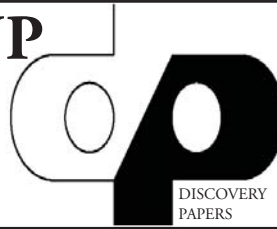


# THE HUMBLE RAISED UP

*SERIES: BELOVED EXILES: STUDIES IN 1 PETER*



Catalog No. 091213  
1 Peter 5:1-14  
8th Message  
Steve Zeisler  
December 13, 2009

Peter was called from a fishing boat to cast nets of God's saving love. He followed a King who had no place to lay his head and, according to tradition, was crucified for his faithfulness to the Gospel. Turning to chapter 5 we conclude our studies in 1 Peter, a letter in which the apostle teaches from a lifetime of his own learning. It is instruction for beloved exiles, known by God, yet strangers in the world; those who through hardship discover God's grace and are changed by it. Peter is an unlikely teacher of humility, yet humility is at the heart of what we will discover in this study.

Two big ideas we will observe are: "clothe yourself in humility toward one another" (v. 5) and "humble yourself under God's mighty hand" (v. 6).

1 Peter 5:1

**<sup>1</sup>To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:**

This is the second time in this letter that Peter has described himself. In 1 Peter 1:1 we meet, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Every human society defines itself by what it believes about leadership and Peter's two self descriptions help us see what is distinctive about leadership in the church.

The term "fellow elder" (v. 1) is significant for what is missing. Peter was an apostle (indeed the foremost among the apostles) and could have issued an order, but instead he makes an appeal. At the end of the day persuasion is more powerful than compulsion. Those who hear God's word voiced by their brother are further along than those who hear only a human command.

We might do well to remember how Peter is described in the gospels. He tried to take charge on the mount of transfiguration (Mark 9:5). He upbraided Jesus for his willingness to die (Mark 8:32) and in a fit of foolish

bravado, chopped off a man's ear at the time of Jesus' arrest (John 18:10). He once loved the center stage and the sound of his own voice. The man we meet in this letter, now practicing humble leadership, has matured and learned from failure. He is a "fellow elder," not a braggart or a know-it-all theoretician.

Peter is "a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed" (v. 1). He once expected an immediate overthrow of Rome, now he waits patiently "for glory to be revealed" (v.1). Even more significant is his reference to himself as a witness of Jesus' suffering. His first readers (and all since) knew the account of his cowardice and denial. He watched from a distance as Jesus died, thus to speak of 'Christ's sufferings' is also to speak of his own failure. Peter's humility in this letter qualifies him as a leader of God's people. Humility remains essential to godly leadership today.

Every flock needs some who serve as shepherds (a church that rejects proper leadership will always fail). Verse 2 gives direction to shepherds of God's flock.

1 Peter 5:2-5

**<sup>2</sup>Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup>not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. <sup>5</sup>Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older.**

A shepherd is primarily a sheep-feeder. The most important thing a shepherd does is make sure the sheep have enough food—to make sure the people of God are being fed on the presence of the Spirit, on the content of the Word. They also ward off danger, bind wounds,

and give guidance.

The first believers in Christ became a Christian congregation with the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost. The first elder/shepherds of the church were the apostles. Peter taught saints and preached to unbelievers. He worked for unity when there was division and was persecuted (beaten and jailed) for his faith. What Peter taught these elders in this letter is what he learned as an elder of the Jerusalem church.

These verses highlight the importance of motives for overseers: not compelled by human expectations, but aware of the call of God. Bogus pastors seek the high place as a way to financial advantage, or to prominence and special treatment. Peter expects godly elders to be among the flock serving as an example. “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (v. 4).

Having instructed elders, the apostle then has a word for ‘youngers.’ Verse 5a: “Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older.” Respect for elders needs to be learned. Every generation of young people sees old folks as too slow, out of step, perhaps quaint, but not necessary. Peter directs the young to submit to and learn from those whose years have taught them wisdom. This insight has particular significance in the 21st century as technology and the speed of change puts a gulf between generations.

The Peter we first meet in the gospels (when he was a young man who knew everything) is an unlikely teacher of humility, but his message to all is clear. Beginning with verse 5b: “All of you,” (Not just in church and in formal circumstances when we are meeting as a church, but all of you all the time, everywhere.) “clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

Humility makes us concerned for the troubles and fears of other people and less aware of ourselves; quick to listen rather than speak. Peter once boasted that he was courageous above all others (Matt. 26:33). He learned in his public and shameful denial of Christ, that God opposes the proud. Now, in verse 6, he takes the call to humility a step further. Humility among the

saints; humbled under the hand of God.

1 Peter 5:6-7

**“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.**

As a concept, kneeling before God is not controversial. In practice we often find it difficult to wait for God’s assessment of the “due time.” It is hard to wait for blessings or remain steadfast in painful circumstances. We are drawn to other voices that promise to give us what we want, rather than wait for God to act. Waiting for God makes us anxious, and anxiety is often accompanied by false bravado. The only way forward is to admit weakness and temptation, to be honest about anxiety, and to actively give ourselves to God. These two verses remind us of wonderful truths about God: His hand is mighty, and He cares for us.

Finally, Peter turns to instruction about spiritual warfare.

1 Peter 5:8-11

**<sup>8</sup>Be self-controlled and alert. 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 your brothers throughout the world are 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.**

The times when God’s ways are not our ways, when we wait for Him to raise us up, are times that require special alertness against attack. The evil one strikes when we struggle with anxiety. He roars and whispers, threatens and promises, and is intent on winning us in order to devour us. Two observations in these verses come to our aid. First the attack will end if we “resist him, standing firm in the faith” (v.9). Second, we are not alone. Other saints “throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (v. 9).

This letter might well end with the “Amen” in verse 11, but an interesting paragraph remains. It adds names and places, helping us remember that we are learning from our fathers in the faith, from real human beings.

1 Peter 5:12-14

**<sup>12</sup>With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. <sup>13</sup>She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. <sup>14</sup>Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.**

Babylon is a code word for Rome. It is worth noting that Peter’s early ministry was centered in Jerusalem with a responsibility to witness to Jews. He moved from Judea to the capital of the empire as the gospel spread “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Mark and Silas are believers, like us, who learned from the apostles and lived lives of adventure that brought honor to Christ.

1 Peter 5:10-11

**<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.**

This book ends with a great benediction. Amen and Amen.