

# (1 Peter - Part 32): On God's Sheep and Their Needs

by A.W. Tozer

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*We should submit to God's will and humble ourselves under His mighty hand, trusting that He will exalt us in due time.*

**Duration:** 28:20

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:5

**Topics:** "Sheep"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of humility and having a charitable attitude towards others. He encourages listeners to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, knowing that He will exalt them in due time. The preacher uses examples from the Bible, such as Daniel in the lion's den and the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, to illustrate the concept of waiting for God's timing. He also mentions that the exact form of a communion service is not of great importance to God, but rather the spirit of the worshipper.

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## Transcript

For a brief sermon before the communion service, let me read verses from 1 Peter 5, verses 5 and 6. Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Now this was not specifically chosen for the morning, but it is the next two verses succeeding the last passage used here in 1 Peter. This is a sort of verse-by-verse preaching from the Bible, and it is appropriate that we should this Communion Sunday have this passage which exhorts us to humility and to be subject one to another.

Now the form of a communion service would I shock you very much if I said that the form of a communion service is probably not of very great importance to God. I think that God cares very much less than we suspect for the exact form that a service is carried out in. It is the spirit of the worshipper that means everything.

I think that it would be impossible for us now at this late age of the world to discover exactly what happened that night when our Lord with his disciples broke the bread and gave it and blessed it and they did eat. Various denominations and schools of church thought have settled on a certain way of having communion. And occasionally this will be altered after a generation or two of agitation.

They did it this way for 500 years and now a very slight modification is made and the older people who are worried and saying, what are we coming to? The younger people can understand it when changes are made. Take for instance, it is almost humorous when even a word or two is suggested to be changed in the Book of Common Prayer, the great English prayer book, as if God cared about that word or two. As if he cared exactly how communion service is conducted.

I do not know that I say that it will ever be exactly known. We know that the Lord was there with his disciples. We know that they sat down and they took bread and the Lord blessed the bread and he gave it and then later he gave the wine.

But it says he broke it and gave it to them, but it doesn't say how he gave it to them. Whether he carried it to them, whether they came after it, it doesn't say how much they ate, how much they cooked, whether it was much or little. It doesn't say what kind of bread it was or even what kind of wine it was.

The point there is not the mode, but the spirit. And to approach a communion service anywhere, whether it is brought to you at your seat or whether you go and kneel in the front and take it as we used to in the early lines, whether it is handed around in individual cups, I think that is of the least consideration in heaven. But the spirit of the worshiper is of utmost consideration in heaven.

God is not concerned so much with external things as with our internal parts. And he says here, be subject one to another. Now submission may be a virtue or it may be a necessity.

An example of submission as a necessity might be the polls, say, under the heel of the Communists. Those proud and strong-willed polls are forced to submit to the tyranny of Red Russia. But they're not submitting graciously.

They are submitting under pain of death. And that kind of submission is not necessarily a virtue. It may be good sense, but I doubt whether it's a virtue.

Now, the kind of submission that comes from necessity very often embitters men and makes them sullen and even revengeful. And if they die without ever getting revenge, they died with a vengeful spirit. There is nothing in the Bible, at least there's nothing in the kingdom of God, about submission by necessity.

It is all submission by voluntary grace. Blessed are the poor in spirit, says the Holy Ghost, and blessed are the meek, and blessed are the peacemakers, and blessed are you when men shall persecute you, and so on. This is submission, voluntary submission.

And this is, of course, a virtuous thing. When I do not need to submit and do really submit for Christ's sake, then it's a virtue. When I am forced to submit, then it is a vice, or at least it is not a virtue.

At best, it is a negative thing. Now, the Bible says here we are to be clothed with humility. Clothed with humility, that's the good, strong, vivid, biblical figure of speech.

They counted on their virtues as being worn. It is, as a soldier, by the very uniform he wears, indicates what he is. The mailman the same.

He comes up the walk, you're not afraid of him. His gray uniform tells you that he's a servant of the sack. And it was so in olden times, men dressed according to their status and place in society.

And the Holy Ghost here says that we are to wear the uniform that indicates to everybody what kind of people we are, to whom we belong. We are to be clothed with humility, that kind of uniform, the uniform of humility. For you remember that it was Jesus Christ, our Lord, who dressed himself in humility.

Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, nor did he consider that being the equality with God something to be held on to. But he humbled himself, you know the rest of the story, down, down, down to the death on the cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name. Now, because Christ came to the world clothed with humility, he will always be found where his people are clothed with humility.

He will be found among the humble people. There is an odd little passage back in the Song of Solomon that I want to take notice of right now. I don't know whether this would stand up under the rigorous criticism of the Bible expositor or not.

But at least it is a good illustration, if it is not sound exposition. In fact, I don't know how anybody is going to soundly expound the Song of Solomon. It's pretty near what you say it means.

Well, the bride is talking, and she says, I sleep, but my heart waketh. I wonder if she was dreaming, or if she was lying in that twilight catnap zone, halfway in between asleep and awake. I sleep, but my heart waketh.

It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. Now, whether that was a dream, or whether he was actually there or not, I don't know. But she says, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? But my beloved put his hand in the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for him.

I rose up to open to my beloved, and my hand dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. Here she was, dressed up nicely and all fixed up. And when her beloved, who was out gathering lilies and myrrh in the garden in the night, and looking for his sheep, when he came and called for her, she wasn't plumbed in a manner that she could go out and go with him.

She was fixed up and ready for the night, and all with myrrh, and sweet-smelling myrrh on her fingers. Then she said, Too late, I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone, and my soul failed when he spake. I sought him, but I could not find him.

I called him, but he gave me no answer. And here was the bride, and the bridegroom was trying to get in contact with her. He said, Come on, come on.

He was out among the sheep and out among the lilies in the cool of the night with the dew on his hair, and he wanted her to go with him in humility and service. But she said, How can I go? I put off the garment I would wear out there, and I am dressed for the evening at home. I'm not ready.

And by the time she got ready, he was gone. Now, brethren, there is such a thing as finding Jesus Christ where he is, and not always expecting him to be where you are, but finding him where he is. And he is in the place of humility always.

He humbled himself, and because he humbled himself, we ought to humble ourselves. For always remember this, God is always on the side of the humble man. Because, it says here, God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.

God resisteth the proud. Now, in this context, of course, it means the man who is stubborn in his pride. God accepts the resistance of the proud man as being resistance to him.

But it's very rarely, I don't suppose once in a hundred years, that anybody actually raises his face to God and says, God, I resist thee. God, I defy thee. I don't think people do it that way at all.

We defy God by taking a side other than the side God's on. We resist God by resisting the side that God is on, the ways of God. And when a man resists God, God resisteth that man.

The man who hardens his jaw against a Christian, even though he may be right from point of fact, nevertheless he's wrong in spirit, and for that reason God resists him. Many a quarrel, someone will justify himself and snap his jaws together and the muscles will stand out on the points of his jaw and say, but I am right. Yes, he is right in point of fact, but wrong in spirit.

And God is more concerned with spirit than with fact. More concerned with how you take a thing than what you take. More concerned with your reaction to abuse than the abuse you get.

Much more concerned. It isn't difficult to abuse a man. The average fellow with a good flow of English can usually do a pretty good job of abusing another.

And some are very eloquent in it. But it isn't how eloquently you have been abused, but it is what attitude have you taken toward the abuse and how is your spirit in the whole thing. If your spirit is stubborn and you resist, then you can only be sure of one thing, God's resisting you.

Now it doesn't mean that God will take the side of the other man, but it just means that God will take sides against the stubborn man always. Always. Because, though I repeat in point of fact, he may be right.

In his heart he's wrong, and it is by the heart that man lives. Now when God resists a man, God resisteth the proud. When God resists a man, it won't show itself in dramatic judgment as rule.

Rarely does God send his judgment dramatically. It will not be a colorful and public-wise judgment. So the public will say, it won't be that at all.

If it were, then it might be different. If when a man resists God, God resisted the man as one soldier another, with blood and the clash of swords might be something to think about then. And a man might learn his lesson quickly, but it never works that way.

When God resists a man, it is by a slow inward spiritual degeneration that the judgment falls. An inward degeneration, a slow unwillingness, a slow hardening, until hardness and fruitlessness and joylessness and cynicism finally take the man over, and he sours as a jar of fruit sours. And thus a man literally sours in his own juice.

Not because he was wrong in point of fact, maybe, but because he was wrong in spirit. Well, it says over against that, God resisted the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble. That is exactly the reverse of resisting.

He giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God. Now, if it were merely under the hand of God, it would be a relatively easy thing to do.

If God would say to me, now I'm coming and I'm going to stand at the front of the church, and dramatically I'm going to expect you to come and kneel before me and humble yourself, that would be very easy to do, because God being God, nobody would lose face. He would feel altogether just as proud as ever while he knelt before the eternal majesty on high. But, oh brethren, God doesn't do it that way.

God sometimes sends people unworthy to black your shoes and expects you to humble yourselves meekly and take it from them, and thus you'll be humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God. Look at our Savior himself. The lash that fell on the back of Jesus was not wielded by an archangel, it was wielded by a Roman pagan soldier.

The abuse that was heaped upon our Savior was not heaped by the deity or the multitude of heavenly hosts, it was heaped by wicked, blasphemous, dirty-tongued men who weren't worthy to clean the dust from the soles of his holy shoes. So by humbling himself under the hand of men, he humbled himself under the hand of God. You say, then, must we always humble ourselves? The answer is, we must never violate morals or truth in humility.

If in humbling ourselves it means a compromise of truth, then we must never do it. If it means a compromise of morality, we must never do it. But when it doesn't mean neither, then it's perfectly all right.

Old Thomas Aquinas said that if we want a peace in our hearts and want to get along all right, we must often humble ourselves and keep still, not only when we were wrong, but when we were right. I think he's right about that, provided, of course, it doesn't enter the realm of doctrine or morals. No man is ever called of God to degrade himself, morally or in truth, only to humble himself and to let the other man through to the rock throne.

Now, it says, if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, he will exalt us in due time. Now, due time here is a pretty good expression. He will exalt you in due time.

Due time means a time proper to all the circumstances, a time best suited to perfect us, and a time that will bring honor to God and the most honor to God and the most good to men. That is due time. Sometimes God will make us wait a long, long time before he will honor us or exalt us.

He will let us labor under humility quite a while because it isn't time yet, it isn't due time. Teaching a child to drive before it's old enough, giving it its own money before it's old enough, giving it freedom before it's old enough, may come out of kindness, misdirected kindness, but it'll harm the child. And to reward a man before he's earned it will harm the man.

And for God to come to defense of a saint before the saint has gone through the fire will harm the saint. You know that if some of the modern books on fiction had handled Daniel, the book of Daniel, we'd have had a vastly different book. I can just imagine how some of these, Ken this or Cliff that or something, that's writing the fiction of the modern hour, I can imagine how that would have worked.

The Den of Lions, old, old Daniel. He wouldn't surrender. The den was full of lions licking their chops and driving their angry tails or their tails angrily.

And Edgar can take care of that. And there he went into the lion's den. But just before he entered the lion's den, every lion dropped dead.

Voice out of the sky spoke and every lion died. Or they'd have worked it some other way. I remember one man who wrote a book of fiction, both be very great books.

And he, his locale was Canada and the theme was communism and Christianity. Some of you may have read it. Well, he had a man on his hand, this Christian author, but didn't know what to do with him.

He had to get rid of him somehow, just like the other writers, but he couldn't kill him because he was a Christian. He didn't, he just couldn't kill him. You know, the regular writers of fiction, when they want rid of a character, they just have somebody to kill him.

But this brother, being a good Christian fundamentalist, he couldn't kill his character, so what's supposed to happen? He had to look out of the dark and tear him up. Now I can imagine how these fiction writers would have handled Daniel, but what happened actually? Daniel was permitted to enter the den of lions and stay there all night, because the night before wasn't the due time. The next morning was the due time.

Now, I'd like to have our modern fictioneers also handle the three Hebrew children and the fiery prince. Brother, that would make a whole book. That chapter could be expanded into a 482-page book with illustrations.

And they also would have had, just before they went into the furnace, the fire miraculously went out, or they'd have handled it some other way. But that would have been putting the fire out too soon. It wasn't due time.

In order that God should have his way, those saints had to go into the fire and stay there all night. You will exalt you in due time, but remember, it's his time and not yours. Some of you that are in the fiery furnace right now don't think that I am not preaching to some people in the fiery furnace.

I am. You'll shake my hand after the service and you'll smile straight at me and I won't know who you are, and you won't let anybody know that you're in the fiery furnace. And you say, why doesn't God get me out? It isn't due time yet.

When it's due time and you've cooked enough, God will get you out. But there won't be a smell of smoke on your garment, and there won't be any harm done to you. The only harm can come from your insisting on God getting you through sooner than he should.

Relax and take it. And the Lord will exalt you in due time. Always he exalts his people in due time.

Brethren, you can always afford to wait. Wait is the thing that you can do, and time is the thing that a saint has the most of. A sinner has no time.

He's got to hurry or he'll go to hell. But a Christian has eternity. And you've got all sorts of time.

So if you are in a furnace, don't try to get through too soon. Wait it out, and God will exalt you in due time. Time proper to the circumstances.

Time properly designed to glorify God and bless you. Now I point out that this time is God's time, and the great weakness of Christians is insisting upon getting vindicated before the trial's over. You let God try you, and when the trial's over, he'll bring in the verdict, not guilty.

Now I notice two phrases, one used by Paul and one used by Peter. In the fulness of time was used by Paul, and in due time is used by Peter. In the fulness of time has to do with the coming of Christ, and in due time has to come with the return of Christ.

In the fulness of time Christ came, that he might die. And in due time he will return. So we are in between the fulness of time when he came and due time when he will return.

I only pray that we may be very wise in knowing how to conduct ourselves. And this morning in our communion service, fitting very graciously into Peter's little exhortation, we celebrate the time that he came and the time that he will come. We do show forth his death till he come.

This is the interim. This is the bracket in between yesterday's coming and tomorrow's coming. And in the meantime you and I are to humble ourselves, take a lowly and charitable attitude toward everybody, friend and foe alike.

And when we do, and as we do, the Lord will let us bake a while, and let the fire burn a while in the bush to get rid of all the larvae and bugs. And when he has us properly purified, he will return. Or he will exalt us and honor us even now on the earth before the coming.

But mainly it is reserved for that hour when the Son of God returns from heaven above to earth below to reward the saints. I pray, I pray that we may get the lesson. Could we pray again? O Father, anoint us, Lord, this busy, nervous age in which we live.

Wheels are under us and wings overhead of us, but they are not the wings of angels, but the wheels of the holy chariots of God. They are the wheels of Henry Ford and the wings of Wilbur Wright. And the buzz and the roar and the haste and the speed and the excitement, all of this works against saintliness.

O Lord, in this hour drawn near to us, even now, O Lord, Thou art here. Let us adore and own how dreadful is this place that all within us feel Thy power and lowly bow before Thy face. Save us, we pray, from time and civilization and the cares of this life.

Help us to set our affections on things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God. And as we enter into the communion service, we pray that we may receive the commune as becometh saints. By nature, we're not worthy, but we can be Christians and in a worthy manner with reverence and faith and humility celebrate Thy coming until Thy coming.

The coming that brought salvation until the coming that brings deliverance and glorifies. Graciously bless us as we wait in Thy holy presence. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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