

FBC POWELL, 7-21-19 AM NOTES

“The Power of Humility”

1 Peter 5:1-7

18 in Series, “Standing Firm in the True Grace of God”

Proverbs 22:4 (NASB) “The reward of **humility** and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life.”

Acts 20:19a (NASB) “Serving the Lord with all **humility**...”

Ephesians 4:1-2a (NASB) ¹ “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all **humility** and gentleness...”

Philippians 2:3 (NASB) “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility** of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”

James 1:21b (NASB) “...in **humility** receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”

1 Peter 5:5b (NASB) “...clothe yourselves with **humility** toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the **humble**.”

“Humility is a proper view of God, a proper view of our self, and an appropriate response which is total dependence on God.”

“[Humility] is simply the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all.”
- Andrew Murray

“And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil.”
- Andrew Murray

I. Humble Leadership (vv. 1-4)

A. The Operation of Leadership (vv. 1, 2a)

“*Elder* emphasizes the man’s spiritual maturity necessary for such ministry, and in many Protestant churches it is the official title chosen for the office. *Bishop* or *Overseer* states the general responsibility of guardianship. *Pastor* is the word ‘shepherd’ and expresses the priority duty of feeding or teaching the truth of God’s word.”
- John MacArthur

“It is significant that Peter used the plural **elders**. In reference to this ministry, the term always appears in the plural in the New Testament, affirming that the office was designed for a plurality of men.”
- John MacArthur

B. The Obligation of Leadership (vv. 2b – 3)

1. Elders / Pastors Must Keep Proper Motives (v. 2b)

2. Elders / Pastors Must Have a Proper Model (vv. 2c – 3)

1 Timothy 3:3b (NASB) “...free from the love of money.”

C. The Opportunity of Leadership (v. 4)

II. Humble Living (vv. 5-6)

A. Humility Before Man (v. 5a)

Ephesians 5:19-21 (NASB) ¹⁹ “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

B. Humility Before God (vv. 5b-6)

John 3:30 (NASB) “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

“God uses [people] who are weak and feeble enough to lean on Him.”

– Hudson Taylor

III. Humble Leaving (v. 7)

A. The Action – Casting (v. 7a)

B. The Object – Anxieties (v. 7b)

C. The Motive – He Cares (v. 7c)

Sermon 18: The Power of Humility

1 Peter 5:1-6

Humility may well be one of the most misunderstood words in the English language. Make no mistake; God desires, no, God *commands* His people and especially His leaders to be humble. That is really counter cultural in a world that honors human pride. The Scriptures are filled with exhortations and commands to be humble. Here is a small sampling of what the Scriptures consistently say.

Proverbs 22:4: “The reward of *humility and* the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life.” God rewards those who are truly humble.

Acts 20:19a: “serving the Lord with all *humility...*”

Ephesians 4:1-2a: “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all *humility* and gentleness...” A “worthy walk” includes humility.

Philippians 2:3: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with *humility* of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”

James 1:21b: "...in *humility* receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

1 Peter 5:5b: "... clothe yourselves with *humility* toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the *humble*."

Let's look deeper to make certain that we understand biblical humility. The Greek word most often translated "humility" means, to be brought low, or seeing ourselves small (because we are). In the New Testament, humility is always used in a positive sense. Putting all of that together, here is an expanded definition of humility: "Humility is a proper view of God, a proper view of self, and an appropriate response which is total dependence on God."

The best book I've ever read on humility is a small book by Andrew Murray entitled *Humility, The Beauty of Holiness*. Listen to this quote: "[Humility] is simply the sense of entire nothingness, which comes when we see how truly God is all, and in which we make way for God to be all." Murray also gives a description of the opposite of humility – pride. "And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil." [Andrew Murray, *Humility, The Beauty of Holiness*, page 13]

It is only when God is supreme, and we are totally submitted to Him in humility that He is properly glorified through us. To glorify God is our supreme purpose for existing.

With that background, let's jump into the text and see and experience the power of humility.

I. Humble Leadership (vv. 1-4)

Peter addresses these first four verses to the "*elders* among you." This is a timely passage for our church since soon we are going to present five men for you to decide whether or not they should be elders of this church. One of the key things you should look for in these men is their humility. One of the things you should pray for each of our current elders and each member of this church (including you) is humility.

To exhort (verse 1) means to "appeal" (NIV). Remember that the Christians to whom Peter was writing were under a lot of pressure. They were being persecuted and ostracized by non-believers. We saw the last message, in 1 Peter 4:12-19, that they were going through "fiery ordeals". They were in desperate need for godly leaders, humble elders who would shepherd them through these fiery ordeals they were going through. Let's focus on how leadership that is humble should function in the church.

A. The Operation of Leadership (vv. 1, 2a)

Peter is basically telling the church elders, "man up; shepherd the sheep who are under your care". The office of elder is not for wimpy men. These beleaguered Christians had been under some tough persecution and they needed assurance and guidance. The word "exhort" in verse 1 means to call alongside to encourage and motivate. That is what those beleaguered "sheep" desperately needed.

By way of information that will help you better understand these verses, there are three words that are used *interchangeably* to refer to the same leadership office in the church. The terms used are *Elders*, *Overseers* (some translations translate it *Bishops*), and *Pastors*. John MacArthur gives a good summary:

Elder emphasizes the man's spiritual maturity necessary for such ministry, and in many Protestant churches it is the official title chosen for the office. *Bishop* or *Overseer* states the general responsibility of guardianship. *Pastor* is the word 'shepherd' and expresses the priority duty of feeding or teaching the truth of God's word.

[John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Peter*, page 263]

It is interesting that MacArthur gives us another statement describing these elders that explains one of the reasons we moved to an Elder system of church leadership/government about fifteen years ago. "It is significant that Peter used the plural *elders*. In reference to this ministry, the term always appears in the plural in the New Testament, affirming that the office was designed for a plurality of men." [John MacArthur, page 264]

The only use of a singular "elder" is when the text is referring to a specific elder, such as when Peter describes himself in verse 1 as "your fellow elder". It is interesting that Peter identifies himself not as the first Pope, but as "your fellow elder".

The exhortation Peter gives to these elders in verse 2a is to "shepherd the flock of God among you..." That can be translated "pastor the flock of God among you..." I want to give a word of exhortation to our current elders and the five men you will be presented as potential elders soon. The primary task of elders is not to run the business of the church. Certainly, we have to deal with some business matters, but that is not our primary task. Our primary task is to "shepherd (pastor) the flock of God among you." Please know that is our heart and our desire. Sheep need a shepherd! Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, but He often ministers to His people through the elders of the church.

B. The Obligation of Leadership (vv. 2b-3)

In this passage we find some important obligations and cautions for spiritual leaders. If you want to know how to pray for our elders, this passage will help you.

1. Elders/Pastors Must Keep Proper Motives (v. 2b: "exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God...")

Leading God's people should be a delight, not a drag. An acquaintance of mine who is now with the Lord – Dr. Bob Burch, used to say something to the effect that the way a church is to function is that the pastors – the shepherds – "lead and feed" and the sheep are to "follow and swallow". That may be a little too simplistic, but there is a lot of truth to it. Also, the shepherds must be careful to never forget that the sheep are the flock of God and not the flock of the shepherds.

This obligation of elders to exercise oversight also speaks to the potential laziness of elders. Let me first focus on the staff elders. Most of our congregation understands that we have two categories of elders who have *equal authority* but different means of having their material needs met. We have staff elders who receive a salary from the church and non-staff elders who are either retired from a vocation or currently work full time in a non-church vocation. This is not the "A" team and the "B" team. Both staff and non-staff elders are hard workers, but those paid by the church have greater scrutiny from the members. I don't think that is necessarily a bad thing. A lazy person can get by with their sinful laziness on a church staff longer than anyone can in the business world. After all, the members of the church don't know if you're preparing sermons or reading *Sports Illustrated*. I don't know if it's true or not, but I heard of one staff

pastor who named his fishing boat, “visitation”. When someone called the office for him, the ministry assistant said, “He is out on visitation”. In all seriousness, I think that lazy pastors should be fired.

2. Elders / Pastors Must Have a Proper Model (vv. 2c-3: “not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock.”)

That phrase “sordid gain” is translated “dishonest gain” (NKJV) and “shameful gain” (ESV). It is speaking of people who do ministry to get rich. In giving qualifications for an elder, we see in 1 Timothy 3:3b: “...free from the love of money.”

Verse 2 ends with the word “eagerness”. The elders are to fulfill their obligations in the church eagerly, with enthusiasm, with energy, and with genuine excitement.

In verse 3 we find another caution for elders. If I had to summarize what this verse is saying, it would be, “Godly elders lead, not by intimidation, not by manipulation, but by example!” I heard that same truth spoken to elders in a cruder way: “Elders, if want your people to bleed, you must hemorrhage.” I know that is crude and some find it inappropriate, but I think it makes the point this text is making. An elder should never ask the members to do something that the elder is not willing to do.

Pray for our elders. One day we will stand before the Lord and give account of how we loved and led His sheep. Pray for the five men that will be presented to you in a few days. You can pray for them without knowing their names.

C. The Opportunity of Leadership (v. 4)

One day every elder will give an account to the Chief Shepherd (Jesus Christ Himself). They will say, “Lord, this is how I have shepherded your flock.” That humbles me, and to be honest, it scares me. I and each of the elders of this church will give an account to the Chief Shepherd concerning how we led (by what we taught, by the example we set, and by love we lived out). That is heavy, very heavy. Some will receive the unfading crown of glory. Some will not. The “you” in verse 4 is not every elder; it is the elders who faithfully shepherded the flock, not for sordid gain, not lording their authority over the flock, but those who were examples to the flock.

II. Humble Living (vv. 5-6)

These last two verses in the text are not focusing solely on elders or shepherds, but on all the sheep (believers). The phrase in verse 5, “clothe yourselves with humility” is interesting. The word translated “clothe” pictures the character quality of humility as a garment that is put on. In the everyday Greek language, it was used of a slave putting on an apron to serve others. We make a choice to put on humility like the putting on a work apron. This humility goes out in two directions.

A. Humility before Man (v. 5a)

The context here is in a local church. As we saw, the elders of the church are warned in verses 2-3 not to be dictators in the church. 1 Peter 5:3: “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.” After warning the elders not to be prideful in their authority and leadership, then he warns those in the church to submit to the elders. Do you see how it is supposed to operate? The elders lead with a servant’s heart desiring to be an

example in their attitude and behavior. The members, the sheep, submit to the shepherd's leadership.

The leadership in the church in Scripture is always a humble servant leadership. Humility is always connected to submission. The elders submit to the flock by putting the flock's wellbeing over their own comfort and serving them by being channels through which God's love can be poured out on them. The flock/members submit to the shepherds by following their leadership.

In Ephesians 5:19-21 we see a picture of a Holy Spirit filled church. After commanding the church to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18, Paul gives a picture of how a Spirit filled church operates. Ephesians 5:19-21: "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." That is a portrait of a humble church. Humility manifests itself with an attitude of mutual submission. Oh, the shepherds still lead, but their desire is always for the good of the flock and they are willing to sacrifice to see that the needs of the flock are met.

We are to put on humility like a servant putting on his work apron.

B. Humility before God (vv. 5b-6)

Humility before God manifests itself in the attitude of John the Baptist when he spoke of Jesus in John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease." As we live in submission to and in total dependence on God, we experience His mighty hand exalting us and lifting us up, not to stroke our ego, but to be a display case for His glory.

Hudson Taylor caught the essence of what it means to be clothed in humility toward God when He said, "God uses [people] who are weak and feeble enough to lean on Him." When we lean completely on him, He in His timing will exalt us by conforming us to the image of Christ and magnifying himself through our bodies (Philippians 1:20b).

Conclusion

There is a responsibility that is put on us when we hear truth. The question is: "are you going to apply what you have learned or are you going to ignore it?"

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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