

WISE EXHORTATIONS

I Peter 5:6-11

Simon Peter, writing to the Christians scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, tells them how they ought to live so as to be well-pleasing to their Lord in spite of their being subjected to persecutions. In doing so he sets forth some of the qualities of a successful Christian career. Among the wise exhortations presented in these scriptures are the following: --

1. To Humility. Verse 6.

Humility is contrary to nature; hence it is not regarded by the natural man as an attribute to be desired and to be cultivated. The natural inclination of the human mind is to think its plans far superior to anything else. Of course, man's plans for his growth and service would not include and persecution or suffering. Humility is a Christian virtue which has become quite rare. In many places it is danger of becoming extinct.

Peter tells his readers to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. The word "therefore" in our text tells them the reason why, for he says, "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." A proud person resists God. The very laws which God has ordained fight against a man of pride. He becomes self-centered. His own values of judgment become warped and distorted. All his acts relate to his own exaltation. He is exceedingly sensitive when he does not have his own way. He is broken-hearted when his selfish purposes are not achieved. Worse than all, he sets his heart on self-advancement, material possessions, his distinguished ancestry, his great office, etc., and, when all these come to nought and life draws to a close, he finds himself losing the things which have made him proud, and facing death without any hope at all of peace with God or eternal life.

Peter succinctly enjoins humility on all individuals. He uses a figure for "girding" with humility as if with a towel. The Greek for "gird yourselves with humility" is rare and somewhat curious. It means, "tie yourselves up in humility," as if with a towel.

This exhortation to humility is a very necessary one for the tendencies to pride are very insidious. People can be proud even of their humility. But there is no place for pride in the life of a child of God. The habitual frame of a child of God is that of one who feels not only that he owes all his natural gifts to God, but that he has been the object of undeserved, redeeming love, and who regards himself as being not his own, but God's, in Christ. Self-exaltation spoils everything. The self-exalted one will be abased (cf. Luke 18:9-14). It is pride that seeks for recognition apart from God. Pride springs from "the flesh," or satisfaction in what can be done, or known, or obtained by one's own efforts. Pride has no chance of meeting with success, "For God resisteth the proud."

Let us remember that God dwells with such as are of a contrite spirit. God depresses the proud and exalts the humble in due time. It becomes us, therefore, as God's people, to be humble before the Lord amid trials, afflictions, and chastisements, and to wait patiently for the accomplishment of His will, for there will come a season of His visitation in mercy and favor. The humble Christian will never be put to shame. We do not need to exalt ourselves; if we wait upon the Lord He will do it for us. We should simply recognize our own insignificance, our utter worthlessness, our impotency, and cast ourselves upon the faithfulness of God.

Humility is the richest pearl of the Christian crown of graces. It is a suit that is always in fashion, never wears out and is always becoming. It is recognized by men, admired by angels, and appreciated by the Lord. It brings the soul into a position to hear God's voice, be used of Him, and receive blessings from Him. Humble yourselves, and He will exalt you in due time.

2. To Trustfulness.

Peter bids them cast all their care upon Him. There is nothing that so unfits a Christian as care for the duties of one's calling. Trustfulness consists in casting all our care upon God. This life is full of anxieties. They vary with our position in life, our circumstances, our characters, but none are free from them.

God's child is in no condition to gain victory in his living if he is weighed down with anxious care. It is his privilege to cast his burden of care upon a God who cares. Released from the burden of care, the Christian is prepared to meet the difficulties of life with confidence and victory.

We are commanded to cast our burden on God because he has made it His business to care for us. There are many things that God wants us to do for Him, but carrying a load of anxiety is not one of them. He wants us to throw our cares from us. Most of us bring our anxieties before God. We tell Him our desires and our fears, and then we go away carrying those anxieties with us. Just cast your burden on the Lord, whatever the burden may be. If you are worrying over your past sins, cast them upon the Lord. If you are filled with regrets over past failures, cast them there also. If the future looks dark and lowering, leave that with Him also, remembering that with divine tenderness He careth for you.

3. To Watchfulness. Verse 8.

There has never been a time when the temptations of Satan have been so fierce, so frequent, or so constant as now. What Satan wants to do is to destroy the testimony of God's people, to take them out of places of power and influence for the gospel, to rob them of that joy, victory, and power, by which others will be brought to confess the Lord Jesus Christ.

His mention of sobriety is not particularly a warning against drunkenness, but to sobriety in all things. It is possible to become intoxicated with honor, ambition, and a lot of other worldly things, without touching a drop of liquor. Sobriety means to be able to think clearly. That is very important in these evil days. Satan is very subtle, and unless we are sober he will overcome us. We ought to watch our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

4. To Resistance. Verse 9

Satan is in this world and doing all that he can to bring defeat to the cause of Christ. If believers are to be victorious they must be on guard against Satan's temptations and snares. He must be resisted and we have the promise that if he is resisted "he will flee from you" (James 4:7).