Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Peter 5:5-7
Code: 60-48

We have the privilege each time we gather together because that's really the calling of God upon us to give our attention to His precious Word. And tonight is no exception. We gather together that we might learn; that we might know our God better and His commands for us. And so we come to our study of 1 Peter again and we embark now upon what really is the last section. We'll get into it tonight, not completing it, but we'll get a good start, I trust.

First Peter chapter 5 verses 5 through 14 compose the final section of this great epistle. And we'll take this section under one heading, "Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity," fundamental attitudes for spiritual maturity. I think any Christian who is really walking in the Spirit would say to himself or herself, "I want to be spiritually mature. I want to be spiritually effective. I want to be all that God wants me to be." Well that's fine to have that wish and to have that desire, but it only comes to pass when you build your life on certain fundamentals.

We here at Grace Church appreciate great music. I think very often we may take for granted the fact that men can play trumpets and trombones and ladies can play pianos and violins and all of those assorted things and folks can sing and do it with such expertise. But the truth of the matter is it is the product of a very, very clear grasp of and a great skill in the repetition of certain fundamental things, fundamentals of music. And I remember as a little boy taking piano lessons and they bored me to death. I have always been a very adventuresome person and even as a kid I couldn't sit still long enough to repeat scales over and over and over again. And yet that was essential. I remember when I took up the trumpet and decided I wanted to play the trumpet because I had such a hard time with eighty-eight keys I figured I could play three of them much easier. And so I began to try to learn the trumpet and I did and I played through elementary school and through junior high and high school and on into college and I played in trumpet trios and all of that. And I found, however, that it was the same kind of process, it was a matter of learning certain fundamentals. And once you learn those fundamentals then somebody could drop a sheet of music in front of you and you could apply those fundamentals.

I spent a lot of my life in athletics. It's basically the same thing. In terms of athletics, any good coach will drill his athletes on certain basic fundamentals. There are certain things in any applied athletic

event that are required, foundational principles and elements. And good teams and good athletes have mastered fundamentals.

Well, that is true also in the spiritual dimension. I think all of us would like to sort of go to sleep some time and wake up mature. Go to sleep and wake up profound. Go to sleep and wake up skilled in ministry, spiritually acute, wise. We'd like to wake up some morning and be able to apply all spiritual truth to all dimensions of our life. But it isn't the result of wishing or wanting or hoping or thinking or imagining or of even positively confessing, it's a result of the fundamentals. We must learn at some point in our Christian experience that we have to apply ourselves to certain spiritual fundamentals if we are going to be mature, if we are going to be effective, if we are going to be all that God would want us to be.

And so, with all of the profound things that Peter might have said to close this epistle, and it would be an exercise in imagination to concoct all of the things he might have said, all of the great mysteries of God he might have enlightened us about, all of the great divine secrets that he might have exposed for our understanding, all of the profound mysteries that are still hidden to us that he might have revealed. There would have been an infinite wealth of data in the mind of God which could have been given to us to expand our horizons, to help us see deeper and farther and higher into the things of God. But what did Peter do? He went back to the fundamentals, almost as if at the end he says, "Now by the way, let's get back to the basics." And so Peter chooses to reiterate the fundamental attitudes for spiritual maturity to this congregation to whom he writes that are scattered by persecution.

They are in great difficulty. They are suffering unjustly. In some cases they are suffering without mercy at the hands of people who have misrepresented them. They do not deserve the persecution that they are receiving. And so, all the more important that they get back in touch with the fundamentals. In times of prosperity, in times when everything goes well, it might be a little bit easier to conduct yourself in a spiritual way, but when all adversity has come against you like a flood, you better be good at the fundamentals because it's what you do with the fundamentals in the time of greatest stress that makes the greatest effect.

Now, what you have then, beginning in verse 5, is a series of imperatives, a series of commands. And they come in an almost staccato fashion, almost rapid-fire like a machine gun. One right after the other Peter fires them out. And they remind us of the basic attitudes necessary for our maturity. Now I want you to keep in mind that they all are attitudes. They have not so much to do with how we act as how we think, not so much to do with what our actions are as what our motives are. These are the matters of spiritual attitudes that are the building blocks for spiritual maturity.

Now remember, he has already exhorted the leaders in verses 1 to 4. He exhorted the elders there to shepherd the flock of God and we went in to that in detail. And now he turns in verse 5 from the shepherds to the sheep. And he uses the word "likewise." You see it there in verse 5. "Likewise" throughout this epistle is Peter's word for a transition to a new group. Back earlier in chapter 2 he was talking about various groups. In chapter 2 of this epistle he is concerned that we act in a certain way toward those who are around us, toward those who are in the world. In verse 13 he says, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as one in authority or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, to the praise of those who do right. All in authority, governors, kings," the implication here people in authority, "police, soldiers," whatever they are, "you are to submit yourselves to them."

Then he moves to a different group in verse 18. He says, "Servants, you be submissive to your masters with all respect." Then coming down into chapter 3 he picks up that word "likewise." "Likewise, you wives be submissive to your own husbands." So he starts out by saying you're to be submissive to all the authority. Servants, you're to be submissive to your masters. And likewise you wives, you be submissive to your husbands. So when we're over here in chapter 5 and we note the word "likewise," we get the idea that he's moving from the group he's just been talking about to a new group. He's been talking about leaders, now he's talking about people. He motivated the pastors to shepherd their flock, now he exhorts the sheep to proper spiritual attitudes.

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This applies to us then as sheep, to all of us, to all of you. And Peter will fire out command after command after command after command. You'll be familiar with them, you'll see them in a new and a fresh way, I'm quite sure. And you'll find it's wonderful review because we always have to go back to the basics, don't we, always have to go back to the fundamentals. And that's exactly where Peter takes us. If you're going to be mature, you get there by starting out with these basic attitudes.

Attitude number one, attitude number one, an attitude of submission, an attitude of submission; it's not as if he hasn't already talked about submission. In fact, I just told you in chapter 2 he talked about the fact that we're to be submissive to all authority. We're to be submissive servants to those who employ us and are over us. We're to be submissive in marriage. So submission is not a new theme here, in fact it's a relatively familiar one in the epistle. But now in chapter 5 he says that we are to be subject to elders. He writes, "You younger men likewise be subject to your elders."

Now he identifies young men here. Why does he do that? Why doesn't he just say everybody ought to submit to elders, everybody? Well, I'm not sure I can tell you what was in his mind or the mind of the Holy Spirit, but I can make a stab at it. First of all, it was young men who tended to be aggressive. Young men who, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy, tend to strive toward prominence, young men who are enamored with their own ideas and tend to be somewhat disparaging about the ideas of the older generation, young men who might be aspiring to the eldership, to the shepherd's role, and so he reminds the young men who would probably be the most head-strong in any assembly of believers that they are to be subject to the elders. It really wouldn't be an issue for old men; they would be the saintly, mature ones. It wouldn't be an issue for women because women already were subject to their own husbands. He made that clear in chapter 3. So really the only people within the congregation who would pose a sort of imminent threat to the submission aspect would be the younger men.

But I think the spirit of what he says sweeps through the whole congregation. We can simply assume that the older men were the older men and therefore wouldn't be subjected to the older men. And that the women knew their role and knew their place. And so all that remains really is the young men who would tend to be head-strong and maybe pursue roles of leadership which they were not suited for. So he starts out by saying, "Be subject to your elders." But the spirit of that pervades the whole of the church. All believers are to be subject to those who are over them in the Lord, who are their shepherds, who are the older, mature saints. Be subject. The word again, *hupotass*, means to line up under. It's a military term, it means to get in line under their leadership. And so he is saying, in effect, everybody, particularly the head-strong young men, needs to get in line under the authority of the elders and the shepherds, the pastors. And he may even include in the word “elders’ here the senior saints, those who are the models of spiritual maturity. It's a call for respect, beloved. It's a call for honor. It's a call to give deference to those in spiritual leadership.

I will tell you and I tell you this with an aching heart because I've endured this through the years, in some cases personally, in many cases through friendships with other men in the ministry, nothing is more distressing than a congregation of people who do not hold respect for those who are in spiritual authority over them. Conversely I confess to you, nothing is more discouraging to a congregation than irresponsible spiritual leadership. But where you have responsible godly and mature spiritual leadership, you are to give honor and deference and respect and submission to those. That is a fundamental attitude of spiritual maturity. That is a foundation. And I have seen in my lifetime the ebb and flow and the come and go of many gifted people who were given by God great natural gifts and by the Spirit of God significant spiritual gifts who never achieved a measure of spiritual maturity and usefulness because they never learned to slay their own pride, ambition and need to be preeminent, who never learned to submit to someone else's leadership and authority. That is a spiritual principle that should pervade the life of those in the church. We are to be submissive to those who are over us. It couldn't be clearer, "Be subject to your elders."

Now what is he talking about with this word "elders"? Does he mean just the old men? Well I would take it that back in verse 1 when he exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God, he's talking about the spiritual leaders, not just the older people. And I would assume that he here has the same thing in mind that you are to be subject to your elders and particularly is that noteworthy because he says, "You young men," assuming that the young men would be the ones prone to seek the seats of leadership they did not really deserve. And so I believe he's saying that we are to have an attitude of spiritual submission to those that God has placed over us as our shepherds.

Now I don't want you to get the idea that I have some personal agenda. I'm just teaching you the Bible and that's where it is and that's what it says. But I believe with all my heart that this can destroy churches and has and continues to destroy churches if it is not an attitude in the hearts of the people. The end of the letter to the Corinthians, the first letter, Paul writes, "I urge you, brethren," chapter 16 verse 15, "you know the household of Stephanus, that they were the firstfruits of Achaia and that they devoted themselves for ministry to the saints, I urge you that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors."

The people of God must learn to submit themselves to those in spiritual leadership. And it is not a question of perfection on our part. We're not perfect. It is a question of spirituality that you are to submit.

This is something that becomes a theme on the heart of the apostle Paul. Not only in a general sense does he say in Ephesians 5:21, "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ," in other words, generally we ought to be submissive to each other, but he gets very specific about those in leadership. Look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. This is a very important text. We'll be looking at it some months down the road in our study of 1 Thessalonians. But in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 he says this, and he's writing to this very noble church in Thessalonica, very godly people. As we have pointed out in our study of the Thessalonian church, though they were brand new Christians and had only known the Lord for a number of months and though they had not had the benefit of spiritual leadership being there, Paul staying just a brief time, and though they were in the midst of paganism which was at its worst, yet they were such a wonderful congregation. But he reminds them as men emerge in the role of spiritual leadership, and, of course, Paul and Silas and Timothy were leaders they already knew, and as more men moved into the role of leadership, this is what he says, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another." This is such significant advice.

And then he says, assuming some people are going to get out of line, verse 14, "You better admonish the unruly." You better admonish the unruly. The ones who will not submit need to be admonished or exhorted or warned.

So, Paul says to the Thessalonians, you need to appreciate the people who diligently labor among you, who do spiritual ministry in your midst, who have charge over you and who give you instruction. Those are elders. They teach you, they lead you. You are to esteem them very highly, you are to love them, not because they're so lovable but because of the work they have been called to do. That is a very essential spiritual attitude. And I promise you, if you do not have an attitude of submission toward those over you in the Lord, you give evidence of a lack of the foundation for spiritual maturity. And your life will be hindered in its growth.

In Titus, look at chapter 3 for a moment. A little broader context and yet the principle is the same. Paul says to Titus, as you go ministering in the church remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed. Be subject. He doesn't even qualify who these rulers and authorities are. It's very general, whether they are in the society or in the church. And then he says this, and here is the practicality of it, verse 2, "to malign no one." That is not to speak against anyone in authority, "to be uncontentious, to be gentle, to be showing every consideration for all men." This is to characterize believers. Our lives are submissive to those in spiritual leadership.

Look at Hebrews 13 and this may be the most direct and decisive text. Hebrews 13 verse 7 says, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you, remember them. And considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." So the first thing he says is the people who led you and taught you who live out the spiritual life, you imitate them, you imitate them. But then notice verse 17, he goes farther than just imitating them. He says in verse 17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Do what they say and submit to them. "For they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." They're responsible to God. Your responsibility to God is to submit. Their responsibility to God is to make sure their leadership is what it ought to be. "And if you will submit," this is so important, the middle of verse 17, "then you will let them do their work with joy and not with grief, because if they have to do it with grief, this is unprofitable for you." Nobody wants a grieving shepherd. Nobody wants a heart-broken leader. And yet church after church after church after church after church experiences that very reality. Because you have a people who won't submit, you have a grieving leader whose ministry becomes unprofitable.

One writer says, "In submission we engage the experience of those in our fellowship who are qualified to direct our efforts in growth and who then add the weight of their wise authority on the side of our willing spirit to help us do the things we would like to do and refrain from the things we don't want to do. They oversee the godly order in our souls," end quote. I like that. We engage their experience, we engage their wisdom, we engage their authority to oversee us in a godly order.

Spiritual maturity always calls for an attitude of submission. And if you don't have that, not only do you make the ministry difficult, the servant of the Lord sorrowful and grieving, but you will fail to have a cornerstone in your own spiritual life.

There's a second attitude that needs consideration that goes right along with the first one that Peter gives us and that is an attitude of humility. Immediately upon completing his first command he gives another one. Verse 5, "And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time." An attitude of submission is a twin to an attitude of humility. If the attitude of submission attacks self-promoting pride, the attitude of humility attacks self-love.

So, the matter of spiritual virtue is a matter of humility. The matter of maturity is a matter of humility, and notice how comprehensive. He says, "You younger men, I'm particularly concerned about you because you have the potential to be unruly, but all of you, notice that in verse 5, “all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another."

Now did you know that God has developed a certain garment where one size fits everybody? I was in New Orleans the other day and I walked by a store and there was a sales person in there, very aggressive, came out and said, "Why don't you come in? You might want to buy something." And so I walked in and I saw lots of clothes folded on shelves and I said, I said, it was women's clothes, I said, "I have a basic rule, I don't buy women's clothes for me and I don't buy women's clothes for my wife because I might get the wrong thing, especially if I'm out of town." And she said, "Well, it doesn't matter. All these clothes all fit everybody." I thought to myself, "If I brought home something for my wife that could fit anybody, she wouldn't take it as a compliment." She said, "Everything in the store fits everybody."

Well there's something in verse 5 that fits everybody too. And he says, "All of you need to put it on, you all need to clothe yourselves." That...that word "clothe" is a very, very interesting word. It's not as

general as it appears. The word literally means in the Greek to tie something on yourself with a knot or a bow, okay? Very specific word, *egkomboomai*, to tie something on yourself with a knot or a bow. Now the word was used of an apron which you tie on yourself with a knot or a bow. And it had particularly in mind a work apron. In fact, it had the apron that a slave put on in mind. A slave would put on an apron over his clothes to keep them clean, just like you might do when you go to work, just like a housewife might do around the house. In order to keep your clothes clean you put on an apron, you tie it in a knot or a bow. It became the word for putting on humble service. Garment yourself in the one-size-fits-all garment of humble service. Put on the apron of the slave. That's what he's saying.

Clothe yourselves with...the word “humility” is the word “lowly mindedness,” with an attitude that you are lowly, an attitude that you are not too good to serve, you are not too great to stoop. And by the way, this is totally foreign in the pagan world. Humility was not a virtue, you know that. Humility was not a virtue in the pagan world, just like it isn't a virtue today. Humble people today, they get mocked and trampled. They're called wimps by the world. This is the day of the macho man. This is the same day in Peter's day. Humility was no virtue. Humility was for weak and cowardly people. The only humility they tolerated was the involuntary humility of slavery. And so Peter is saying you need to put on the garment of a slave and take on a voluntary humility, a lowliness of mind in two directions, verse 5, "First toward one another,” toward one another.

Peter might have been thinking about his Lord. You remember the incident recorded in John 13 where it says that Jesus looked and the disciples’ feet were not washed and no one was there to do it. And so He got up and He girded himself and He stooped and washed their filthy feet. This is the Son of God who put that garment that fits all on and tied the knot in the slave's apron and bent down and washed their dirty feet. Peter probably remembered when the Lord put that on and when the Lord did that. And he says you need to put it on, too. You need to clothe yourself with the attitude of a slave, the attitude of a foot washer, the attitude of a servant toward one another. What does that mean? Toward other Christians.

Now we've been learning about that in Philippians chapter 2. He says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself." That's the key. You have to see others as more important than you are. That is a challenge. I mean, you just...you battle your fallen flesh and your pride on that one incessantly. To be able to see others as more important than yourselves is a...is a major spiritual victory. But that's what it takes. Don't be selfish, don't be conceited. With humility of mind regard others as more important than yourself. Then he says, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interest but the interest of others. Have the attitude in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And then he goes on to say how Christ Jesus was exalted with the Father, stooped, became a servant and gave Himself even in death in order that He might serve us, humbled Himself in an amazing, inconceivable way. And that's the

heart attitude you need to have. You need to stoop even to serve unworthy sinners. Put on the garment of a slave.

Now to support his exhortation in verse 5, Peter quotes from the Old Testament. He quotes Proverbs 3:34 which says, "God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble." This is reason to be humble. Why? Because God gives grace to the humble but He opposes the proud. By the way, James quotes that same verse, Proverbs 3:34, in James 4:6, says the same thing, "God is opposed to the proud, gives grace to the humble." The only difference between this quote and what the Old Testament Greek Septuagint says is the Old Testament uses the word “Lord,” and Peter substitutes the word “God,” but both obviously have reference to the same person. That's an Old Testament axiom that must have been very common. Peter used it, James used it. And the axiom says, "It's wise to clothe yourself with humility toward each other because God will give you grace if you do and God will fight against you if you don't." That's pretty good motivation. God is opposed to the proud.

You say, "Why is He opposed to the proud?" Very simply, He hates pride. God hates it. He hates pride. And that couldn't be more explicitly revealed in Scripture. Proverbs 6:16, "There are six things which the Lord hates, yes seven which are an abomination to Him." He starts off, "Haughty eyes," it's another word for pride, haughty eyes. He hates pride. In Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth I hate."

You know why God opposes the proud now, don't you? He hates pride. He despises it. Do you know what sin it was that caused Lucifer to be thrown out of heaven? What was it? Pride, I will, I will, I will, I'll be like the Most High and I will ascend, and so forth, pride. And God's grace is reserved for the humble.

Perhaps no one has said it better than Isaiah. In Isaiah 57 and verse 15, "For thus says the high and exalted one who lives forever, whose name is holy, ‘I dwell on a high and holy place and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite.’" Isn't that something? God says, "I live on a high and holy place. And who lives with Me there? Not the high and lifted up, but the lowly, they live there with Me."

Isaiah says it again, a message from God in Isaiah 66:2, "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble." God gives grace. What does He mean grace? Blessing, He blesses the life of the humble and He opposes the proud. I see people stumbling around all the time trying to fix up their life, stumbling around trying to find some kind of solution, some kind of fix, some kind of therapy that will work, some kind of counseling that will solve their problems, some kind of book that will deliver them

from their supposed dilemma and the bottom line may be there is no deliverance, my friend, because you are not experiencing the grace of God, you are rather experiencing the opposing hand of God in your life because you are proud. God opposes the proud and He gives grace to the humble.

So, Peter starts out then by saying you ought to be humble toward each other so that you can know the grace of God and not the opposition of God. Then secondly he says, you better be humble not only toward each other but toward God. This is so straight-forward. Look at verse 6, and this will open some richness of thought. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time." Since God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble, therefore you better humble yourself and not only toward one another but under the mighty hand of God. Based on that scriptural truth quoted in verse 5, Peter gives a clear command to humble ourselves under God. We better not rise up and think ourselves equal with God. We better not fight God. We better not contest God's wisdom. We better be meek and lowly and humble whatever God brings into our life. Whatever He brings we humble ourselves, we humble ourselves. We accept it from His hand.

The Old Testament has so much to say about this, I feel somewhat pressed, but let me just give you a few scriptures that will open this rich truth. Micah 6:8, "He has told you, oh man, what is good." And what is that? “What does the Lord require of you?" Listen to this, "To do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." What does He require? You walk humbly with Him. What does that mean? You walk under His mighty hand. You walk under His mighty hand.

You say, "What does that mean?" Well, the mighty hand of God is an Old Testament symbol of God's covering power, God's controlling power, God's sovereignty. God is in charge. The mighty hand of God is the hand of God in charge of you. That's what it means. It is the power of God working in the experience of men, always accomplishing His sovereign loving purpose. The mighty hand of God means different things at different times. Sometimes the mighty hand of God is used to deliver the believer from trouble. Sometimes the mighty hand of God is used to protect the believer through a time of testing. It's a shelter, rather than a deliverance. Sometimes the mighty hand of God is used as a chastening hand, bringing blows against the believer. But always it is the sovereign mighty hand of God, whether for deliverance, for testing, for chastening, always God's mighty hand.

Look with me to Exodus chapter 3 and let me let you see the mighty hand of God at work. In the life of Moses, in the great confrontation at the burning bush and then God's call to Moses to lead His people out. They are in bondage in Egypt. And in Exodus chapter 3 verse 19, "God says, I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go except under compulsion." God says, "Look, I know

that...that Pharaoh is not going to let the people of God go." "So, God says, I will stretch out My hand, the mighty hand of God, and strike Egypt with all My miracles that I shall do in the midst of it, and after that He will let you go and the mighty hand of God becomes the hand of what? Of deliverance, delivering the people as He strikes the blow against Pharaoh and his forces. God's hand is a delivering hand, a hand of deliverance.

Would you notice Job chapter 30 and verse 21. By the way, there are a number of other Old Testament scriptures that speak about the mighty hand of God, but for sake of time we move to the second point. Job chapter 30 verse 21, verse 20, backing up, Job is pouring out his heart because he's going through a terrible test, unbelievable, how terrible his life has become. Verse 20 he says, "I cry out to Thee for help, Thou didst not answer me. I stand up. Thou dost now turn Thy attention against me. Thou hast become cruel to me. With the might of Thy hand Thou doest persecute me." Here the mighty hand of God is not the hand of deliverance, here the mighty hand of God is the hand of testing, of testing, of perfection, of maturing, so that he can come out as gold, so that in the end he can say, “I heard of you with the hearing of mine ear but now my eye seeth You and I repent in dust and ashes.” Now I see You, God, like I never saw You before. Now I hate myself and I hate my sin and I adore You. Oh what a spiritual progress that is. The mighty hand of God may be for deliverance. The mighty hand of God may be a hand of pressure that may even appear cruel, but it is a hand of perfection, of testing.

Would you look with me at Ezekiel. There might be a number of scriptures that we could look at, but look at Ezekiel chapter 20. And here comes the Word of the Lord against Israel. In Ezekiel 20 and verse 33, "As I live, declares the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I shall be king over you." Down in verse 37, "I will make you pass under the rod and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me." Here is the mighty hand of God seen in purging, chastening, judgment, punishment as God purifies His people, as God chastens them for their sin.

So, Peter says, "Look, you just need to humble yourself, whether the mighty hand of God is there to deliver you, whether the mighty hand of God is there to protect you through testing that seems so difficult, or whether the mighty hand of God is there to, as it were, strike you in chastening, submit yourself, humble yourself, don't question God, don't argue with God, don't debate with God. Humble yourself under His will, under His Word, under His power."

You see, this is very direct for these readers. They're under God's hand and it isn't the hand of deliverance. In some cases it might be the hand of chastening, but mostly it's the hand of testing. He's covering them and they're going through this terrible time of testing. And Peter is saying, look,

you need to accept that God-controlled experience. You don't need to fight it. You don't need to argue with it. You accept the mighty hand of God over you in this time of testing, as God puts you through a trial because you know, verse 6, that He may exalt you at the proper time. What's the proper time? His time, not our time, His time, the perfect time for God to lift you up. He knows when it is.

You say, "When will it be?" Well, it will be when He's accomplished His purpose. And only He knows His purpose. First Timothy 2:6 says Jesus gave Himself a ransom at the proper time. In God's perfect timing, He gave Himself a ransom. Titus 1:3 says, "The hope of eternal life came at the proper time, even His Word." Christ came at the proper time. The Word came at the proper time. And your exaltation, your being lifted up, the word means to be lifted up out of the trouble, will come at the proper time. But until the proper time, what are you to do? Humble yourself. We don't know much about that. That's a building block, that's a cornerstone, that's a foundation stone to spiritual maturity. And if we fight God at that point, we literally destroy the future for us. So it's important to remind these readers that while you are under the mighty hand of God and He brings pressure against you to test you, to purge you, to purify you and you are suffering through very difficult experiences, you're not to become discouraged, you're not to judge God as unkind or unfair, you're to be humble.

Warren Weirsbe said, "One of the evidences of our pride is our impatience with God. And one of the reasons for our suffering is that we might learn patience." God has to teach us that. And the way to be able to remain humble under God's hand, what's the way to do that? It's the third attitude, verse 7, very simple, "Casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you." That's the way to be humble. That's the way to remain under it. This is the third attitude, an attitude of trust, an attitude of trust.

Humility, what does it require? Much prayer for the death of pride. Don't ever think you will be easily humbled. It takes much prayer, much prayer. Secondly, it takes much rejection of praise, much rejection of praise. Thirdly, it takes much confession of sin. But fourthly, it takes much confidence in a caring God. I can't humble myself under God's pressure if I don't think He cares, but I can if I do. And so Peter says you have to have an attitude of trust. Trust in what? In His care so that you cast all your anxiety on Him because you know He cares for you. And so you're able to say, "Lord, I...it's difficult and I...I can't handle the trial, but I'm going to give You the whole deal because I know You care for me."

The word "casting," it's used of throwing something on something. For example, throwing a blanket over a horse, or a donkey, a mule; that's how it's used in Luke 19:35, throwing a blanket on an animal. Peter says, "Just cast it on, just throw it on Him all your anxiety." What's the anxiety? All of

the discontent, discouragement, despair, questioning, wondering, pain, suffering that you're going through, just give it all to Him, turn it in for trust in the God who really cares about you.

Hannah is a great illustration. She didn't have a little boy and for a Jewish mother not to have a little boy was a real problem. And so it says in 1 Samuel 1:10, "She, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly." She was one broken-hearted woman. And God had her at that time under the mighty hand of testing. So she made a vow, she said, "Oh Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maid servant and remember me and not forget Your maid servant but will give Your maid servant a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life and a razor will never come on his head." I'll not only give him back to You, but I'll take a Nazarite vow for him so that he'll give no attention to his physical looks and he'll devote his whole life to You. And so it came about as she was continuing praying before the Lord that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving but her voice wasn't heard so Eli thought she was drunk. And Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you." Hannah answered and said, "No, my Lord, I'm a woman oppressed in spirit, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, I've poured out my soul before God." I'm under the mighty hand of God and it's painful and I'm praying. I've given God my burden. "Don't consider your maidservant as a worthless woman. I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation." And Eli answered and said, "Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him." And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad. Then God gave her a child.

What happened to her? It says in verse 18, she went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad. Why? How was it no longer sad? Nothing had changed? No. But what had she done with the burden? Gave it to the Lord, gave it to the Lord.

That's the issue. Why? Because He cares for you; He does, because He cares for you. There's no doubt in my mind that Peter had in mind Psalm 55:22 when he said that. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you, He will never allow the righteous to be shaken," oh that's good. "Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you, He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." He cares for you. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "If He takes care of the lilies of the field, do you think He'll clothe you? If He feeds the birds of the air, do you think He'll feed you?" Paul says, "My God shall supply (what?) all your need."

So, Peter says, "Let's get back to basics, folks." Spiritual maturity begins with some fundamentals: An attitude of submission to those in spiritual authority, an attitude of humility toward others, toward God

under His mighty hand, and an attitude of trust that says I can humble myself because I'm going to give this whole burden to the God who really cares. Those are the fundamental attitudes that produce spiritual maturity. Without them, it doesn't happen. And there are more but that's for next time. Let's pray.

Father, when we think about Hannah going to the temple and praying and the high priest mistaking her for being drunk, we are reminded of some of the times when we're bearing burdens that in themselves are so great to bear and then people come along in their insensitivity and heap more burdens on us. But we thank You for the testimony of this dear woman, who though burdened so deeply and under such great distress found in the place of prayer that she could yield that burden to the God who cares. Lord, help us to know there aren't any secrets, any short-cuts. True spirituality is the product of some fundamental attitudes: One is submission, another is humility to men and to God, another is the ability to trust the God who cares and so accept whatever His mighty hand brings into our life. Oh God, may this church and this congregation and each of us begin to build our life on these cornerstones. For the Savior's sake we pray. Amen.

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