

The Apron of Humility

1 Peter 5:5 (12/18/16)

Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

1 Peter 5:5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Clothe yourselves with humility. The Greek meaning of this phrase pictures putting on a servant's apron, tying and knotting it securely, and beginning to serve others. Put on the apron of humility. That's exactly what Christ did at Christmas.

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, who created all things, who upholds all things, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, stepped down from His throne in glory and came to earth as a babe in a manger, as a bond-servant, humbling himself to the point of death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8 describes Christ's humility and obedience.

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Christ laid aside His divine prerogatives. He took upon Him the form of a servant and submitted to His Father's will to come down, to humble Himself, to put on the apron of humility, to be born as a human being, to come down into a world of sinners. He esteemed us sinners above Himself and did all that was needed to lift us out of our filth and guilt and dirt and weakness, to draw us and give us new life and raise us up with Him, and to take us with Him back to the glories of heaven, all as our humble Redeemer. Christmas is the story of the humility of God. When the shepherds ran to see what the angel told them, they saw the unthinkable humility of God, God in human flesh lying in a feeding trough.

Jesus came to serve undeserving, guilty people. He came to meet needs, to love and give of Himself. At one point He literally laid aside his robe and tied on a slave's apron or towel and stooped down, going from one set of dirty feet to the next, doing what slaves do. Christ humbled Himself and came down. He submitted to His Father's will and came down to die on a Roman cross in deepest humility.

Through that cross He formed a body of believers in which all the members are called to submit to Him and to one another. Knowing we don't deserve a thing but condemnation and hell, we tie on the apron of humility and follow Christ's example to serve one another. We are motivated by God's grace and our love for Christ. Our service to others is not to be well thought of, not for human glory, and not so others notice, but to please that humble child of Bethlehem who is now exalted as our glorious Savior at the Father's right hand!

But we have a problem. We aren't very humble and we really don't like submitting to others. If we are going to be a Christmas kind of people of God, we have to learn how to put on this apron of humility and serve one another. Peter gives us three crisp, clear directions for how to wear this apron of humility.

First, wear the apron of humility with a submissive spirit to others in the church. *"You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders..."*

God is talking directly to you younger men and women – teens, young adults in the 20s. Peter may have in mind a team of young people who have specific ministries. In Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead, the young guys - the same Greek word *neoteroi* – got up and carried out their corpses. He is probably speaking to the next generation of leaders. You younger people with all your energy, vigor, and vision, we love you. 1 John 2:14 describes the young men like this, “You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

Young people have been greatly used of God throughout the centuries. Even in the Reformation, it was the students in the German universities who got fired up with the gospel given through Luther and other leaders and took it out to the people. In 1885 the Cambridge Seven, young college students, left everything and went to China as missionaries. C. T. Studd was one of them. He wrote, “Only one life will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

So Peter urges the younger believers with their passionate hearts to be sure to submit themselves to the older folks who have more experience and wisdom. Elders need to be godly, faithful, wise, and humble followers of Christ so they can provide structure and counsel and encouragement to the younger ones. The church is like an army where leaders and warriors must function together, all serving the Lord together. We’re here to do battle for the Lord in the devil’s domain; we need one another to fight the good fight of faith.

MacArthur says the younger tend to be “the most aggressive and headstrong members of any group.” Of course, that’s why we love them! Sitting here before me are motivated, passionate, visionary young men and women. We are so thankful for you. But don’t forget while being driven by passion and zeal, to submit and respect your elders. Check in with them. Get their counsel. Let them encourage and teach you. Don’t buy everything you hear out there hook, line, and sinker. When it comes to marriage or money or ministry or just managing your life, those older than you have wisdom for you. Only pride would lead you to think you already know it all. Your dad actually does know a few things. Well, maybe not about that latest video game or the difference between a Playstation 4 and an Xbox One. But if an elder gives you counsel about a young man, don’t be like the young lady Warren Wiersbe talks about who left the pastor’s office after receiving some warning saying, “I don’t care what you say or what God says about this. We’re getting married!” Remember those young punks who mocked Elisha, “Go up, you baldhead, go up, you bald head.” Elisha rebuked them strongly, and then two female bears came out and tore up 42 of them (2 Kings 2:23-25). So be careful what you call the elders. Leviticus 19:32 says you are to stand up before the gray head.

Both the elders and the younger men have responsibilities. Older, more mature believers have a responsibility to walk with God and be a helpful, good model for younger people. Younger believers should nurture a respectful attitude toward older believers and see them as part of God’s plan to help them grow. God designed this mutual responsibility in the church to provide good leadership and willing following! That’s a healthy, strong church!

Second, wear the apron of humility by nurturing a humble servant’s heart toward others –
“And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another...”

Now we’re digging down into the heart. Humility is the opposite of pride, and the issue isn’t, “Do I have pride,” but “How do I show my pride?” Pride infests every heart in this room. Our hearts swell quickly with pride’s cursed power. If you could squeeze your heart like a sponge, an ugly dark greenish blue thing called pride would squish out. So we have to pray and work hard to nurture humility in our relationships with one another. And it must be genuine humility; not a humility that you try to put on to impress people like the hump-backed Pharisee who wanted everyone to see how humble he was. No, God is talking about humility in the heart, in our attitudes, and lowly thinking as Paul described it in Philippians 2:3-5.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.

There are no big shots in the church. Whether in your marriage, your family, your relationships with others in the church or outside, there are no know-it-alls. We need to nurture loving humility first before God, then before others, and even with our enemies. Christ humbled himself to serve us. So should all of us tie that apron of humility on and don't let it slip off. Before God, you deserve nothing but His wrath! You have no merit to earn your salvation. Even your faith is a gift from God. Everything in the gospel negates any human pride; there is nothing in the gospel that encourages human pride. We aren't here to out-do or out-shine or out-maneuver one another. There is never a reason for crowing, showing, or blowing our horns. Our serving isn't about us. Christ is the focus in all our serving one another. Grab one of those slaves' aprons, tie it on tightly, and get busy washing feet. Serve others like Christ did.

Remember, God lays this on "all of you." All of you are to nurture humility. God's plan for you is to grow in humility. Be teachable. Be a learner. Be quick to admit wrong and quick to forgive others. Refuse to carry resentments and hurts against others. Selflessly serve in your marriage and family. Everyone in your family should be wearing servants' aprons and finding joy in the power of the Spirit to serve others. Kids, you claim Christ. So how are you serving your mom and dad? Do you have a humble attitude? Parents, God's plan includes serving your kids, but not indulging them or pampering them (that's for grandparents). Men, are you humbly serving your wife without blowing a horn every time you do something?

Third, we need to tie on that apron of humility because of what God thinks about pride and humility! *"For God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

This is crystal clear. God despises proud people and loves humble people. Peter is quoting from Proverbs 3 where it says, "He scoffs at the scoffers." Peter uses a military term. God opposes or stands against, proud people. God is arrayed like a warrior against anyone who thinks they don't need Him, thinks they are better than others, thinks they are righteous in themselves, or thinks they don't need to confess sin, forgive others, or pray for God's help.

Pride is the great sin. Chrysostom, an early church father, called it the mother of hell. Pride is mother of all sins, the essential vice, the utmost evil. Proverbs 8:13, *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Pride, arrogance, and the evil way, and the perverted mouth I hate.* There is nothing God despises more than pride, and we all carry some of it in the dark recesses of our hearts.

Let me give you a few evidences of pride so we can repent of them and forsake them. I have two cautions, however. First, we are not very good at identifying our pride; we're sure the other person is proud, but not us. Second, your pride with its desire to be noticed and well thought of and so easily takes offense when you are criticized, will pursue you all the way up to those golden gates of glory. Praise God, there'll be no pride in heaven. Here is a list by Stuart Scott of evidences of pride. These should help us recognize pride in our own lives, things that God hates. Pride is manifested when you...

- Complain against God. "I can't believe God let that happen to me!"
- Fail to give heart thanks. Proud people find it hard to give genuine thanks to others.
- Get angry when things don't go as you think they should. "I deserve better than this."
- You think you are better than others. You'd never say it, of course. We all have a little Winston Churchill in us, who said, "We are all worms, but I am a glow worm."
- Have an inflated view of your own importance.
- Bemoan what gifts and abilities you don't have and are jealous of others who have them.
- Insist on everything being perfect.
- Talk too much.

- Talk too much about yourself.
- Refuse to submit to a higher authority. This was Satan's chief sin that got him kicked out of heaven.
- Are consumed with what others think about you. You wait for the compliments and if they don't come you are hurt.
- Are easily offended or angered when corrected.
- Are not teachable, feeling we know it all.
- Are unkind or mean spirited in our words.
- Don't offer to serve.
- Have no compassion for others.
- Get defensive or flip the script to the other person when criticized.
- Refuse to admit you are wrong.
- Can't bring yourself to ask forgiveness.
- Spend little or no time in prayer.
- Give your opinion even when not asked.
- Minimize your own sin.
- Maximize others' sin.
- Get impatient or irritable with others. "Don't they know how important you are?"
- Are jealous of others.
- Use others for your own advancement.
- Cover your sins, faults, and mistakes.
- Use antics to draw attention to yourself.
- Feel like you don't need anyone else.
- Make sure others know you knew that.
- Your knowledge puffs us up above others.

God hates pride – self-centered, self-stuffed pride. Calvin wrote, "Let, then, this declaration of Peter be as a celestial thunderbolt to make men humble!"

God loves humble people. And right here in 1 Peter 5:5 He promises to pour rich, abundant grace into humble hearts. What is this grace that flows to those on the bottom, the lowly? Grace to find joy in serving, motivation to live for Christ, power to help fulfill His will, strength to persevere, willingness to forgive others, contentment and satisfaction in Christ even when other relationships are not going the way we would like them to go. I've asked forlorn wives hoping their husbands will change, "What if he never changes? Will Christ be your sufficiency?" Someone said all other graces travel in the vessel of humility. You can't have a proud love or proud patience or proud gentleness.

Only God can create humble hearts out of our pride-saturated hearts. When God saves a man or woman, He humbles them to become aware that their only hope is Christ. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Your cross I cling." There is nothing in the gospel to foster pride, only humility. Ephesians 4:1-2, *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, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.*

Humble people are thankful, teachable, approachable, compassionate, learners, asking questions rather than always displaying their knowledge, quick to admit wrong. Like Brad Bigney, pastor and author of *Gospel Treason*, says, "Confess your sin as first, most, and worst, being quick to show mercy and forgiveness to others."

What does a humble person look like? C. S. Lewis described him like this, "He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all!" Then he adds that the first step to nurturing humility "is to realize that one is proud."

So as we go through this Christmas Season, remember the humility of Christmas. The greatest and most awe-inspiring display of humility was when Christ came down from His glorious throne, joined the human race, and did all that was needed to save us from our sins! Has God smashed your pride and humbled your heart to receive His gift of eternal life? And Christians, deal with that pride every time it moves in your heart, your words, your reactions, in all your relationships. Don't boast about your humility, but ask God to help you nurture that self-denying, others-esteeming, Christ-like humility that brings God's sweet, enabling grace into your lives.