

Ever have days when you feel like the wheels are coming off in this country? It seems like all the virtues that have held us together as a nation are unraveling like a cheap sweater. The motto "in God we trust" mocks us as God is pushed farther and farther toward the margins of our society. "My people have committed two evils," says the Lord through Jeremiah, "they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Jer. 2:13. The historic Christian faith is being replaced by a secularist faith which sees Christianity as a competitor to be vanquished, rather than as an alternate set of beliefs to be tolerated in an open society.

Television personalities mock those who follow Christ. Powerful politicians refuse to confirm those who have a strong Christian testimony saying that is not what "this country is supposed to be about." The mayor of Houston attempted to censor pastor's sermons. Civil liberties organizations try to bleed Christian businesses dry. How are we to live in such an increasingly hostile environment where the sacred is trashed and the secular is treasured? In case you missed it, that's what 1 Peter is all about.

There are three typical responses when our faith is under attack; isolation, escalation or assimilation. Isolationists hide. They hunker in the bunker and console one another. Escalationists attack. They appeal to the past when America was a Christian nation and pounce on the injustice and inconsistencies of the secularists. Those who choose assimilation wave the white flag and simply conform to the culture. They go along to get along. There is another option presented by Peter. Don't isolate, escalate or assimilate. DEMONSTRATE Jesus. That is our calling. In 1 Pe. 2:9, Peter says, "You are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 2:12 says, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Today we come to the end of 1 Peter. Peter's closing words identify a most unlikely weapon fashioned for a most unmerciful enemy employed by a most unimpressive army who are called to demonstrate Jesus to a wheels-off world. Let's begin with the unlikely weapon in 5:5-7, "clothe ourselves with humility."

**I. Humility: our greatest asset.** To be humble is not to think lowly of yourself it is to think highly of God and to have an accurate assessment of self. The old English Puritan John Flavel said it well, "They that know God will be humble and they that know themselves cannot be proud." The humble recognize their need for God and their dependence upon God. At the proper time, God will exalt the humble. (v. 6) just as He did with Jesus.

Jesus' is the picture of humility. "Have this mind(set) among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven

and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:5-11

The humble are rewarded with God's favor...v. 5. Three times in the Bible we read these same words, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6, Prov. 3:34).

In v. 7 Peter tells us how to humble ourselves. The word "casting" is in a form (ptc) that indicates a continuation of the same thought. Humility is letting go of anything that competes for our single-minded devotion to Christ. When your mind is divided (anxiety = divided mind) it is comforting to know that God cares for you. God is not an impersonal force. He is a loving Father. I'll never forget the words spoken by one of our men at the funeral for his child. "The pain that I feel at the loss of my son helps me to understand how God feels about me."

**II. The devil: our greatest enemy...**vv. 8-9. If humility is our greatest weapon in this unconventional war then pride is our greatest enemy. Pride is personified by the devil. Calvin Miller says the devil fell from heaven when he chose to skip his morning alleluias and started singing, "I gotta be me." Peter gives us some insight into the tactics of the enemy by comparing them to another proud, prowling predator...8b.

1. Lions take advantage of darkness.
2. Lions seek out the most vulnerable.
3. Lions separate their victim from the rest of the herd.

How are we to respond to this powerful enemy? In two ways: Verse 8 says, "Be self-controlled (sober) and alert." We have encountered the word "sober" previously... 1:13, 4:7. Here it is again. It is the opposite of being intoxicated. Don't allow yourself to be "under the influence" of this world's values. Satan is a master at guerilla warfare. I have rarely encountered a frontal attack. What often happens is that I am lulled to sleep by the good things of life and that is when I become most vulnerable. Peter says, "Be alert." I wonder if he was thinking about the time he fell asleep while Satan attacked Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? (Mt. 26:38-41).

The second way to respond to the enemy is to resist. (v. 9). Resist, knowing how this story ends. "Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." Romans 16:19-20. We are to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil knowing that, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under OUR feet." Not under HIS feet but yours. What an amazing thought.

"I have no problem believing that God will crush Satan. What blows my mind is that it's not under God's feet that Satan will be crushed; it's under my feet – our feet. I can understand Satan being crushed under the feet of God. We are told that heaven is God's throne and the earth is His footstool. Those are big feet! Yet the question comes to mind: If the soles of our feet have this kind of cosmic power, what untapped potential has God placed in the rest of us?" McManus, p. 87. Humility is our greatest asset. The devil is our greatest adversary...

**III. God's glory: our greatest hope...**vv. 10-11. This is another profound promise. God calls us INTO His glory. In the O.T. God's glory inspired fear. No one dared to approach when God's

glory was revealed. We hear stories about the priest entering the Holy of Holies with a rope tied around his ankle lest he did not survive being in the presence of God's glory. But v. 10 says we have been "called into His eternal glory." We have been invited not as spectators but as participants. We who have, "sinned and fallen short of God's glory," now share in His glory.

Isaiah was given a vision of God in Is. 6. He saw the Lord and he heard angelic beings singing "Holy, Holy, Holy." The seraphim in attendance around the throne covered their eyes in the presence of God's glory. Eight hundred years later John was given a vision of the Lord, only something had changed between the time of Isaiah and the time of John. The angelic creatures in John's vision were covered with eyes. (Rev. 4:6). "And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev. 4:8). Why were they covered with eyes? To gaze upon the glory of God.

What happened between Isaiah's vision and John's? God came down. The Word became flesh. John says, "We beheld His glory." Our greatest need is to see God's glory. When I see God for who He is everything takes on a proper perspective. (Awareness matrix) When we humble ourselves God becomes His own right size. If my mind is fixed on the glory of God I will not fear the depravity of man. If I can keep my eyes on the glory to come I won't need to isolate or escalate or assimilate. I can demonstrate the shalom that God promises in the future.

When God's people were exiles in Babylon they formed a resistance movement under the guidance of the prophet Jeremiah. What is interesting is how they resisted the Babylonians. They were told, "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Jer. 29:5-7. In other words, don't build walls plant gardens. Be a blessing to those around you. Jesus demonstrated a similar approach to the prevailing culture. It is remarkable to me that Jesus refused to be a culture warrior. He never wore a hat that said, "Make Israel Great Again" nor did he start a "Jewish Lives Matter" movement. He never commanded His followers to "engage the culture." But He did command them, "love your neighbor." The devil ruined the world through pride. Jesus saved the world through humility. His posture was not one of power and entitlement but servanthood and humility. What does that tell us? As His disciples our calling is not to subdue a pagan culture by manipulation and political power and clever strategies. Our calling is to bless this world by living Christ-like lives as foreigners and exiles.

God is still using the unlikely and unimpressive to accomplish His purposes. We're excited to host Nick Vuijic, a man who was born without arms and legs. His inspiring story has challenged thousands of men and women that no matter what their disabilities are, they have a purpose. And that purpose is to demonstrate the beauty of a God who cares for us and gives grace to the humble who will "restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (5:10)

We are going to close this morning by hearing from some who want to demonstrate their faith in God by humbling themselves through baptism.