

Text: I Peter 5:5-7

Title: “Attitudes that Fortify”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles please to I Peter 5:5-7. As you're turning I want to say a word to our men about our Men's Dinner Rally this Wednesday evening. Our guest speaker is Nico van der Merwe, a Christian businessman and author from South Africa. He has written a book entitled “What Does God Know About Business?” It is a powerful testimony of how God has guided him in his business and professional life. You'll be encouraged to hear his talk. It all starts with dinner at 6pm on the 2nd floor of the Welcome Center. Nico will speak at about 6:30pm. Now let's turn our eyes to the Scriptures. Read I Peter 5:5-7.

QUOTE: In one of his books Pastor Chuck Swindoll says this: “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we embrace for that day. We cannot change the past... We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge with our attitudes.”

As we've studied the book of I Peter we've seen a clear challenge to us to stand firm in the grace of God as we face the trials of life. And here he gives us some attitudes that will fortify us for the trials of life.

ILLUSTRATION – We're told that we should take vitamins to keep our bodies strong and to fortify us against disease. Well what we have here are attitudes that are “spiritual vitamins” that strengthen and fortify us. Let's take a look at them:

1. SUBMISSION

Now Peter has already instructed us about this matter of submission. In I Peter 2:13-14 we're told to submit to governmental authorities. In I Peter 2:18 servants were told to submit to their masters. And in I Peter 3:1 wives are to submit to their husbands.

To submit means that we line ourselves up under the authority of those whom God has placed over us for our well-being. And now in I Peter 5:5 we're instructed about another area of submission.

1 Peter 5:5a (NIV) - Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older.

Now in the picture here are those who are called “young men” and those who are called “older.” Let's start first with “those who are older.” This is the same word that is used in v.1:

1 Peter 5:1 (NIV) - To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder...

So probably these “older” ones are the “elders” referred to in v.1 who are the pastoral leaders in the churches. What are these elders (pastoral leaders) told to do?

1 Peter 5:2 (NIV) - Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers...

So whoever these “young men” are, they are to submit to the pastoral leadership of the church. Well, who are these “young men”? Some say that are just that ... younger men in the church. Why would they be singled out? Perhaps it is because they would have been the most prone to an independent spirit, as opposed to women or to older men with more wisdom and maturity. But in this case younger people benefit from the wisdom of older people.

Note: We are blessed to have a multi-generational church. Sometimes this kind of diversity is despised. And it has its challenges when it comes to meeting the needs of older people that may conflict with the needs of younger people. But we must be humble in all of this because it is a beautiful thing. Younger believers can learn from older believers.

Other scholars interpret these “young men” to represent the rest of the church who are not the elders. The word “young men” means literally “newer ones.” If the elders have been in the faith longer and are given responsibilities in the church to shepherd the church by virtue of their maturity and wisdom, then the “newer ones,” people in the church who have not been in the faith that long, are to submit to the spiritual leadership of the elders.

So whatever Peter has in mind here, he intends that all of us are to line ourselves up under the people God has placed in our lives as spiritual authorities.

Hebrews 13:17 (NIV) - Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

So spiritual leaders are accountable to God for watching over the souls of God’s people, and church members are to submit to their spiritual leaders as they lead according to God’s Word.

This is a warning to us about being what I will call “rogue Christians.” A rogue Christian is someone who answers to no one, is accountable to no one, and basically lives under no spiritual authority. They float in and out of churches, but never officially connect with a church under the leadership of a pastor. But if you are serious as a follower of Jesus, you will connect with a church and place yourself under the spiritual care of leaders who will help you stay strong in the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION – Let me show you what this looks like. Recently on a Wednesday night after our men’s Bible study one of our guys came up to speak to me. He is about to assume a very important responsibility of leadership in our church. He said to me, “Pastor, I take this responsibility seriously and I’ve been trying to prepare myself spiritually for this. I want to ask you that if you ever see in me an attitude or anything else that is wrong I want you to tell me.” He said, “I have blind spots and I need you to help me see them.” Do you know what he was doing? He was lining himself up under the spiritual leadership of his pastor. Did I take that as a heady thing? Absolutely not! I

thought about it all evening. If he's that serious about his walk with God, I better stay serious about my walk with God.

That's what submission looks like. The process of spiritual growth thrives among those who have this attitude of submission. I cannot grow spiritually if I am not submissive to the people God has placed in authority over me.

Now there is another attitude that fortifies us...

2. HUMILITY

1 Peter 5:5b (NIV) - All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Submission is fortified by humility. I don't have trouble lining myself up under someone else in obedience to God if I have dealt with pride in my heart. If I am proud, I will not be willing to be taught or led by God or anyone else. So the next attitude that fortifies is humility.

"Clothe yourselves" is a phrase that means "to tie something on oneself." In ancient times, a servant would tie on an apron. When you go into a restaurant your server has likely tied on an apron. That is the uniform of a server.

And we are to "tie on" the apron of humility.

Humility is a state of mind where I do not consider myself better than others. In fact, I really don't even consider myself at all.

The supreme example of this was Jesus. Turn with me to John 13. Let's see this together. Jesus had gathered with His disciples for the Last Supper. Jesus surprised His disciples. Let's begin reading in John 13:1-5.

Now one of those being served by Jesus was Peter ... yes, our man Peter. Read John 13:6-9.

Well Peter has the humble example of Jesus in his mind when he writes to these believers...

1 Peter 5:5b (NIV) - All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

God opposes the proud. Let that soak in for a moment. God goes to battle against the proud. This is a quote from Proverbs 3:34. And you find it over and over in the Scriptures ... God opposes the proud.

Note: I don't want to be found opposing God, and God opposing me. You don't want God as an enemy. You lose every time.

But on the other hand it says that God gives grace to the humble. When I humble myself before the Lord He gives grace. He more than makes up for anything I give up when I humble myself.

So the application to this matter is...

1 Peter 5:6 (NIV) - Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

“God's mighty hand” describes God's sovereign power at work all around us. God is at work in the affairs that seem totally out of your control. God is at work in the circumstances you don't understand. God is at work in the trials and sufferings that you endure. Humble yourself under God's sovereign activity all around you. And that same mighty hand will lift you up when the time is right.

We don't know when that time will be, but God knows when He has finished His work in our lives and He can then set us in an elevated place. It may not be until Christ returns, but it's worth the wait!

Now there's another attitude that fortifies:

3. TRUST

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV) - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Just like submission is fortified by humility, humility is fortified by trust. I can submit to God and to those whom He has put in authority over me if I am humble. I can humble myself before God and others if I am confident in God and trust that He cares for me in whatever makes my heart anxious, and that His mighty hand will lift me up in due time.

Psalms 55:22 (NIV) - Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

What is this anxiety? It is a corrosive kind of care. It tears us apart on the inside ... pulls us in different directions. Jesus spoke of this in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:25 (NIV) - “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”

Matthew 6:31 (NIV) - So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

Matthew 6:34 (NIV) - Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Three times in those verses we hear Jesus say, “Do not worry. Do not worry. Do not worry.” Are you worrying? Jesus said, “Stop it.”

But what am I to do with those things that I’m worried about? Well, you cast your cares on the Lord. “Cast” means to throw something on someone or something else.

ILLUSTRATION – When you go to the airport, you check in at the counter. And you take that luggage that you have been carrying and you cast it on that ledge next to the counter. And somewhere back there in the dark recesses of the airport some employee is taking that same piece of luggage and “casting” it on to a cart that will take it to the plane. And another guy takes it and casts it into the cargo hold of the plane. It’s no wonder our luggage looks like it does.

But we often do casting, like one casting a lure into the water when he is fishing. You cast it and reel it back in ... cast it and reel it back in.

No, God wants you to completely cast your cares, your anxieties, on Him.

- Your discontent
- Your discouragement
- Your despair
- Your discomfort
- Your disappointment

Now how do we do this? Paul explains it for us:

Philippians 4:6 (NIV) - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV) - And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Take the energy that you spend on anxiety and turn it toward seeking God in prayer and worship.

ILLUSTRATION – Years ago I heard the story of a pilot in Pacific theater of WWII. He was flying a great distance and he was forced to land on a remote island for fuel before continuing on with his flight. After he refueled and was airborne again he heard an unusual sound inside of his plane ... a gnawing sound. He looked around and saw the problem immediately. A giant island rat had climbed aboard at the last stop and was gnawing on something that was essential to the plane staying airborne. The pilot couldn’t leave the controls. What could he do? He put on his oxygen mask and pulled the plane in a steep climb ... higher and higher and higher. Soon the gnawing sound stopped; the menace was dead. In the thin air of that high altitude the rat simply couldn’t survive.

What are we to do when the rat of anxiety and worry begins to gnaw away at our lives, threatening to cause us to crash? Well, we put our lives into the steep climb of faith and prayer. We cast our cares upon the Lord. And in the high altitude of communion with God and confidence in God that ugly menace of anxiety disappears.

CONCLUSION

You can cast all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. Hear that again: He cares for you. Do you really believe that? He cares so much for you that 2000 years ago He sent His one and only Son to die in your place. He cares so much for you that He didn't want to leave you a spiritual orphan. He came to you and adopted you into His family and placed His Holy Spirit in you to guide you and guard you.

Don't just cast your cares on the Lord ... cast your life on Him. Put it in His hands, and never take it back. Watch the difference He makes.