] Please, go online to Barnabas Aid, The Clarion Project, Voice of the Martyrs and read for yourself. Our troubles are small in comparison to those who suffer for the faith around the world. If they can stay firm in the faith, standing on the truth of Scripture, surely we can too.**

## **6. Trust God for Your Stability**

***He's the God of every kind of grace. ... the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen, I Peter 5:10-11.***

**If you are confused, He has grace for you. If you are discouraged, He has grace for you. If you are upset, He has grace for you. If you are angry, He has grace for you. If you are guilty, He has grace for you. If you feel like giving up, He has grace for you. If you feel like the world has turned against you, He has grace for you. God will restore you, making up whatever you lack. God will strengthen you, giving you what you need to finish the task He's given you. God will be your firm foundation, consistent and unwavering, making strong what is weak in you.**

***The Message (Eugene Peterson) translation says this: The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ - eternal and glorious plans they are! - will have you put together and on your feet for good.***

**Genuine Christians don't need special gifts or unusual abilities. They only need to remain in Christ when difficulty or the devil attacks. Don't give in**

**to bitterness or to fear or to moral compromise. It's amazing what God can do through ordinary people like us when we dare to stand our ground, trust in God, and believe his Word.**