

**HUMILITY: THE APRON FOR ALL SEASONS
I PETER 5:5-7**

NEED: HUMILITY BEFORE GOD AND MEN

**PROPOSITION: HUMILITY IS THE APPROPRIATE APPAREL FOR THE
CHRISTIAN IN ALL RELATIONSHIPS.**

OBJECTIVE: TO ENCOURAGE HUMILITY IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

INTRODUCTION:

St. Augustine said concerning the Christian life, “Humility is first, second, and third in Christianity.” He was reflecting the sentiments of Simon Peter in our text.

Peter himself knew how difficult it is to keep a humble heart. He had been exposed to the greatest demonstration of humility that the human race has ever seen. It happened on the evening before the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was gathered with his distracted disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem. They were so distracted, wondering who might be first in the coming kingdom, that they neglected a very basic duty. No one gave attention to the washing of feet. The washing of the dirty feet after the travel into the city from Bethany was a physical and social necessity before they set down together for the passover meal.

Much to their embarrassment Jesus their Lord took off His outer garment and wrapped a towel around His waist. He then filled a basin of water and took a towel in His hand and began to do the servant’s chore of washing their feet. When He came to Simon Peter, Peter was quick to protest. He knew that Jesus should not be washing his feet because Jesus is the Lord. Jesus proceeded to explain to Peter that He was giving him an example. The way of the Kingdom of

God is the way of servanthood and humility. Instead of seeking the prominent place at the right hand of Jesus, Peter and the others should be seeking the place of service. He gave Peter and the others the admonition to go and do as He has done.

That dramatic demonstration of humility must have been in the mind of Peter when he penned these words. The admonition, “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,” actually means to put on the apron worn by the household slave. As a badge of their servanthood and their lack of status, slaves were required to wear such an apron. Peter’s admonition to the younger believers in those early churches was that they and all of the other believers should put on humility as their outward sign of servanthood before God. Indeed, humility is the apron for all seasons. It is an appropriate piece of attire whether you are relating to God or men.

I. THE BEAUTY OF THE APRON OF HUMILITY.

The word translated “humility” in our text was not used much in the pagan world. Actually, when the Greeks did use this word in their writings, they almost always used it in a negative context. But after the life and ministry of Jesus His followers took this word and made it a basic part of the Christian vocabulary. What the world despised, Jesus taught us to prize. In the Christian community the apron of humility is always a thing of beauty. If you will understand the nature of humility, you will begin to see some of its beauty.

1. The beauty of a teachable spirit.

One mark of true humility is a teachable spirit. While pride will boast of what it knows, humility will acknowledge what it does not know. It is noteworthy that Peter specifically addresses this

word to the younger members of the congregations and encourages them to have an attitude of submission toward the older members of the congregation. The assumption is that if they will have a teachable spirit, there is much that they can learn from those older Christians who have walked with the Lord for a long time. A teachable spirit is the opposite of arrogance - and it is always a beautiful thing.

2. The beauty of the grateful spirit.

Another mark of genuine humility is deep gratitude. Because the humble have an awareness of their own limitations and unworthiness, they are grateful for whatever blessing comes their way. The proud have very little gratitude since they see themselves as being deserving of what ever good has happened to them. When something bad happens all they do is complain because they feel that they did not deserve it. But the humble are very “down to earth.” They have a true estimate of their own need before God so they are grateful for every expression of God’s goodness toward them.

The story is told about the village organist giving a recital on the chapel organ in an English church. It was one of those old fashion organs where someone had to pump the bellows and thus creating the air that allowed the organ to be used in this particular village. The person who pump the bellows that sustained the organ was the village half-wit.

During the concert the organist would take an exaggerated bow after each presentation after each presentation and would acknowledge the applause of the people by saying, “Now I will play you” – and would name the next number. This had gone on through several different pieces.

After one such bow before the crowd and promise of another selection, the organist sat down at the instrument and put his hands on the key but there was no sound to the surprise of the audience. The head of the half-wit appeared from behind the curtain and he said: “Let’s have a little more “we” in it!” The humble person is always ready to put “the we” in the their vocabulary. They are gratefully aware of how much their lives were helped and enriched both by God and by others. It is a beautiful apron!

3. The beauty of the servant’s spirit.

The primary feature in humility is that of servanthood. This was both what Jesus did and what Jesus taught. Jesus is the only teacher that I am aware of that preached what He practiced.

The Apostle Paul takes the life of Jesus as the supreme example of what humility means. In his letter to the Philippian church he writes, “Let his mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Then he proceeds to demonstrate that the attitude that was prominent in Christ was that of humility expressed in servanthood. He said to the Philippians, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross! Included in Paul’s words was this word, “Taken the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” The servant spirit which is a basic expression of humility is a Christ-like spirit. It is this Christ-likeness that gives it its beauty. When you adorn yourself with the apron of humility you are following the example of the beautiful life of Christ Himself.

II. THE BLESSING OF THE APRON OF HUMILITY.

Peter is careful to point out the blessings that come to the person that wears the apron of humility. He sites these blessings in order to encourage us to appropriately adorn ourselves with this apron of servanthood.

1. It protects the unity of the body.

“Young man, in the same way, be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.” Peter remembered how pride had threatened the unity of the apolitical band before Jesus was crucified. It was in response to that divisiveness and pride that Jesus had humbled Himself and washed their feet. Peter must have sensed that some of the Christians assemblies were being threatened by new expressions of pride. He wanted to protect the unity of the assemblies. The best to protect the unity of the assemblies is for each believer to wear the apron of humility.

Many Christian assemblies are threatened in our day by such pride. Many times it has surfaced a long age division. Some churches are being destroyed by animosity between the young and the old. One of the outstanding leaders of our state called me just a few days ago seeking counsel about how to restore unity in a church that is being threatened by such a division. The young and the old have pitted themselves against each other, each claiming that they know what is best for the future of the church. They have lost their ability to listen to each other and to carry on a meaningful dialog about anything. The quickest way to restore unity to a church in such circumstances is for everyone to put on the beautiful apron of humility. It is almost impossible to divide a church where the young and the old are wearing the apron of humility.

2. It brings grace.

Paul quotes from the book of Proverbs. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

This proverb states God’s preference for the apron of humility. When ever God sees a manifestation of pride and arrogance in a human heart He resisted. He sets Himself to destroy that arrogant spirit. But when ever God sees a believer wearing the apron of humility, He always responds with grace. In this instance “grace” represents the fullness of the divine provision. Grace is whatever is needed for the living of life and the doing of the will of God. You find grace when you humble yourself before God and men.

3. It leads to promotion.

“Humble yourselves therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.”

God lifting a person up means that He is promoting him or exalting him. This was a statement that Peter heard Jesus repeat again and again. He kept reminding His disciples that those who exalt themselves will be humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted. He wanted them to understand that the principle of His kingdom is that of servanthood, not that of power and lordship over others. If He, their Lord, felt comfortable doing the servant’s task of washing their feet then surely they should feel comfortable washing each other’s feet. If you want to make progress in the kingdom of God, then you need to wear continually the apron of humility.

4. It frees from anxiety.

It is in this context that Peter gives us one of the most familiar admonitions in this book, “Cast all of your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” At first this admonition may seem to be out of context. However, it surely relates to the admonition in the verse before where Peter says,

“Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand.” When we humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand we let God be God and we give us any sense of responsibility that we have for being God. Anxiety comes into life when we began to accept responsibility for things that are not our responsibility. We find freedom from anxiety when we submit ourselves to God and to His providential Lordship over the circumstances of our lives. We reassure ourselves with the tremendous truth that “He cares for you,” and we remind ourselves that he is at work in every circumstance for our good. Humility will free you from worry and anxiety. Much of your anxiety is rooted in pride.

III. THE ADORNING OF THE APRON OF HUMILITY.

If this apron is so beautiful and brings such blessings, how do you put it on? The admonition says, “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.” But how do I do this? Without giving an exhaustive statement concerning the way to humility, let me just make two very helpful suggestions to you.

1. Before I share those two suggestions with you, let me remind you of something that Peter assumes. Peter assumes that God is at work in your life seeking to produce humility in you. God is at work already seeking to adorn you in the apron of humility. We see this in the admonition, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.” The verb translated “humble yourselves,” is actually a passive verb in the Greek. The idea in the word would be that we are to allow ourselves to be humbled. God is already at work seeking to dress us the apron of humility, but we must not resist what God is doing. How is God at work seeking to adorn us in the apron of humility?

1. God seeks to adorn us in the apron of humility by leading us to a deeper knowledge of ourselves.

It is in this context that we understand Paul's "thorn in the flesh." In his letter to the Corinthian Church Paul acknowledged that he was inclined toward spiritual pride because of the good things that had happened in his life. God gave him the painful "thorn in the flesh" to keep him in touch with who he really was. God gave him this continual, painful, humiliating thorn in the flesh so that he would continue to wear the apron of humility.

So God is at work in the things that he providentially puts in our way to help us know ourselves so that we will wear the apron of humility. Some of us may be inclined to be like the German Kaizer as his ballet described him. He said of the Kaizer "I cannot deny that my master was vain. He had to be (as all highest) the central figure in everything. If he went to a Christening, he wanted to be the baby, if he went to a wedding, he wanted to be the bride. If he went to a funeral, he wanted to be the corpse." God puts in our path experiences however to keep us reminded of our nothingness.

One old rabbi observed that God created man on the sixth day so that he would not be swollen up with pride. It would always be helpful for man to remember that "a flea preceded you in creation.." God wants us to be constantly reminded of our creaturelessness and our dependence upon Him.

2. God seeks to adorn us with the apron of humility by leading us into a deeper knowledge of himself.

You will remember that it was when God uncovered His glory before the eyes of Isaiah that Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me!” When Isaiah left the temple after gazing on the glory of the Holy One of the Ages he was wearing the apron of humility. He was saying to the Holy One of the Ages, “Here am I; send me!” He had a grateful and servant spirit.

Is this humility not what we need in our families? Would it not be a new day in your family if you went home today wearing the apron of humility? If you were to get off your highseat and put on the spirit of servanthood, miracles might begin to happen in those family relationships. Many of our relationships here in the Church would be dramatically improved if we began to wear the apron of humility. Some of you have broken fellowship with each other because you were not willing to wear the apron of humility. You were so committed to your perspective on an issue or your answer to a problem that you were unwilling to listen to anyone else. Your insistence upon your way prevailing has decimated relationships with others around you. If you will wear the apron of humility it will amaze you what God will do.

Your walk with God will take on new dominions when you begin to wear this apron. It is to the lowly in heart, the down to earth, the teachable that God begins to show His secrets. No wonder Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” I commend to you this morning that apron of humility.