

## **God is God and I Am Not (1 Peter 5:5-11)**

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This morning we wrap up our study of 1 Peter by taking a look at 5:5-11. In these 7 verses Peter quickly rattles off several commands and instructions all relating to the overall theme of his letter, our need to remain faithful to Christ even in the midst of difficult times.

Throughout our study we've been encouraged to remember that as followers of Christ we are part of God's family, citizens of his Kingdom, and people who have been saved by Jesus so that we may go into the world and "proclaim the excellencies of [God] who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light." (2:9, adjusted).

We've learned about respecting authority, loving people who do not always love us, and building God-honoring relationships in our homes and in our church. We've seen how suffering can lead us to depend more on God and allow us unique opportunities to share the Gospel with a world desperately in need of the redemption, reconciliation, and renewal that can only come from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Last week Pastor Steve showed us that we all need to be willing to receive spiritual help from Christian brothers and sisters more mature than ourselves, and that we are not meant to try and figure out our faith all on our own. God is gracious to give us a community, a church, that we can lean into and rely on in both good and hard times. And because we are all here to help, love, and support one another we need to treat each other well. In fact, the apostle Peter said all of us, every follower of Christ, should "*clothe yourselves with humility toward one another*" -- and it is that command, with its focus on humility, that I want to explore with you this morning.

Before we go any further, however, I want to let you all in on a little secret: preaching, teaching, and even talking directly about humility is tricky. It seems counter-intuitive to stand up in front of a bunch of people and say, "*you* all need to be more humble, and *I* will tell you exactly why and how." Studying humility and preparing this sermon has itself been a very humbling experience. I am by no means a pride-less person (and neither are you, so we're all in this together).

I have been the guy who opens the car hood and stares at the engine because, even though I know very little about car repair, I want anyone who sees me to at least have a chance to be impressed with my mock-mechanic skills. I have also been the person who cleans just enough space at home so the picture of my dog I post on instagram will look great, impress everyone...and not include the dirty dishes, unfolded laundry, and unsorted stacks of mail that can typically be found in my living room during any given week.

I struggle with humility and I struggle with pride, and I need this message from 1 Peter just as much as anybody else here today. So again, we're all in this together. Today we learn together, we seek Christ together, and together we add to our understanding of how to remain faithful, be humble, and cling to the grace and holiness, and glory of our good, good God.

With that goal in mind, let's read the text together. 1 Peter 5:5-11.

## **1 Peter 5:5-11 (NIV)**

*<sup>5b</sup>All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,  
“God opposes the proud  
but shows favor to the humble.*

*<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

*<sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

*<sup>10</sup> And 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. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

As the apostle Peter brings his letter to the Christians scattered and exiled to the outer reaches of the Roman Empire to a close, he calls on all them (and 2,000 years later, all of us as well) to make the practice of humility a fundamental part of their everyday faith. Be humble toward others, be humble before God, humble yourself -- three times in two verses he commands and he pleads that followers of Christ pursue the attitude, or virtue, of humility.

For anyone who has been a Christian for awhile, or has read very much of the Bible, Peter’s admonition for humility probably isn’t all that surprising. The Old Testament is full of similar commands from God for His people to be humble.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God promises,

***14** if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

And a passage that has inspired Christians for centuries to serve, protect, love those in need is Micah 6:8,

***8** “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

And of course Peter would have learned the value and essential nature of humility from Jesus Christ himself, who repeatedly told the disciples that the meek would be lifted up and made strong, that the last and least would be first in the Kingdom of God, and that, (Luke 14:11, NIV)

***11** “all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

So it's pretty clear that humility matters to God, and is therefore essential in the life of a Christian. It is, or at least should be, one of the defining marks of Christian character -- right up there with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. If we want to be more like Christ, we need to grow in humility and learn how to "humble ourselves".

Which naturally leads us to the somewhat obvious and yet slightly tricky-to-answer question ...what is humility? How might we define or describe it?

I asked a bunch of people to answer that question this week (including my mom, so just know that if you disagree with this you disagree with Mama Creagar, and that will put you on thin ice my friends...) and they all responded with some variation of the same idea: **"Humility is remembering that God is God, and I am not."** I love that. It's simple, easy to remember, and packed with a great deal of truth to explore.

"God is God"...meaning He is the one who is all powerful, all knowing, limitless, perfect, abounding in unquenchable love, and worthy of all our glory, honor, and praise.

"God is God...and I am not", meaning that I am NOT all powerful, all knowing, or perfect. I have extreme limitations, my love is often very fickle and conditional, and my worthiness for praise is not even really worth exploring. Part of humility is remembering that I have a problem with sin, and that God is the only one who can save me from the consequences.

Being humble helps us keep a good grip on the reality of our relationship with God (he's in charge and we are not), but it also frees us to have better, more Christ-like relationships with others. Humility leads us seek the good in others, to see their value as fellow image-bearers of God, and increases our genuine desire do what's best for them even when it's not necessarily what's best for us.

According to theologian and commentator Karen Jobes,

*"True humility, as opposed to a contrived, self-degrading humiliation, flows from recognizing one's complete dependence on God and is expressed by the acceptance of one's role and position in God's economy. With such humility one is freed from attempts to gain more power or prestige. Instead, humility expresses itself in the willingness to serve others even beyond one's self-interest."*

Rather than being something that keeps us down or degrades us, true biblical humility teaches us how to love God and love others the way Jesus does: selflessly, sacrificially, and compassionately. Perhaps no passage in all of Scripture confirms this better than Philippians 2:3-11,

*<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

*<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

*<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,*

*did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing*

*by taking the very nature of a servant,*

*being made in human likeness.*

*<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

So what is humility? It's remembering that God is God and that you and I are not...and embracing the freedom that truth give us to share our lives with others the way Christ has shared his with us.

And what might a life lived in light of humility look like? Probably a whole lot 1 Peter 5:5-11.

In vv. 5-11 Peter says that if we embrace the practice of being humble -- if we hold that right perspective and put it on ourselves daily like clothing for all the world to see -- four astounding, incredible, grace-filled things can and will happen.

**First, if we are humble then we will receive the blessing of God's favor and prevent our pride from making us God's enemy.**

In v. 5 Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34, saying "*God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.*"

Think about that for a moment. You and I can live in such a way that draws the opposition, the anger, the righteous wrath of the Almighty God. There is nothing more catastrophic, more damning, then having God draw a line in the sand and finding yourself on the other side -- the very, very wrong side. That's what pride does. "When sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon Him" (Mahaney) their pride has led them to be counted among God's enemies, instead of being found among his beloved children.

In Scripture you can find pride described as a sign of arrogance, rebellion, insubordination, and the root of sin and therefore the very root of human self-destruction. Proverbs 16:5 goes as far as to call the person who is prideful of heart an "abomination to the LORD" and promises that he or she will not go unpunished.

To be clear, the kind of "pride" we're talking about here is not the kind parents experience when their kid succeeds in school or even when you receive recognition for hard work done well. God does not have a problem with us experiencing success or achieving our goals. We get into trouble when we buy into the lie that we did it all on our own. Canadian theologian Jenny-Lyn de Klerk explains the nuance well when she says,

*"Having power or success in this world is not evil in itself. But letting one's heart be driven by dreams of an ideal life marked by the primacy of self is the opposite of excellence in the Christian life. The next time you think about 'being the best you', remember Christ's response to the question, 'who is the best?' -- he said it's the person who humbles himself. (Matt 18:4). According to Christ, humility is the*

*best way to live.”*

Nothing good comes from being a prideful person....but so much wonderful grace and favor comes from being humble. And the Bible gives a stunning reason for why this is so: while pride draws the out the wrath of God, humility draw the loving attention of God. In Isaiah 66:2, God says,

*“These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.”*

In the Gospels it is the humble -- both poor and powerful -- who draw the praise and admiration of Jesus. While dying on the cross it was not the man who demanded a display of Jesus' power who was promised salvation, but the man knew himself to be a sinner, confessed it, and threw himself at the mercy of a dying God who he still believed would somehow be able to save him. And what was Christ's response? A mighty promise: “*Today you will be with me in paradise.*”

Humility opens the door to God's favor and grace by doing nothing more than helping us admit we need it.

This week I challenge you to consider what prideful attitudes you might need to confess, and how you might humbly praise God for the grace and favor He has shared with you. One way I've recently started practicing this is just before bed I think up a few things from my day I know God should get the glory for...and then I thank Him for them. I actually write them down on a board so I can see, read, and remember that the good things I've done I've only done because God's blessed me to do so. It makes me really thankful, and it quickly roots out any pride I might have attached to my works. That practice might work for you, or it might not. My overall suggestion is this: DO SOMETHING to praise God for his favor and confess your pride. Be intentional about it. It's been a breath of fresh air to my faith, and I believe it can be for the same for your, too.

**Second, if we are humble then we will trust in God's strength and protection rather than our own.**

In v.6 Peter uses a unique phrase, telling his readers, “*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*” The “mighty hand of God” is an idea straight from the Old Testament, especially from the book of Exodus, that refers to the power God unleashed in order to save his people.

In the Old Testament, Israel was freed from the bondage of slavery and oppression. In the New Testament, the Gospel of Jesus Christ saves you and me from the bondage of sin and death. Humility allows us to see, celebrate, and savor this incredible display of God's strength and protection for us, rather than pridefully and feebly try to accomplish salvation on our own.

It also allows us to accept difficult circumstances as part of God's plan and happening within the bounds of His ever-present protection of us. The promise that God will “*lift you up in due time*” means there will be times when we don't feel very “lifted up”. Times when, like Christ, we are mocked and hurt and humiliated. In those moments we must lean into God -- not run away from Him, doubt Him, or demand an explanation from Him (though He is good and may at times gives us one) -- and, with the world watching to see what we'll do when we're at our weakest...we boast NOT in ourselves, we fight back NOT for

ourselves...but instead we preach Christ crucified. We share the Gospel. We take up the same strategy as the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

*1 "When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.<sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power."*

Our faith must rest in the strength and protection of God -- not on our own. Humility (admitting that God is God and I am not) helps us trust the Lord, AND His timing, for what we need.

### **Third, humility graciously frees you to truly believe that God cares for you.**

1 Peter 5:7 is a verse that has brought both pain and grace into my life. Humility is the key to having it be a blessing. Pride is the trap that turns it into a curse.

About a year and a half ago I began to develop extremely severe anxiety. Looking back now I can see that I've likely had some issue with anxiety all my life, but for whatever reasons my coping mechanisms had always kept it under control. Until, all of a sudden, they did not. As my anxiety got the better of me I felt like everything in my life was getting done the wrong way, and that it was all my fault. My role as a pastor became something I felt unworthy of, my confidence as a husband shattered into pieces, and my gift of preaching felt as if it had left me. I was scared, I didn't understand what was going on, I didn't want to tell anyone, and if I'm being honest I wanted to prove to God and to myself that I could overcome this trial on my own.

That was pride. My anxiety was just something that happened, but my prideful response turned it into a disaster. And I withdrew further and further into myself, and pushed more and more people away. That verse, "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you*", felt more like a taunt than a promise. I didn't read it like an invitation, like a gift. I read it like a condemnation: "if you were REALLY a good Christian, you'd just give this all to God and everything would be great." I believed that for about a year. I couldn't stop myself from believing that. And if you struggle in a similar way, I want you to hear from this pulpit and from your church a very important truth:

Your anxiety does not define you. Your depression does not define you. Your struggle does not define you. Jesus Christ bought, with his own blood, the eternal right to define who you are, and he says you are more than the things that break you down. He looks at you, even at your most painful, wretched times, and says "I love that one. That one's mine."

We all get anxious. We all have worries and concerns that creep into our hearts and chip away at our confidence and our faith. "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you*" is meant to be a gracious and loving promise that lifts you up in your moments of doubt and pain. However, in order for that to happen, you have to focus NOT on the command, but on the promise itself: **God cares for you.**

Let that sink in a minute.

God cares for you. Have you ever thought about how incredible that is? The Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe cares about YOU. Loves you. Makes sacrifices for you. Protects you, fights for you, wants to have a personal relationship with you.

God cares for you. It is because of this amazing truth that you can “*Cast all your anxiety on him*”. That doesn’t mean the anxiety will magically go away. It means you are never alone in your anxiety, that God understands it, and loves you even as you struggle to trust Him with your concerns completely. The power of this verse is NOT in the command for you to do something. It is in the promise that God has already done something on your behalf, and continues to do things for you. God cares for you.

I still struggle with anxiety. But by the grace of God I am much better at dealing with it than I used to be. Getting here took a long time, and it took a lot of help. I needed this church, my wife, my family, the direct intervention of God, and to be honest I needed to accept the miracle of modern medicine. I praise God for anti-anxiety meds. I believe that they are part of the way he cares for me.

I say all this because I want to normalize the struggle against anxiety. You are not a bad Christian if you worry. God anticipated our tendency to stress and our desire to take over because we foolishly believe we’ve got it all under control. His response to this error is not anger. It is, has always been, and forever will be love. God cares for you. Let your focus rest on that promise, and I believe the command to cast your anxiety on Him will become more of the gracious gift it is meant to be.

#### **Fourth, humility keeps us ready to resist the devil.**

And entire sermon could be dedicated to vv. 8-9, so I’ll have to ask you forgiveness and understanding in only scratching the surface of these two verses. But the bottom line is this: the devil is real, he is our enemy, and he is always looking for a way to crush our faith.

“*Be alert and of sober mind*” basically means, “Wake up! Pay attention!” Maintain a sort of “spiritual sobriety” and be in a state of readiness because “*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*”. Faith is not a passive thing. Believing that “God is God and I am not” is going to require some discipline because deep down inside we still struggle with the twisted wish that we could say “God is God, and I’m that God!” Satan has always pounced and preyed on that desire.

The good news is that Satan is not all-powerful. He’s been defeated, his power and influence are limited, and they cannot compare or compete with Jesus’ victory over death achieved through the cross and resurrection. The devil can be resisted because Jesus is better. Satan has schemes, but Jesus has salvation. Satan may have had regency on earth, but Jesus has absolute sovereignty. In Christ we find the strength to resist the devil.

Peter doesn’t tell us how to resist, but his promise that Satan can be resisted leads us to recall how we’ve seen it done before. Jesus in the desert using Scripture as a shield against temptation. James, the brother of Jesus, imploring the readers of his letter to draw near to God so that the devil will have no choice but to flee from His presence. Paul’s promise that if we commit ourselves to being excellent at what is good and innocent of evil that the God of peace will crush Satan beneath our feet” (Rom 16:19-20).

All of these things begin with and are strengthened by a commitment to humility -- to confessing our need for God and everything He has to offer in the fight against evil. Admit that you cannot resist the devil on

your own, and through prayer, Scripture, devotion, confession, repentance, run into the presence of the one, Jesus Christ, who had already resisted and defeated Satan on your behalf. Resistance is not found in our ability, but in Christ's victory.

Peter caps off his plea for followers of Christ practice humility with one last reminder that all of this is worth it because:

*<sup>10</sup> ...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. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Humility leads us and prepares us for eternity of rest and revelry in the glorious presence of the God of all grace. Right now we just get glimpses of that glory, and in small overwhelming flashes we take in God's greatness and our smallness. But one day we'll take it all in and instead of being undone...we will be restored, and made strong, and firm, and steadfast forever.

God is God and I am not. And I am eternally grateful for that truth.

This week I encourage you all, in humility...

...receive the blessing of God's favor and confess the pride that leads you astray from his presence.

...trust in God's strength and protection rather than your own.

...no matter what struggles or anxieties you face, allow humility to free you to truly believe that God cares for you.

...and equip yourself with humility so that you can resist the devil.

As you seek to do one, some, or perhaps even all of these this week, may the God of all grace, who has called you into His eternal glory in Christ restore you now and assure you of the greater and eternal restoration that will be given to you at the return of our Savior, Jesus.