

Christ's Servant Sufferers (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter, if you would, beloved. We will not finish 1 Peter today.

I'm a happy man. When I realized that that was going to be the case around Wednesday, I was rejoicing. I don't want to let this book go.

This is a wonderful time that we've had. I don't even know how many months we've been in 1 Peter together, but boy, has it been arrived. It's just a wonderful, wonderful book. And Peter, he's such an awesome example to us of just a real person in a real world trying to struggle to be faithful to his God.

And we're so grateful for the way that Scripture shows us both his weaknesses and times when he was very strong, when he persevered through the trials and the failures and the stumbles to serve the Lord his God.

The title of my message, again, is Christ's Servant Sufferers. I'm adopting that title from last week. Just thinking in terms that this might serve well as kind of a part two for what Peter's doing.

[1 : 16] I want to keep you reminded as we look at some of my introduction here, what we're dealing with as we come to this final chapter in Peter's letter is just what probably you'd do if you were writing a really important treatise to someone that you deeply cared about and you wanted to encourage them because of some very tough times they were experiencing.

You would probably come to the end of your letter and try to sum up what you said and try to bring some of those more salient points home to their heart so that they would carry those away with them at the end of the letter and savor those things and remember, hey, here's the most important. If you didn't hear anything else, please take this home with you kind of thing. That's what Peter's doing right now. So before we actually get into the text, let me take you to a couple of places and continue to remind us about how Peter has rolled us into these moments, particularly for our visitors.

I think this might be helpful. Think about this with me, friends, without a doubt, without a doubt, at least in my mind, to my way of thinking as I read the scriptures, pride, pride is the most pervasive, sneaky, and troublesome sin in our fight of faithful living to please the Lord.

Now, I'm assuming that's the truth in your life. I've worked with a lot of folks over the years and I certainly know that about myself. Pride, pride is a pernicious kind of issue for us.

[2 : 46] We are most likely correct, I think, in thinking that just about every expression of sin springs from the pride and greed of our hearts.

So pride is a big issue. It's an important issue. It's a big problem. And it's interesting that pride from very, very little as a human person and as you grow continues to be an issue.

Let me see a show of hands. How many parents in here how to teach your children to be prideful? Did you have pride lessons? No, you didn't have to do that, right?

Right? Your kids probably gave you some instruction in pride and helped you learn some new ways to express it. At least that was certainly the case raising my three. Let me take you, first of all, as we roll into this together, let me take you to the book of James, chapter 3.

James 3. Let's just whet our appetites a little bit more here. James 3, beginning in verse 13. Who among you is wise and understanding?

[4 : 01] Okay? Let him show by his good behavior, his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

Now, the apostle James warns against putting ourselves forward in our lives. He says that if we have bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and arrogance in our hearts, we are actually living a lie against the truth of the Lord.

Now, that can be true even for a Christian in certain situations, circumstances, and moments of their lives. That's what sin is, isn't it? When you and I sin, we are living in that moment a lie against the Lord.

It comes from the father of lies. Now, think of this with me. The wisdom of the world encourages self and self-esteem as worthy pursuits in themselves.

And so, James clearly teaches us that if we continue to read, look again with me at verse 14. If you have bitter jealousy, selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

[5 : 33] This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

But the wisdom from above, God's wisdom, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering without hypocrisy.

And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. So the issue that we're confronted with takes us right back to James 3, 13.

Who among you is wise and understanding? If you claim to be that in the Lord, then you should be living what he says in those last few verses there in this passage.

Let him show this by his good, good behavior. God defines the good behavior, holy behavior in his deeds, in the gentleness of wisdom.

[6 : 54] The gentleness of wisdom is God's way. So the question then, the issue becomes, are you living and then are you also relating to others in the gentleness of wisdom?

Do you even know what that is? Or what that looks like? Well, we don't have to go far to get our answer. We just drop right back down into the passage again. This wisdom from above is pure.

What does it look like for me to be gentle in wisdom? It looks like purity in my life. Peaceableness, gentleness, reasonableness. It looks like mercy and good deeds toward others.

It looks like an unwavering, persevering holiness without hypocrisy. So that my life is about sowing the seeds of peace among my brothers and my sisters and people that I meet.

Can I be counted on by the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit to be a human being who is living in the gentleness of wisdom? Now, when you think about Jesus' life, can you see a picture in the Gospels of the gentleness of wisdom?

[8 : 05] Oh, it's beautiful, isn't it? Well, that's what we're called to. And if we're called to it, then we're expected to live by it. In grace, through faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Paul goes right at this issue of our pride, telling us to, and let me get this up on the screen for you.

You can turn there if you want. It's Philippians 2, 3, and 4. Look what Paul says. Do nothing, nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves.

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. All right, now look here. Selfishness is the same Greek word James uses for selfish ambition in the passage we just read.

That's how Paul's using it here. It means a heart desire expressed as putting yourself forward at the expense of other people.

[9 : 20] Empty conceit, empty conceit is interesting to me because it actually means groundless self-esteem, empty pride, or the idea of pursuing and expressing an eagerness for meaningless glory, where we get the term vain glory.

It's vain. It's empty. In other words, why are you thinking you're all that? You're not. Scripture is like in your face, isn't it?

It's just true. If you have a self-esteem problem when you come to Scripture, it'll be worse by the time you finish. Not better. Not better.

It'll make you want to turn to Jesus. The world's wisdom tells you that you think too little of yourself. And folks, many of you know from my background, because you've known me for a while, I spent many, many years studying psychology.

I got degrees in psychology before the Lord rescued me and began to teach me truth from Scripture. I was immersed in humanistic wisdom about how to help people and how to deal with soul issues in life, because that's what psychology is all about.

[10 : 40] It's the study of the soul. Well, who made the soul? Who speaks to the soul? The world wants to tell you. Psychology wants to tell you.

Many of the answers that we have today in what's most wrong with life and what's most wrong with human beings has to do with this idea that most of us get into trouble because we think too little of ourselves.

We have low self-esteem. And so there's tons and tons of books and all kinds of money being spent and made dealing with this issue of low self-esteem.

Their idea is then, therefore, a robust and growing self-esteem or esteem for yourself is the best way for you to have a meaningful life and meaningful relationships.

The Bible tells you exactly the opposite. Why? Why? Because your Creator knows your heart even better than you do.

[11:47] He knows that your starting place in life and relationships is, wait for it, loving yourself. Jesus told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

The Bible assumes you love yourself. Can you find a single place in Scripture where you are told or commanded to love yourself? Can you turn in Scripture and show me where Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love as your...

He has to tell us to love God and to love others. He doesn't have to tell you to love yourself. You already love yourself. It's an amazing thing to watch counselees come in and get biblical counseling and we come to the moment where I have to teach them these principles and show them that actually what you've come in thinking is low self-esteem is you love yourself too much and your pride is the issue and until you're willing to deal with that there's no moving forward.

Now we're at a critical point. They either don't come back or they come back humbled and saying, okay, tell me more. It doesn't do any good to speak the truth apart from love.

And it doesn't do any good to say you love people and not tell them the truth. And so the Scripture encourages us to do both. So the Bible tells us exactly the opposite.

[13:34] We already love ourselves and look out for ourselves so we need God to guide us out of ourselves. If I said it even more biblically correctly it would be Jesus said deny yourself.

Take up your cross and follow me. So isn't it freeing, friends, to have the Bible tell you the opposite of what the world tells you? Well, it is to me.

It's very freeing. It gives me hope. It sets the course. It plows the ground ahead of me and it makes the path clear. Isn't that what Scripture is?

It's a light and a lamp. Now, Peter, Peter, gives us these same instructions about pride and humility. So let's look at 1 Peter, chapter 5.

And I'll begin reading in verse 1. We're going to go down through this together moving into the context for today. Peter says, Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

[15:10] And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Now, this is previous messages that we've used to work through all of that, but let me remind you in 5, 1 through 4, Peter tells pastors to shepherd, oversee God's people with selflessness.

That's how we can sum that up. Pastors, overseers, elders, shepherd God's flock, love God's flock, feed God's flock, protect God's flock with selflessness.

In verse 5, notice in verse 5, he tells the young men to selflessly submit to their pastors. Then he instructs each person in the church family to selflessly serve each other because God opposes the proud in heart, but he ministers his favor and power to those who will put off self-righteousness and put on selflessness and humility.

[16:50] Powerful stuff. In chapter 5, verses 6 and 7, the godly response to the temptation to be prideful is selflessly submit to God and his design for your circumstances.

So he tells us, humble yourself under God's mighty hand. Don't try to squirm out from underneath God's hand when he designs trials and sufferings for you.

Don't try to circumvent God's will. Don't complain and grumble and feel sorry for yourself and all these different ways that we show that we don't want to be under this mighty hand in these moments of suffering.

Well, where else would you want to be? You don't. It's your flesh and the devil that wants to try to convince you to squirm out from underneath the hand of God as it were when these trials come. It's more about you getting away from the problem than it is being faithful to the Lord. That's exactly what Satan wants to do. That's what a lot of our Wednesday night study is all about, isn't it, Greg? That's what we're trying to look into.

[17:57] It's how does Satan use those opportunities of trials and sufferings to distract us away from a pure and simple devotion to the Lord Jesus. 2 Corinthians 11:3.

That's what we're dealing with. Humble yourself under God's mighty hand as he takes you through the trials of suffering because God uses those times to burn away your pride and train you in humility, friends.

And that's what you want. You want that and you need that in your life. Now you say, all right, yes, yes. Okay, but Jeff, listen, I find myself struggling with all kinds of thoughts and feelings in these circumstances.

I understand that. I'm just like you. So you might say this to me and maybe I'll cover most of what we would experience at different times and different levels as we go through these things.

Maybe it's this. You might say, Jeff, I have doubts in these times of suffering and trial when stuff's going on, persecution, injustice, all kinds of stuff happening in my life.

[19:07] You know, I struggle with doubts. I'm unsure of myself. I'm fearful about outcomes and about what might happen.

I'm fearful toward other people. I worry about what people think about me. You know, what do they think about me if they see me going, if they know I'm going through this.

I'm angry. I get angry in these instances, you know. I get angry because this is the way it is and I don't like being in this position. Why does this have to happen to me?

I get impatient and I struggle with being irritable. I get short and I, you know, I don't look and sound much like a Christian during these times because I just, I just want things to be different.

I don't want it to be like this. I feel sorry for myself sometimes. Maybe I run from it. I turn in on myself or I try to ignore it.

[20:14] I just pretend like it's not there and hope that it'll pass. You see, there are all, and fill in the blank, there are all kinds of ways that you and I respond or react in these circumstances of the heat getting turned up in our life, right?

And maybe one or more of those is indicative of how you struggle. Maybe you say, yeah, that's my Achilles heel. That one that you mentioned toward the middle, that's me.

That's more me. I don't run from it. I'm a fighter. So I get mad and you know I'm mad and it's just hard. Or maybe you say, yeah, I just run and bury my head.

I just don't want to think about it. I don't want to talk about it. I'm going to make a statement now and then I'll say a little something about it. Quote, yeah, I don't like confrontation.

End quote. Well, I don't either. Who likes confrontation? You know, even a boxer boxes because he gets paid, I think, mostly.

[21:17] I don't get that. I don't want to get punched in the face, so I'm going to avoid that at all costs. But you know, I understand these things. Peter understands these things.

Look, knowing all all of what I just said about us because he was just like us in so many ways. Peter.

Peter tells us what to do. Will you look with me at verse seven of chapter five? Casting all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

God cares for you. Now, friends, listen. He doesn't say just in case in the unlikely event that you get anxious in these situations and maybe you react in one of the ways I just kind of mentioned and threw out there for you.

Just in case, do this and this. He doesn't say that. He knows, Peter knows, we'll all have some level of anxiety about these situations and he tells us what to do with that reality.

[22:31] Do you remember last week when I preached through this, I told you that the word anxiety in the Greek encompasses a spectrum of different kinds of responses when you're in these scenarios.

It can be from something as legitimate and minor as you have some concerns as you go through this. You're concerned. It's not wrong to be concerned, to have concerns.

It's not wrong to feel a certain burden about what's going on, especially as sin is involved in this trial. People are sinning again and you're burdened in that.

You feel a sense of grief. These are all very legitimate biblical responses as a human being. God's not saying don't be human. And then you run that spectrum up, up, up, and it can be all kinds of other things that start happening.

You start feeling sorry for yourself, so there's some self pity, there's some anger, there's some irritability all the way up and you get on the other side and it's sinful worry. It's a sinful preoccupation with wanting to manipulate and control outcomes because you want to be God and you don't like where the Lord has you.

[23 : 40] You see? And all along that spectrum is the word anxiety. Cast all your anxieties on him, all of them, even the sinful ones, folks, maybe most of all those.

This is Peter's instruction for us as God's people. We mentioned that in this process that God is taking you through during these times, when he says cast, it's the word that means throw, throw, like you'd throw a baseball.

Throw all the concerns, throw all your cautions and all of your calloused pride and your caustic worries that happen in your heart onto the strong and careful caring of God.

Did you hear how I said that? The strong and careful caring of God. Your flesh and Satan would want you to consider that God's cold, austere, he's not listening, he's abandoned you, he doesn't get it, he doesn't understand what kind of a loving God would let you go through this, what kind of a loving God would design something like this for you, blah, blah, blah, yeah, right.

That's not what the Bible says. The Bible says cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. How much more clear do we need it said?

[25 : 01] He cares for you, beloved, he loves you. He is a sinless, perfect, heavenly father, all wise. Look around at the colors of the leaves, look around at all of the display of the glory of God that we see in nature right now even and think, my goodness, what a wise, wise God.

What a powerful creator that all of this came from darkness and nothing. You know, you've heard the joke, I'm going to get into competition with God and I can do what God did and I'm going to create this and that and the other and God says, well, fine, get your own dirt.

You create something out of nothing. No, no, no, no, don't start with my stuff. You get your own stuff. You just say and speak it into existence.

That's your God. That's the one who cares for you. It's personal. It's individual. It's specific and it's tailored to you.

What do we do? We see across the aisle and we see they're not going through this and we get jealous and we get envious. Now we're back to James. Jealousy and selfish ambition.

[26 : 14] And where that's going on, there's all kinds of disorder. So we need to look to the Lord and we need to listen to Peter. In all of this, folks, a huge, huge part of your ability to do this effectively concerns the previous context of what we've been looking at.

Your submission, two, and your humility toward your pastors and each other in your circumstances of suffering. Your complete trust in God as he takes you through these trials.

That's all the stuff that we've been looking at over the last few weeks in the different messages since we got in to chapter five. All right? That's my introduction.

Now we're ready, right? Thank you. We're primed and we're ready to listen to what Peter has to say, even as we've looked into other places in James and in Paul, and we've been reminded about what a big deal this pride thing is and how Satan wants to use it in our lives to draw us away from cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you at the proper time and don't miss the blessing of when he brings you through the trial and out the other end, the blessing of what it will be like for you to have learned and submitted and humbled yourself and looked up into heaven and said, thank you, God, for teaching me.

[27 : 55] Now that I can look back and I can see what was going on, I see the wonder and beauty of your wisdom as you did that in my heart. God, thank you so much. I never would have scripted that for me.

Never. And then off you go. Boy, the Christian life. How else would we ever want to live? So here's where we were from last week.

Oh, humility of mind. See, I get so excited. That means lowly mindset, a sense of your littleness, I said all that. All right, attitudes. That's where we were last week.

Attitudes of the Savior's servant sufferers. That's where we've been. As we nurture the heart attitudes that we covered last week, submissiveness, humility, and trust, we then put these into spiritual action as ways we can humble ourselves under God's mighty hand.

You with me? So you might benefit, you might benefit now from seeing these actions as what I'm about to cover as Peter's way of summarizing what is involved in you casting, throwing off all your anxieties on the Lord and trusting that he cares for you.

[29 : 12] You might be saying, Jeff, I don't really know how to throw off all that on the Lord. I try, I pray, I'm going to give you some more ammunition for that. If you didn't listen to last week's sermon, I covered some of that and gave you some practical one, two, threes to help you think about that.

Now we're going to fill in some of those blanks for you today. All right, so we move into this. Actions of the Savior's servant sufferers. Now don't get too hung up on demarcating between attitudes and actions in this passage.

They blend together and all go together. In Dr. MacArthur's exegesis of this, his exposition of this, he called all of these that I'm going to give you attitudes. I looked at it and thought more in terms of it looks to me like he's talking a lot about what the heart needs to be doing and then he moves us into some action that we need to take.

All right, so the first one that we want to look at in verse 8, now there's going to be a number of these that are going to take us down through our passage. Verse 11, let me read that for you real quick.

Verse 8, be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, but resist him.

[30 : 28] Firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Boy, that's just beautiful. To him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. Those are all just further ways and evidences of Peter showing you this is how God works when you're under his mighty hand.

He will accomplish these things and at the end of the day you win because he's going to perfect you and strengthen you and bring you to himself. It's just a win-win across the board. So don't try to wiggle out from underneath his mighty hand when the heat gets turned up in life.

So the first thing that he gives us then, we're only going to cover a couple of these, so don't worry. Only a couple of them. And the first one that we're going to do is this one, self-control in verse 8.

We're going to say a good bit about this one and one other one. Another way to think about this is compose yourself. In the New American Standard, it simply reads this way, be of sober spirit.

[31 : 47] Be of sober spirit. So now, turning right on the heels of saying that you are to throw off all your anxieties onto God because he cares for you.

Peter says, get busy with controlling yourself. Man, do we need to hear this in our time. Control yourself.

The English Standard Version, which several of you have a copy of, I'm preaching from the New American Standard, the English Standard Version says this, be sober minded.

Excellent translation. Be sober minded. In the Greek, we have the Greek word here that we're using. It comes from the word nepho.

It literally means to be sober. It's a form of nepho that means literally be sober. Be sober. The idea here is to be restrained, disciplined, or self-controlled.

[32 : 46] Are you with me? Restrain yourself, discipline yourself. Keep yourself composed and under control. It was actually used in relation to people who literally needed to sober up from being intoxicated.

So they needed to regain control of their emotions and desires and behave responsibly. Now we're back to James again who told us that we are to be reasonable in our attitudes and behaviors.

Reasonable. Behave reasonably. Now friends, self-control is your responsibility. It isn't my wife's responsibility to exercise control over me.

Or vice versa. Right? Right. No, we don't do that. That's your responsibility. So let me use me. In times of my own lack of self-control, in those times when that's happening in my life, you, you don't make me mad.

Nope. Or make me say and do something or another. I choose and act from my own heart.

[34 : 14] heart. So if anger comes out of my mouth, that's a choice I've made out of my heart, not yours. You didn't make me mad. Anger was in my heart and now you've given me an opportunity to express it.

That's all you did. You've just provided the opportunity. I had another choice. I could have responded in holiness, in selflessness, in patience, in kindness, in gentleness.

Even if I disagreed with you, I didn't have to be angry about it. So my sins don't come from your heart or your actions or your choices.

My sins come from what I think, what I desire, and what I do. All right? With me? Now that's basic principle Bible 101 as we think about controlling ourselves and living before God in personal holiness.

You don't make me do what I do or say what I say. That comes out of my own heart. Now let me ask you a question as we think about this because Peter is all about telling us, now take all of these Christ-like attitudes that I'm asking you to cultivate and nurture in your heart.

[35 : 36] Be submissive. Be humble. clothe yourselves. Remember last week? Gird yourselves with the girding of humility. We all should be wearing the servant's towel of humility.

And then trust the Lord. All right? Nurture those in your heart. Now move into action. And the first thing that you want to concern yourself with as you move into action to express these heart attitudes is compose yourself.

Control yourself. Now folks, you can see this. You can see this in life. When things get hot and heated up and when stuff's coming at you, one of the first things you want to do is kind of go, okay, all right.

Rather than react and get rolled up into all of the stuff, let's just think about this a minute. Just calm down. God's in control.

He's got this. I'm under his hand. All right. Step one. You see? Can you see that picture? This is where Peter is. Compose yourself.

[36 : 39] Control yourself. Keep yourself in control. All right. The question then on the table now, well, what is godly self-control? Well, I've given you a little bit of background here about the word, the phrase that Peter's using and why, what's going on.

Let me tell you what it's not about. Self-control, godly self-control is not about making everyone think you have it all together. We're so worried about what other people think.

It's not about never letting them see you sweat. You hear how the world teaches you this kind of stuff? You want to make people think you're in control. Don't ever let them see you weak.

Well, here's what the Bible says. Can I invite you to go back to Philippians with me one more time here? Philippians chapter 4. verses 11 through 13.

This is a situation in Paul's life. He's coming to the end of the letter to the Philippians and he's speaking to them in great gratitude about how they've ministered to him and helping provide some things that he needed.

[37 : 48] But he wants them to understand I'm not trying to manipulate or take advantage of you. I'm not trying to poor mouth. I'm not trying to make you think that you're obligated to do stuff for me. I'm really grateful for what you've done.

But I want you to understand where my faith is in all of that gratitude for what you've done. This is what Paul's dealing with. I'll put it up here on the screen too. It might be helpful. This is what he says.

Not that I speak from want for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. You see that verse 11 is just gold.

I know how to get along with humble means and I also know how to live in prosperity. So you kind of get the picture. He knows how to live in between all of that whether I have nothing or God's given me a lot and everything I learned how to live in all of that in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry both of having abundance and suffering need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. That's not a verse that we can claim whenever we want to see something done in our lives or we want to claim something that we want in our lives. [39 : 07] I can do all things. That's not what this verse means. In the context Paul is saying whatever God puts on me calls me to do or designs for me in the way of a trial I will find in him all that I need to move through it faithfully.

Big difference between a name it and claim it attitude and an attitude that looks to the glory of God and says Lord if it's your design for me to suffer through this for the sake of Jesus as I share in his sufferings so be it.

Help me to be faithful. I look to your grace knowing that I can do all things through him who strengthens me. That's a faith response so that you can be faithful.

Big difference. That's where you want to be. That's where Peter's calling you to be but you cannot do that apart from self control. If you're in your mind and in your heart kind of running all over the place and you just can't get a grip on your thoughts can you see how that's going to be a problem? It's going to be hard for you to look to the Lord when everything's just all over the place. We'll talk some more about that in just a minute. So what are we mentioning then?

[40 : 19] How can we summarize what we're saying here as we answer the question what is godly self-control? Here it is. It's spiritual stability. It's spiritual stability.

What's the secret? Paul spoke about a secret. What's the secret of contentment, calm, and courage in life? Here it is. Paul maintained an eternal, heavenly, godly perspective on himself and his circumstances.

In terms of himself, it's humility. In other words, it's the definition of humility that we gave you last time when Peter said, clothe yourselves, gird yourselves with the servant garb of humility.

It means valuing and assessing yourself biblically. Valuing and assessing yourself according to God's view of you. So even as we speak about humility, biblically being something where you think little of yourself, be humble in mind, think little of yourself, God's not saying you're a throw away.

God's not trying to put down on you some heavy burden of, oh, you're such a worm, you're da-da-da-da. He's just, he's saying, in terms of your creatureliness, your sinfulness, your need for grace, keep yourself in perspective.

[41 : 48] Don't run off in pride thinking you're all that and this is all about you. There's a greater, bigger picture. Do you remember the last few sermons I've mentioned? There's a greater, bigger picture that Satan wants to blur.

And in that picture, he wants to blur everything around and he wants to make one thing super, super, super clear. I mean like bring it into super sharp focus, right into the front.

And what is it? Well, I'm looking right in the mirror at it. Me. I'm standing right in the middle of all that blur and he makes it clearer and clearer. That's right. Me, me, me, me.

We fall for it. So again, I'm saying, what's the secret of the contentment Paul speaking about? maintaining a heavenly, godly perspective on yourself, valuing yourself and assessing yourself biblically and then his circumstances.

And what was that all about? Trusting God. Probably one of the last things that we want to hear when we're struggling with stuff is somebody say, well, trust the Lord. But that is a good place to start and then we put our arms around him and we don't just say, trust the Lord and walk off.

[43 : 00] How can I walk with you and trust the Lord? Lean on me and we'll trust him together. That's clothe yourselves with humility, folks. That's what that looks like.

What is godly contentment? Here are a couple of definitions that will help you. Wednesday night, people, as you come Wednesday night, we're going to do some more with this. Godly contentment is inner satisfaction in God alone, whatever the circumstances.

Wow. And then here from a Puritan, Jeremiah Burroughs, from years back, that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every single situation in life.

Isn't that great? Those are beautiful realities that we're called to live by. So that godly spiritual focus defined his earthly perspective on his life.

On Paul's life, it does for Peter as well. And it made Paul's earthly endeavors meaningful and doable. So Paul found great meaning in just doing what God had called him to do.

[44 : 17] He didn't have to have all this other stuff going on. It was enough for him to know I'm in God's will. I'm where God wants me to be. That's enough. Boy, folks, if you've ever been at a place

in your life where you just weren't sure, am I doing what God wants me?

That's a hard place to be, isn't it? It doesn't matter what's going on. But when you have a confidence in your heart, I'm where the Lord wants me to be and I'm doing what I believe the Lord would have me do.

And I have reason to believe that. I know the scripture is speaking to my heart in that way. I'm moving forward in the Lord. That's. Paul persevered with joy and with hope, no matter how difficult the circumstances were because he trusted the Lord and he had a biblical value and understanding of himself.

He didn't think too highly of himself and he didn't think too little of himself. Everything about Paul was defined by his relationship with the Lord. His heavenly mindness gave Paul courage, gave Paul confidence in the goodness of God.

Did you hear that? Say it again. Don't want you to miss that. Paul's heavenly mindedness, his courage and his confidence was in the goodness of God, not in himself.

[45 : 33] So I'm never going to stand up here. Greg's never going to stand up here and encourage you to believe in yourself. Don't do that. That's the problem. Believe in Christ.

Look to Jesus. Walk with Jesus and do not believe that you're all that and can do all that. Paul said, I can do all of this through him who strengthens me.

He's my life. I've died. He lives. What are you facing, friend? What are you facing? What's crushing your heart? What's crushed your heart in the past?

What's troubling you? What are you struggling with that's keeping you from experiencing joy and peace? peace and a sense of confidence in God's direction in your life and how God wants to use you in life?

Are you feeling like, I don't know that I can get past this? Can I raise my hand and say, I know what that feels like? Suzanne knows what that feels like. We're like you. We've come to moments like that where you think your heart is hurting so hard that you will die.

[46 : 38] That's very real. cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. Turn and face life.

Compose yourself. Compose yourself by rehearsing in your heart. I know who's in control. I know whose hand I'm under. I am not a pawn of these people.

I am not a pawn of these circumstances. I am under the hand of my God. He's designed this for me. I can trust him. I don't have all the answers.

I don't know how it'll turn out, but I can trust him. And as I trust him, he helps me know what to do when I get up in the morning. I know where to put my first step. That's all I need.

I get up in the morning and I know where my first step goes and then I trust him. I trust that he's going to say, now this one goes here. All right, now I don't want you to keep, now do this and go here.

[47 : 38] Now look, take that one. You see, didn't he tell us, didn't he tell us childlike faith? Not childishness, childlike faith.

That's how your little kids look to you. I was talking with some parents last night and we were talking about how when our kids are little, they basically worship us. And then they get older and they say, you ain't cool.

What happened to you cool? We can trust the Lord. Contentment, contentment, friends, is critical, critical to spiritual stability.

And when we talk about self-control, we're talking about spiritual stability. And spiritual stability is critical to being content, especially in times of difficulty.

So let me put this up here and see if it helps a little bit. Godly self-control is about spiritual stability and Peter is telling us that our spiritual stability is grounded in submission, humility and trust in our walk with God.

[48 : 44] That's the previous context. Now we're putting that into motion. Both Paul and Peter both want us to understand that you are spiritually stabilized.

baptized by your inner satisfaction with and your focus on God as you humble yourselves under his mighty hand.

I hope that's becoming practical in your mind for you. Now Peter is about to tell us some important things as he closes out his letter. Really important things about the bigger picture that I alluded to a moment ago.

It's about how spiritual life works in this fallen world. That's where he's about to go. He's been telling us all about how persecution and injustice and suffering for Jesus are part of the bigger picture of God's plan for us.

He's been doing that all along. But given the varying levels and expressions of anxiety he's mentioned, we need self-control to follow through on Peter's selfless service.

[49 : 55] The call that he's making for selfless service here begins with this self-control out of these hard attitudes of submitting and humbling ourselves and trusting the Lord.

I just want to keep saying that so you see how they blend. Now what Peter says next requires a spiritually readied and steadied heart.

To face off with this bigger picture reality, to remain faithful to God in spiritual warfare, you need to think ready and steady heart.

That's what I need. So he wants us to understand that behind the people, you think about something that you've been involved in or something you're going through right now, please hear this friends, he wants us to understand behind the people, behind the details of our trials and suffering, behind our need for self- control even, are two spiritual powers with opposing designs for us and opposing purposes for the outcomes.

So, here's what he does. Peter tells us how to get command of ourselves and then how to focus our self- control in our second action.

[51 : 22] And here's the second action, watchfulness. Watchfulness. He says, be of sober spirit, be on the alert.

They're very similar, but they're nuanced. Here, the emphasis is condition yourself. The first one, compose yourself, get command of yourself.

The second one, condition yourself, be of sober spirit, be on the alert. So, friends, here's the point. This is a conditioned response.

So, this isn't you going off. This isn't you getting caught unawares and just reacting and trying to do something. Something's better than nothing.

No, this is a conditioned response. So, with watchfulness, hear this, with watchfulness, friends, you've trained yourself and learned and practiced responding to life like this.

[52 : 25] Do you remember in our passage from Philippians? What did Paul say? I have learned contentment over time.

Isn't that encouraging? You can learn this. The apostle Paul had to learn this. Jesus didn't have to learn it. Right? The Lord of glory, and yet he grew up and matured as a human being.

Paul says, man, I learned. I learned this contentment. I learned this courage. I learned how to care like this and trust like this.

Paul went through all kinds of really tough, tough suffering where God burned away that pride. Do you remember also, Paul talked about his thorn in the spirit.

Doesn't matter what it was. Doesn't say what it was specifically. But whatever it was, he said, the reason that God's given me this thorn in the flesh that I've asked him to take out of my life three separate times, and every time he said no.

[53 : 22] And the reason he said no is I'm using it in your life to keep you humble. I don't want you to exalt yourself. Paul said that. It keeps me from exalting myself. Because God's given me all kinds of wonderful knowledge and understanding.

I've been into the heaven of heavens, and I've seen things that no man can talk about. So to keep me from exalting myself through situations like that, God's given me this thorn in the flesh to keep me humble about it all.

So maybe, maybe that's how God's working in your life and some of the circumstances you find yourself in repeatedly. That God's using that to keep you humble. To cause you to look.

I was in a counseling session just a few days ago, and I was telling this person that I was ministering to in another state. I was saying to them, look, you have repeatedly found yourself in this particular context with these particular circumstances.

Perhaps the Lord is using this in your life not to do what you think. Because the struggle in his life was, it feels like God's abandoned me. And what I was telling him was, according to scripture, if you truly belong to the Lord, maybe God's using this in your life to help you understand and realize that he is using it to draw you.

[54 : 38] He wants you to come to him and fall before him in complete dependence and need and look to him. He's reminding you of your creatureliness and your need.

He wants it to break your heart so that you'll run to him for care. God does this in our life, folks, because we need it.

We're in one of two places a lot of the time. We're either pretending like God's not even there and we can do it on our own or we're wallowing in self-pity. We're either exalting ourself in the way of I got this, I got this.

I'll let you know when I need you. We don't say it, we just live like it. Or we're on the other side wallowing in self-pity and exalting ourself by feeling sorry for ourself. It's still about me.

You see, Peter says, no, we're not going to have any of that. Be spiritually watchful. Practice. So this is spiritual alertness to what?

[55 : 45] To the demonic dangers against your heart. We know this is what Peter has in mind because of what he says next. Look, your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion.

Seeking someone to devour. So he says, be on the alert. Be on the alert. It's literally when rendered as be awake.

So it means be vigilant. One or two of your translations will have vigilant there. Be vigilant. Don't get caught napping. Don't get caught unaware.

Don't be prey. Because you remained ignorant or uncautious or unaware. You took a laissez-faire, you know, attitude toward life and then bow.

Once again, this sees you actively preparing, readying, being self-controlled. All of this because Peter is going to then move us to a position of actively resisting the enemy.

[57 : 00] Right now, we're readying. This is all about readying ourselves. Self-control.

Watchfulness. I'm alert. I know.

I'm aware. Spiritually. You know, I don't just walk into something. We are self-controlled and spiritually vigilant because this is what is needed for us to do battle on God's terms against a very powerful enemy committed to our ruin.

Folks, I want you to see this. I'm putting it up here. I want you to see this worded because this is the reality. Don't let it scare you. Let it sober you. Here it is.

The vital necessity for you to adopt and practice this spiritual vigilance is the chilling reality that you and your loved ones are being hunted. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

It's why Greg and I want to be vigilant as shepherds as we provide oversight to this congregation.

We don't want any of you straying as sheep and getting out there kind of on your own, not submitting to your pastors.

[58 : 17] That's what he means when he talks about submitting to your pastors. It's not kowtow to your pastors. We're just men. It's submit to your pastors and their spiritual leadership because that's one way that God brings us in together and keeps us protected from the very thing that we're talking about now.

This prowling enemy that's seeking to devour and ruin you. If you were tempted to think of self-control and watchfulness as kind of defensive postures, think again.

This is a call for you to take the initiative and to be on the offensive in how you live your spiritual life.

This is real sobering stuff.

So this is not a picture. Think of this. This is not a picture of you backed up against like a wall or something with a stick in one hand and a rock in the other ready to kind of wildly swing and bludgeon your way out of danger.

That's not what this is. Well, what is it a picture of? Here it is. This is a picture of you in the full armor provided by God's protective care, armed to the teeth with God's weapons and fully energized by God's promise to give His grace to the humble.

[59 : 44] You live in pride, you forfeit, and you become prey. Just think of that. Pride, prey.

Humility, honor, protection, the hand of God watching over your life.

So I say again, friends, self-control and spiritual watchfulness combine to make you aggressively aware that you and your loved ones are being hunted.

So don't let that scare you and keep you up at night. Turn to the Lord. Turn to His truth. We need to learn to fight this warfare with our spiritual armor and our spiritual weapons.

Again, this is an unashamed plug for Wednesday night. Come on Wednesday night. This is what we're trying to help you learn and grow in. How to recognize the schemes of your enemy as he prowls around and seeks to devour you and your family.

The submission, the humility, the trust that we've talked about for a few weeks now, they all come together to provide the eternal, internal fortitude and determination, the godly resolve, the godly perseverance for you to remain in the fight as one of the Savior's servant sufferers.

[61 : 08] So as I close, listen, this is no time and this is what Peter's letter, the end of his letter is trying to encourage these people to think like. This is no time for feeling sorry for yourself.

This is no time for fear, fear of circumstances, fear of man. This is no time for frailty, forgetfulness, or for being full of yourself.

Suffering, if you don't keep your heart right with the Lord, will produce all of those things in you and it'll take you out of the fight, it'll render you a victim of Satan's schemes and it'll make your loved ones more vulnerable to his attacks.

That's what's at stake. So, what does he say? Control yourself. Get a grip on yourself. In the Lord, this is not pull yourself up by your bootstraps and that kind of nonsense.

This is look to Jesus. Control, compose yourself. Train yourself to remain aggressively alert as you spiritually scrutinize situations in your life, as you spiritually discern what's taking place in these contexts that come at you.

[62 : 23] And then you can move in that discernment in the wisdom of God, keeping yourself under his mighty hand, remaining humble, but moving forward in a strategy that you know is biblically sound.

You can be confident in that. So, move out and take the steps. Show some courage. Show some fortitude. Bring some people around you that can help you stay that course.

And then you'll serve King Jesus well. So, God willing, next Sunday, I'll be here to close out 1 Peter and to say more about your enemy and about Peter's instructions for us to be spiritually active as Christ's servant sufferers.

We have three or four more of those to do. God willing, next time. Thank you for your kind attention, friends, and as always, Greg and I very much appreciate your prayers for us through the week as we shepherd.

Let's pray together. Father, this has been a full time of rehearsing from Scripture your wonderful and beautiful commands on our lives and your promises that you make to us as your people because you are our God.

[63 : 34] God, and we want to faithfully live together, encouraging each other in sound doctrine, encouraging each other to live out faithfully these wonderful principles that give us hope, Lord, that provide us with clear direction for each step that we take with our families and our friends.

And so, we pray for those families. Now, Greg and I offer to you our prayers as pastors that you will help us to shepherd the flock of God and not with compulsion, not lording it over, but voluntarily with eager hearts, Lord, just eager to see you work in their lives and glorified in their lives and through what they say and do.

As husbands love their wives, as wives love their husbands, and as these parents raise their kids.

And for those of us who've launched our children, as we turn to you and look to you, how can you make us useful, God, even more now that we don't have our children to raise?

In every circumstance of life, Father, help us to exhibit self-control and spiritual watchfulness because we've submitted our heart to you, we've humbled our heart before you, and we're seeking to trust you in practical ways.

To God be the glory, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.