

1Peter 11-07-22a

This is Friday, the 22nd of July, 2011. We continue our study in the book of first Peter. We're in chapter five, verse seven, six and seven and eight, that periphery, that bursting radius there.

I have to backtrack just a little bit, go forward a little bit more, but that's our locale. We'll begin as we typically do with a word of prayer. Father, thank you for another opportunity to spend time together in the study of your word.

We pray that our time will be profitable to each one who partakes of it, that all of us will find in this portion of your word, truth that will illuminate us and enable us and help us to fulfill your plan and purpose in our lives. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. This chapter has begun the final approach for landing here.

Peter is getting ready to close his letter. And so he is recapitulating and summarizing in some ways, the themes that have distinguished this particular epistle. And he has spent the last couple of paragraphs talking about the interrelationships in the church.

And it's an interesting observation to make when it comes to the ideas of equality. You think about Jefferson writing in the declaration, we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are et cetera and so forth. And so we look at the record of human history and we look at cultures and civilizations that did not have the influence of Christianity in them and we find that although we take it for granted now, in much of history and in most of the rest of the world in other times and other climes, this has not been anything that was self-evident.

You know, Jefferson said it's self-evident. Well, it wasn't really self-evident for thousands of years. Romans didn't consider their slaves to be their equals.

They didn't figure they had any equal rights. Slave dies in the performance of his duties. Well, that's kind of a monetary loss, but it's not a big deal.

You know, the Chinese deciding that they didn't want girl babies, they just toss them out and try again. Over and over again in many different places, the idea of equality of value in terms of the value of a human life and a human soul, regardless of its gender or its age or its status or its standing or its possession of riches or its genealogy or anything else, it was really unknown. And a lot of your militant atheists and things today are saying, oh, throw out Christianity, let's get rid of it.

And what they don't realize is that as you try to chop those roots away, you're gonna wither the branches and fruit that have sprung there from. And in our culture, a lot of these things that people sort of take for granted that, oh, yes, of course, women's rights and sanctity of human life. And we don't believe in eugenics and we don't believe in snuffing out the old because they're a

liability.

And it doesn't matter if you're handicapped. It doesn't matter if you've got an abnormality or problem. We value you, we're gonna take care of you.

We'll spend however much money it takes to keep you alive. And we don't look at you as lesser. Well, this is entirely derived from Christianity, from the values that come from the Bible, entirely.

Canvas history and see if you can find some other culture from which this derives. It doesn't come from Greece and it doesn't come from Rome and it doesn't come from Egypt and it doesn't come from your Asian cultures or your Arabic cultures. It doesn't come from your African or your South American or, I mean, search the world.

See if you can find that somewhere. It is Christian. It is Judeo-Christian, if you will, the value of individuals.

So we come to the passage here and Peter says, well, as you look at your congregation, there are inequalities. And we say, well, this seems a little bit of a conflict. We just got through establishing that in Christ, there is no, neither Jew nor Greek, there's slave or free and the male or female.

We are all one in Christ. And what we have to distinguish, identity and the intrinsic value of someone's life and someone's soul as over against function. And it's easily done.

We're all familiar with the military analogy that I've used over and over again. Human worth, human value does not change because you are in a subordinate position, a subordinate rank, a subordinate job, because you are a man under authority. The Roman centurion, he says, I am a man under authority.

I say to one, go when he goes, another come when he comes. And I understand how this works. And he told Jesus, I know that you have the authority to say a thing and it will be so.

You don't have to come under my roof. And Jesus said, this guy's got faith that's rare. I typically don't find it in Israel.

And here's this Roman that has figured it out. So when it comes to gender issues, there's a lot of conflict in the large denominational type churches. Well, what is the role of women? And isn't it misogynistic and bigoted to not let women preach and not ordain them and this, that, and the other.

And there is a difficulty in distinguishing the domain, the purview under which you are evaluating worth. And on a battlefield, what's worth more, five corporals or one general? Well, it depends on what you're talking about. In terms of the value of human life, they're equally precious.

In terms of winning the war, you expend the five corporals, you protect the general. He's functionally more valuable in that scenario. In the church, there are functionally more valuable people.

They are the presbuteroi. And it's not so much age as it is leadership. And we've covered this in detail.

Anybody can be a leader. If somebody is following you, you are the leader. And so you have the opportunities as well as the obligations that go with that leadership function.

All parents are leaders. All older siblings are leaders. All people who have more experience when it comes to a particular endeavor, a particular area, a particular task, well, then you can... A lot of people today have got to go find a 12-year-old to help them figure out their PDA or their computer.

And as soon as you ask that question, the roles reverse. And now that 12-year-old is the presbuterois. Let me show you how to get this thing to change your ringtone or how to get it to get your email off the web or whatever.

And you submit to the experience and the wisdom that you have voluntarily applied to in talking to this person. So it doesn't change intrinsic worth. It doesn't change worth in the eyes of God.

It doesn't change the infinite price that the Lord Jesus Christ paid to redeem us. And if people could think more clearly about function, when wives are submissive to their husbands, when employees are submissive to their employers, when children are submissive to their parents, it is not a giving up of worth. It is not a admission or a tacit statement that, well, I'm allowing myself to be denigrated, to be devalued.

It's functional. Function is different than the intrinsic part of it. So we come to this, and the elders who are among you, I exhort.

And this is basically any time you are in the position to be of benefit to others because of your experience, because of your knowledge, because of your time in the word, because of your role that you fulfill, here are the things to watch out for. Do it carefully. Do it for the right reasons.

Don't let it go to your head. Don't make it an avenue for abuse or oppression. Don't merchandise it.

Don't do it for gain. Don't try to leverage it into something that it isn't. Look at it as a service to God on behalf of brethren and as edification for the church.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory. And we've seen that the emphasis there is glory. The glory of God has been in view throughout 1 Peter.

And this crown is not a ruler's crown. It is a victor's crown. This is not the crown that says you may sit on the throne and dictate.

This is the throne that says you ran your race well. You didn't step out of bounds. You didn't disqualify yourself.

This is sort of like the T-shirt. It's not an exact analogy, but many of you and more of you than me probably have participated in something where if you just finish, you get the T-shirt. You do a half marathon or a marathon or a 10K relay or some such thing.

And there are some winners that get a trophy or something, but everybody that finishes, everybody that participates gets a thing. And this is really what Peter has in view. It's particularly evident if you continue forward in the context, which is what we're gonna do now.

We saw likewise you, Naodoroi, you who are in the other functional position. And again, this is functional. It's not anything else.

And then we saw in verse five, when it says in English here, yes, all of you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility. And I mentioned to you that there's kind of some difficulty here in the Greek. And one thing you notice, even if you take the Greek text here, and even if you include the to one another, I noticed this week as I was reviewing that the conjunction, the adversative conjunction, *da*, that's in here is placed so that the best translation of this, leaving all the words in, is this way.

Yes, all of you be submissive and be clothed with humility toward one another. The one another goes with the clothed, not with the submissive. *Da* comes before one another.

And *da* itself is post-positive. So you can't move the one another to the wrong side. And I'm not real sure why they did it.

But I was looking around and I found that the Net Bible, the New English translation, if you check that, this is exactly how they translate this. In the same way, you who are younger be subject to the elders and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. And so they, I was happy that after I decided that's how it ought to be translated, somebody else had the same thought.

Because, and we talked about this clothed with, this isn't gird yourself. There's an entirely different word for that. This is be decorated with, or be distinguished by.

This is a type of apparel that seems to be a distinguishing mark. Kind of like wearing your blazer if you're a student at an academy and everybody wears the uniform. Have as your uniform, have as your regular mark of identification, humility around one another.

And so regardless of whether you are a *presbudoros* or a *neodoros*, you, it should be done in

humility. You submit humbly, you exert authority humbly. This is the identifying mark.

Because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. This is a quote from Proverbs 334. God scorns the scornful, but is gracious to the humble.

And both here and in James, where you remember he also quotes Proverbs 334, but he giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Both Peter and James quote the same passage. And both of them quote it word for word from the Septuagint.

And so they are assuming familiarity on the part of their audience with the Greek translation of the Old Testament. And that is the translation they quote. Well, it might not do us any harm to keep a finger in 1 Peter 5 and go back to Proverbs 3 and look at the context.

This is our well-established understanding that if somebody in the New Testament quotes the Old, they expect us to be familiar with the context. So we'll go to Proverbs 3 and see what's going on by the time we get to verse 34. We start up in verse 27.

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Don't say to your neighbor, go and come back and tomorrow I will give it when you have it with you. And if you're wondering about that, this is just because you can.

It's manipulative. I've got some leverage. I've got a thing that you want.

So I can make you go away and come back because you're kind of stuck getting this thing from me. And don't use what you have to manipulate other people just for the sake of showing that you have control. I have the thing you need, so we'll do this thing at my convenience.

That would not be a humble attitude. Do not devise evil against your neighbor for he dwells by you for safety's sake. And do not strive with a man without cause.

If he has done you no harm. All of these are exercises of power that you have. You have the ability to do this in some way, but just because you can, doesn't give you a license to do so.

Do not envy the oppressor, choose none of his ways for the perverse person is an abomination to the Lord, but his secret counsel is with the upright. And you get the idea that this is probably the bookmark or the idea that brought Peter's mind to this passage. He's been talking about the potential for oppression, the potential to abuse authority, not to do so.

And before that, he was talking about these Jews of the diaspora who live in a place where people have this power and do use it because they're Gentiles and they're ne'er-do-wells and they persecute what they don't understand. They persecute what they don't agree with. And these Jewish Christians are a minority and there is a temptation for people to kind of gang up on the little guy if they're petty.

And so Peter's mind has returned to this passage. And it's a reminder that God, the Holy Spirit, will bring to our minds passages of scripture that we know. This is why we memorize.

This is why we want to meditate and review passages that we're currently studying because if we don't have the word of God active and available in our soul, what is the Holy Spirit going to speak with? It's what he has done with Peter. And so he comes to this and he says, "'The perverse person is an abomination to the Lord, 'but God's secret counsel is with the upright.'" Notice it's secret counsel. It isn't apparent to the world that God is on the side of the underdog here, but he is.

It is hidden. God moves in mysterious ways and this is never more evident than when you find yourself in conflict with the godless or you find yourself at odds, perhaps under their control in some way. And all they can see is you don't have an answer.

You don't have an argument. You don't have any leverage. You don't have any power in this situation.

And they want to overween and overwhelm your secular-minded professors in college classrooms love to do this. They've got power over the student. Student can't get too contrary or their grade will suffer.

There's great power. And even though the student is the one that has paid the money, that pays the professor's salary ultimately, the professor in the classroom has godlike powers of life and death and can affect the student's fate. And so there is this unfair advantage, if you will, when it comes to discussion, especially between those that are of the secular humanist persuasion and Christian students.

And we find this in other realms as well, the workplace, social situations. And the perverse person is an abomination to the Lord. And we have to make a choice when we find ourselves or we observe our kids perhaps in this situation.

Are we going to try to pit leverage against leverage in the human realm? Are we going to recognize that all is not what it seems? We're not limited to the earthly plane. There is an area that these people don't have access to that we do, which is the eternal, the beyond mundane. And God's secret counsel is with us.

These people may think they're going to prevail. They may think that it's only a matter of time. They may think that they're going to use their authority or their advantage in some way.

And we have to not fall down to the mundane level and be trapped in that mode of thinking. And so this is Peter's exhortation. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

And we need to keep that in mind. It doesn't mean that God is going to give you victory in that

particular situation at that particular moment. The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked.

Now, how long does it take before a curse bears its fruit? Don't know. If the curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, it doesn't mean the house of the wicked is about to burn down or fall over or everybody in it's going to die. This is an invisible truth.

It's something we know, and we ought to feel sorry for them. Our view of people trapped in the earthly, mundane, secularist mode of thinking ought to be pity. This is how we come to the point of loving our enemies and doing good to those who hate us and praying for those who spitefully use us because think about it.

What should our attitude be towards someone on whose house the curse of God has fallen? I cannot help but think that when Moses looked at Pharaoh, having lost his firstborn son, that there was some part of his heart that pitied him, felt sorry for him. Nobody wants to see someone bereaved of their offspring. I don't care how ugly they might've been or how arrogant or anything else.

Who wants to see someone's child die as a consequence of judgment? The curse of God rests on these people. And instead of being intimidated, instead of being confused, instead of being cowed or driven to the corner, the proper attitude is to recognize that, we're going to come out of this smelling like roses. We're going to go into the eternal future.

We're going to be in the bright realms of glory with the Lord Jesus for all eternity. Many of these people are headed down into a dark abyss in this life and in the next. And it's tragic, it's pitiful, it's sorrow inducing.

And far from feeling like, well, I've got to get mine and I've got to show you and I've got to respond in kind and so on. We ought to feel bad for them. And that's the idea here.

The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the just. I'll take the blessing of God on my home over winning any argument, prevailing in any debate, getting any good grade that I turned out to not get, any preference or consideration at work or socially or in the family or anyplace else. What do you want? Do you want a little momentary victory in some happenstance or do you want the blessing of God resting on your house? We want the blessing, obviously.

Surely he scorns the scornful. I don't need to scorn the scornful, although I am sorely tempted. And I often fall for that temptation.

I get into discussions with people and they start scorning me and I find elegant ways to reflect their scorn right back at them. And it's not really the best answer. It's not the biblical answer.

Let God scorn the scorner. God will scorn them. God's curse is gonna fall on them.

God will deal with them. God will recompense. Vengeance is mine.

I will repay, saith the Lord. We will retain and exploit the blessing of God on us and on our house if we maintain our humility. And it's pretty difficult to be flippant and to be sassy and to be insulting to someone if you're cultivating humility.

You don't see very many humble people dishing as good as they get. You know, it's kind of mutually exclusive. You can either be sort of a rascal and talking to somebody and give as good as you get, or in humility, you can try to present the truth in a way that allows room for someone to change their mind.

This is my constant challenge when I'm in discussion with atheists and agnostics and secular people of all stripes, is not to use my wit, which is capable of turning their attitude back on them, and instead to be balanced and to be kind and to be thoughtful and to present the truth of God in a way that they have to stop and consider it. Let God do the scorning. Let God do the recompensing.

We want to reflect Christ. And you never see Jesus returning personal insults. He does some categorical denunciation of the Pharisees, but he never got in the face of an individual Pharisee and said, you know, let me tell you what a hypocrite you are.

You just don't see the Lord doing that. God will scorn the scornful, but he will give grace to the humble. The wise shall inherit what? Look at Proverbs 335.

Is this not what the fruit of our study was on the crown? The wise shall inherit glory. That's what the crown is. It's inheriting glory.

It's entering into, and we do this collectively. We do this together. The glory of the Lord Jesus that is going to be revealed is coming.

To what extent will we celebrate it and reflect it and enter into it? That's really the inheritance. That's really the crown. But shame shall be the legacy of fools.

They create their own legacy and we certainly don't want to be of those fools that have that legacy. So we want to be wise and not fools, understanding what the will of the Lord is. So God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

This is Peter's reiteration of that passage. We see its context. This is in the context of dealing with people who may or may not share our attitude and share our faith and share our relationship with the Lord.

If they are scornful, if they are oppressive, leave it to God. And so Peter continues in verse six and he says, and God will exalt you in Kairos, in time. It doesn't say due time.

The implication, the suggestion is that this is the proper time or the right time, but it just says in time. God will exalt you in time. He'll pick the time, maybe now, maybe later.

He may demonstrate to these people and in some subsequent situation, how wrong they have been. It may not be until the Lord returns, but in time, at a time of God's choosing, he will exalt the humble. Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are they who, blessed are the poor, they shall inherit, blessed are the meek, they shall inherit, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Well, all those people that are on the hillside, have they gotten anything yet of material value? Did they wind up inheriting mansions and having the Pharisees get a finger in the eye for insulting them and denigrating them? Not yet, but in time, they will. The last shall be first and the first shall be last. God will choose the time.

God will exalt you in time if, great promise of God, God will exalt us if we humble ourselves under his mighty hand. And there's a great relationship here between this and the next verse. We're gonna see, because it's one thing to say, okay, humble yourself and say, all right, I just need to be meek, blessed are the meek, I'll just meekify myself.

I'll just, you know, I won't, I'll do the soft answer, turn us away wrath thing. How do you actually do this? It's one thing to hear it, James says it, Peter says it, Solomon says it in the Proverbs. We wanna be humble.

What is the means? How do we cultivate this humility? It says humble yourself. It's a middle voice. This is something we do in our own interest, on our own behalf, and we pretty much do it to ourselves.

Well, how do we do it? We put on sackcloth and ashes, do we kick our toe in the dirt? Well, the answer is right here in the passage. It's extremely clear. It's extremely helpful.

And so this is where we'll pick up when we come back from the break.