

THE DUTIES OF THE BELIEVER (I): HUMILITY AND SUBMISSION

1 PETER 05:05–07

Introduction

This is a great passage on humility. Humility is one of the very first duties of the believer. Some people shrink back when they hear the word humility mentioned. When they think of humility, they picture a shy, weak, unimpressive type of person. But this is not what God means by humility. The humility demanded by God strengthens a person and makes him one of the most striking and impressive persons around.

- I. Submit to the elders (v. 5).
- II. Submit to one another and be clothed with humility (v. 5).
- III. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God (vv. 6-7).

I. 1 Peter 05:05 *Submit to the Elders*

First, submit to the elders or ministers of the church. The word submissive (hopotagete) means to submit and to place oneself under the authority and leadership of the elder or minister. The minister is the leader of the church. God has chosen and ordained the minister to be the leader among the flock of God. Therefore, his leadership is to be...

- esteemed
- followed
- recognized
- acknowledged
- obeyed
- subjected to
- honoured

But remember: the minister is not to be a lord over God's heritage, but an example to the flock (v. 3). He is to lead and exercise his authority by being an example, not by using authoritarian methods and bypassing people. It is this that gives balance to the minister's authority. But at the same time, the flock of God is to submit to the authority of the minister.

Note: the word young is used to describe the laity or believers of a church. The idea being conveyed is that believers are to be as youth who sit at the feet of the parent to be fed and to learn and grow. The very term conveys the idea of submission. This shows how important this charge is to God — so important that he terms believers the young. However, it should be noted that some commentators say that this refers to the young people of the church. They are to submit themselves to the older believers. But this does not seem to fit the context in light of two facts:

=> The preceding verses discuss the elder or minister of the church.

=> The rest of verse 5 exhorts all believers to be submissive toward one another.

The thrust seems to be that young refers to believers. Simply put, believers are to be submissive toward themselves to the minister as the parent of the church, the parent who shepherds and feeds them the Word of God and who willingly takes the oversight of their welfare (cp. v. 2-3).

1 Cor 16:16 *To submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it.*

1 Th 5:12-13 *Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.*

1 Tim 5:17 *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

Heb 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

II. **1 Peter 05:05 Submit to One Another**

Second, submit to one another and be clothed with humility. Not only are we to submit to our ministers, but we are to submit ourselves to one another. Note several things.

1. The word all means every one of us, all ages, sexes and classes (A T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 132). No person is exempt. All of us are to submit ourselves to all believers no matter who we may be: male or female, poor or rich, young or old.

Thought 1. Submission takes concentration and effort. It takes a deliberate decision to submit to someone else. But this is just what Scripture is demanding. Every believer is unique to God and has a very special gift and contribution to make to the world and to the church. All believers are to submit themselves to one another, to each one's uniqueness and gift. All believers are to acknowledge, respect and honour one another, all because of who each one is and because of the gift God has given each one of us.

2. Note: to be submissive toward one another is not enough, not for God. Scripture says that we must also "clothe [ourselves] with humility." The word "clothe" (egkombosasthe) means to gird oneself with an apron. It is the picture of what Jesus did in the upper room when He girded Himself with an apron and assumed the role of a servant and washed the feet of the disciples. Jesus, the Son of God and Sovereign Majesty of the universe, actually clothed Himself with the apron of humility and served the disciples. And, when he finished, He said:

John 13:13-15 *"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."*

Alan Stibbs states it well: "The exhortation here is not to feel humble, nor to pray for humility, but to act it" (*The First Epistle General of Peter*. "The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p. 169). The word "humility" (tapeinophrosunen) means

to offer oneself as lowly and submissive; to walk in a spirit of lowliness; to present oneself as lowly; to act of low degree and low rank. It is the opposite of being high-minded, above and better than others, prideful, arrogant, superior, haughty and self-assertive. The believer may have a high position, power, wealth, fame and much more; but he is to carry himself in a spirit of lowliness and submission. He is to deny himself for the sake of Christ and in order to help others. (See note, *Humility*, 1 Pet. 3:8. See *Humility*, Phil. 2:3.)

3. Note why we are to be submissive toward to one another and to clothe ourselves with humility: because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (cp. Prov. 3:34).
 - a. God resists the proud. He stands against all...
 - who look down upon others.
 - who discriminate against others.
 - who are boastful.
 - who feel superior to others.
 - who are prejudiced.
 - who are haughty.

God opposes the proud — all who oppress others — no matter who they are. The word “opposes” (*antitassetai*) is a strong word. It is the picture of an army being set and arrayed against the enemy. Marvin Vincent says that “pride calls out God’s armies. No wonder, therefore, that it ‘goes before destruction’ (*Word Studies In The New Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 668). God Himself shall destroy those who exalt themselves above others.

- b. God gives grace to the humble. Grace means the favour and blessings of God. The person who walks humbly before God, recognizing and acknowledging the value of others, shall receive the favour and blessings of God. He shall be highly favoured and blessed — rewarded beyond all imagination. The humble person shall bear the fruit of God’s spirit in this life...
 - love • goodness • joy • faithfulness • kindness
 - peace • gentleness • patience • self-control

In addition, the humble person has the full assurance of being cared for and looked after by God, that God will work all things out for his good while he is on earth. And then in the future, when Christ returns, the humble person will be abundantly rewarded with the glorious privilege of living and reigning with Christ forever and ever. (See note, 1 Pet. 1:4 for a list of the rewards.)

Mat 11:29 “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Mat 18:3-4 And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Mat 23:12 “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Rom 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Eph 4:1-2 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Phil 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Col 3:12-13 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

1 Pet 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

III. **1 Peter 05:06–07 Humility Before the Mighty Hand of God**

Third, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. There are three reasons for this.

1. God is to be feared, for He stands opposed to the proud. The very thing we do not want to be is prideful. The only way to escape the judgment of God’s hand is to humble ourselves under His mighty hand. If we stand up to His hand, we shall be stricken down, but if we humble ourselves under His hand, we shall be protected and lifted up, exalted forever and ever. The picture of God’s mighty hand is a different picture for the proud and the humble:

To the humble, God’s mighty hand means...

- strength and power
- sovereignty and control
- salvation and security
- care and protection
- assurance and confidence

To the proud, God’s mighty hand means...

- strength and power
- sovereignty and control
- warning and fear
- anger and wrath
- judgment and condemnation

Note: God’s mighty hand provides two entirely different things for the humble and the proud. Right now the hand of God stands over the world in all of its strength and

power and its sovereignty and control. God's hand stands to save everyone, even the proud if he will only humble himself. But if he refuses to humble himself, then the hand of God stands for something entirely different than salvation. The mighty hand of God stands...

- as a warning and a threat
- in anger and wrath
- in judgment and condemnation

This is the reason we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God — to escape the terrifying judgment of God.

John 10:29 *“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”*

Rom 16:25 *Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past.*

1 Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

Josh 4:24 *He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.*

Psa 89:13 *Your arm is endued with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.*

Psa 98:1 *Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.*

Psa 118:15-17 *Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: “The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things! The Lord’s right hand is lifted high; the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!” I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.*

Isa 59:1 *Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.*

2. We should humble ourselves under God's mighty hand because He is going to exalt the humble. Note that the humble are not yet lifted up. But in due time they will be. The day is coming when they shall be lifted up, exalted in all the glory and majesty of Christ. They shall be exalted to live with Christ and to rule and reign with Him and to serve Him throughout the universe. They shall be with Christ, worshipping and serving Him forever and ever — all to His glory and praise, honour and grace. (See note, 1 Pet. 1:4.)
3. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God because God cares for us; He cares about all our anxiety. Remember: the believers of Peter's day were suffering terrible persecution. They had been forced to flee for their lives, leaving everything behind: homes, jobs and possessions. They had only what they could carry by hand,

and they fled to whatever places they felt were safe. They were, so to speak, an underground people, having to live, work and worship in secret and to find housing and food wherever they could. They never knew when they would be discovered and forced to flee again.

The point is this: imagine the anxiety, the pressure, tension and stress being experienced by the believers. Yet there was great help: God was available to help them. Note that the exhortation is not only clearly stated; it is a command: “cast all your anxiety (merimna) on Him, because He cares for you.” God’s mighty hand will...

- save and deliver you
- look after and care for you
- strengthen and secure you
- provide and protect you
- give you assurance and confidence

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Psa 40:17 *Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.*

Psa 55:23 *But you, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of corruption; bloodthirsty and deceitful men will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Mat 6:25, 33 *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Luke 12:7 *“Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

Luke 21:34 *“Be careful or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”*

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Rom 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor*

anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Phil 4:6 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ■*