

1PETER 5:5-7 CBC 30.8.2020

Read 1Peter 5:5-7 ...

Don't you love that last line? It appears on many posters, calendars, cards – and it's in your Bible. But is it effective in your life? How many times do you end up with your head in your hands, saying, "Oh no, what am I going to do now?" I know you have to deal with many difficulties – things you wouldn't have chosen. Coronavirus has probably added a few more to your already long list. What's the true condition of your heart in those moments when you know that life is beyond your control? Do you doubt God's goodness? Do you lie awake trying to figure out things that are too big for you? How do we get this precious Bible promise off the poster and into our lives at street-level?

The context gives us the answer. So we're going to read the famous v.7 in its context, not to take away its beauty, but to restore it's effectiveness. Let's reboot a verse whose beautiful words have lapsed into sleep mode.

The passage as a whole is a call to humility:

- v.5: "Clothe yourselves with humility"
- v.5: "God shows favour to the humble"
- v.6: "Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand"

So Peter's main point is that humility is essential in the life of a Christian. Jesus calls us:

- To deny ourselves – our need to be at the centre of everything.
- To take up the cross – which means death to our selfishness.
- To live a life of service to others. *The exact opposite of the world's way of thinking and doing.*

This is how we walk in the footsteps of Christ, of whom Paul writes "He made Himself nothing".

- Philippians 2: He laid aside His glory
- John 13: He laid aside His garment
- John 10: He laid down His life for the sheep. The way of Jesus is the way of laying down. Not taking for ourselves power and glory, but laying down our lives in service.

Peter had learned this from Jesus' lips and confirmed it in his own bitter experience when he boasted that he would never deny his Lord, but then fell so badly. But his proud heart had been humbled and he'd grown in the school of Jesus. And now he enrolls us in the same school of humility.

1. WHO NEEDS THIS TEACHING? WE ALL DO!

v.5: "*In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to the elders.*" That's NOT a slap in the face for young people: Christianity began as a youth movement – a 30yr old Messiah and his followers. But youth has it's perils as well as it's opportunities. If you're a young person who is impatient and inclined to act like a raging bull, Peter understands! He remembers his own youthful tendencies! He's speaking from knowledge when he says to the young guys: Confine your testosterone-charged behaviour to the rugby-field. Bring your energy and enthusiasm to the church family, but let it be controlled by humility. Then it will be serviceable to God. That's how young people will become like Jesus.

Oh good, say the old and wrinkled! Keep the youngsters in their place. But wait a minute! Peter isn't suggesting that the older members run the church and never listen to the younger members! He

goes on to say (v.5): *“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another”* – and that includes the elders – not just older members of the church, but leaders. Humility is the rule for all. If the young aren’t to be pushy, equally the elders aren’t to be domineering. It isn’t the way of Jesus when the church becomes a battleground, with the elders proud of their experience and the young people proud of being contemporary.

Humility is absolutely necessary for our life together in community – *think of the miserable existence that results from the egocentric posturings of the Big-Brother housemates.*

And not just humility towards one another, but humility BEFORE GOD. This is how we learn humility: not by focusing on ourselves (because humility is essentially self-forgetfulness) but by focusing on God. SO v.6 *“Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand”* – this is the key to humility. Nothing will teach us humility like having a proper appreciation of God’s greatness, majesty and holiness – and, alongside that, a sense of our own weakness and sinfulness. That’s what cuts us down to size, and stops us thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought.

2. WHY DO WE NEED HUMILITY?

Peter answers the question in v.5 by quoting Proverbs 3:34. v.5: *“God opposes the proud.”* A regular theme in Scripture. Have you ever thought that God might be in opposition to you? It’s a terrible thought. Just read Pharaoh’s story in the book of Exodus!

Why does God oppose our pride? Because it robs His glory and wrecks our welfare. How? By aspiring to God’s throne – and that’s the tragedy of pride, because God’s throne is too big for us. Pride deceives us. Pride makes us take credit for things in our lives that are really due to God’s grace. Pride causes us to think we’ve got what it takes to provide for our needs, to make judgements on what’s right and wrong – who needs God? Pride is one big lie that leads us to ruin – and God in His mercy will never allow it to triumph. So if I don’t want Almighty God opposing me, I need to humble myself.

But v.5: *“God shows favour (gives grace) to the humble.”* If nothing could be worse than having God oppose us, nothing could be better than having God be gracious to us. He gives grace to the humble, because humility is a confession of emptiness and need. God’s greatest deliverances in Scripture are always given to the weakest and most helpless. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

Well, since God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, there’s only one conclusion: v.6: *“Therefore humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand”* -

What does it mean to humble yourself under God’s mighty hand? It means trusting in *His* wisdom, not your own. Accepting that the things He provides for you are best for you. Believing that the way He calls you to live is right – that it will be for your well-being and joy. Is that you? Or are there times when you leave God’s pathway because you think you know better, or you want something else? Then your pride is showing! You think you know better than God! That won’t end well.

No: believe that God has a mighty hand: that He knows all things, and rules all things in love for the blessing of His children. Walk in that wisdom, and *“He will lift you up in due time”* (v.6) – that’s what He did for Jesus, and that’s what He’ll do for you. He knows the right time and the best way to do that, for your good and His glory. *One of the evidences of our pride is our impatience with God.*

3. THE BLESSING HUMILITY BRINGS: A QUIET HEART

v.7: "*Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*" I want you to note something really important: vv.6-7 are joined in the original language. v.7 is not a new sentence! It's as we humble ourselves before God and surrender to His will that we can find freedom from anxiety because we discover that He cares for us. *v.7 is the attractive punchline on the poster, but it depends on vv.5-6 for its power.*

It's only those who put on humility who are invited to put off anxiety. Why? Because you won't be able to trust God with your difficulties till you take Him at His word and believe that His way is better than your way!

As long as your proud heart resists that, you'll feel you need to be in control of everything in your life, and that's something you can never have. You'll break yourself (and others) trying to get it. If you put yourself in the centre of your world and make it all about you, your wants, your feelings – if you try to manipulate people and circumstances to make sure you get what you think you need – you'll lock yourself into a life of constant anxiety and worry and fear and disappointment. Because you can never guarantee that your life will turn out the way you think it should.

I wonder how much fear and anxiety is there in our church, robbing us of joy and paralysing us because we're so wrapped up in ourselves and our own anxious thoughts. And we're making life so much harder than it need be. Because if we would only humble ourselves under God's mighty hand we could cast all our anxieties on Him, because He cares for us. Here's the truth Peter wants us to know: our lives are NOT out of control. They're out of *our* control, but they're under God's control. And we can rest in that. As Paul Tripp puts it, "*There is a King, and it isn't you!*"

The proud will hate that, but the humble welcome it as great news. It means that you don't have to load king-size burdens on your shoulders. All the things that are causing you anxiety and discouragement, the problems you can't solve, the what ifs, the if onlys – listen: Everything that isn't under your control is being managed by the God who has become Your Father through Jesus Christ. He's the definition of what's good and true and loving and wise. Why would you NOT humble yourself under His mighty hand? Why would you NOT trust His wisdom rather than your own? Are you humble enough to live a carefree life?

Whenever your heart starts to be anxious about the future, preach to yourself and say, I will never be in a situation that isn't being ruled by my wise and loving Father. What an awesome thing to remember!

And when you humble yourself to let God be God, you can "*cast all your anxiety on Him ...*" The only other place in the New Testament where that verb occurs is in Luke 19:35 where the disciples threw their cloaks on a donkey for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem. That's we've got to do with our cares and anxiety: instead of coddling them we've got to throw them onto the shoulders of our mighty God and He will carry them, "*because He cares for you.*"

How do we know God cares? Because things are going well for us? What happens when things aren't going well? What will convince us then? The answer is Romans 5:8. We know for sure that God cares, not because of the good things in our lives, but because of the good Saviour He has given us.

Do you struggle with that statement? There was a time Peter wasn't convinced either. In Mark 4:35-41 we read of a time when the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee and a storm broke and they feared for their lives. And Jesus was fast asleep! They woke Him and screamed, "*Don't you care?*"

Jesus stilled the storm and said to them, “*And don’t you trust me?*” Well, Peter learned that Jesus can be trusted in the storm, even when we don’t understand. Later in his life he was in another kind of storm (Acts 12): arrested, imprisoned, and likely to be executed the next day. And that night God sent an angel to rescue Peter who was sleeping like a baby because he’d cast all his cares on the Lord. The angel had a job to wake Peter up! Where did Peter learn to sleep through a storm? He remembered a night on the Sea of Galilee, when he was challenged to humble himself under the wisdom and care of a great Saviour. “*I don’t have to be anxious about anything, because He cares for me.*”

CONCLUSION

Can you say that? Do you spend your waking energies trapped in your own little world of anxieties, or do you really believe your Lord cares? He cares for you. It took Peter time to realize that, and to humble himself under God’s mighty hand, but now he wants us all to grasp this truth: There’s a real connection between humility and rest. When we stop trying to sit on God’s throne, and settle instead for letting God be God, we find that His mighty hand is over us – and not to crush us, but to care for us.

PRAYER: We thank you, Father God, that in Jesus we have seen you care for us in perfect love. Grant that by Your Spirit, we may humble ourselves under your mighty hand, and find the joy of keeping a quiet heart; for Your glory’s sake. AMEN.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION

- What have been the results in your life of trying to control relationships and circumstances?
- How would your life be different if you let God be God? What’s stopping you?