

Humble Yourself To Gain Grace

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[0 : 00] the hand of God. And the contrast that you've got to see is between the devil whose purpose is to destroy you and the mighty hand of God that is to prove you.

And those are the two forces that you and I are caught in between. Well, how do you treat the devil? Scripture says we're to be sober, to be vigilant because of his ruthless and destructive power. His power in our life utterly destroys everything. And he can't, I mean, all he can do is kill you. And death isn't all there is, but he can effectively do that. So we're to be sober and to be vigilant and we're to recognize that we must resist him because it's stupid to pretend that evil doesn't exist so that you don't have to be sober, you don't have to be vigilant, you don't have to resist the power of evil because you do. And because of the deadly intent of the purposes of Satan.

He says you will get some considerable help in this when you recognize that this is the universal enemy of Christians throughout the world. That we're all involved in this battle.

[1 : 54] You're not fighting it alone. He has not singled you out and putting you under pressure. You're fighting the same battle that others throughout the world are fighting.

And one of Satan's chief deceits is to make you think, I alone am fighting this battle. You're not. You're not. And you're not.

So that's what you're, the way you're to deal with the devil. Now, how do you relate to the mighty hand of God? And it says this is what you're to do.

You're to humble yourself, therefore. Now, you know, you may not know, but I know, that in almost every circumstance in which I find myself, my first and most primitive and strongest and most basic instinct is to exalt myself.

I am the biggest, the smartest, everything else with the EST on the end in this place. It's just absolutely instinctive.

[3 : 05] You always do it. You sometimes are surprised that other people don't recognize it immediately, but you take steps to see that they soon do recognize it if they haven't caught on to it.

I exalt myself. I was at Synod for the last two days, and only I recognized that I was the most important person there, and nobody even asked me a question.

And that business of exalting yourself, I tell you this, but it makes my cheeks burn with shame to recognize how much energy I waste exalting myself.

And trying to establish how important I am. And I want to say thank you to so many of you who helped me with it. But the fact of the matter is that what he says we're to do is to humble ourselves. Now, to humble yourself is to put on the clothes of service. You know what your job is, and you clothe yourself to do that.

[4 : 21] You clothe yourself to be the servant of the will of God in whatever situation you find yourself. You are, in effect, down on your knees, waiting for God to say how you are to serve him in dealing with whatever situation you're in.

That's what it means to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. You have a very powerful God, as I say, who's going to push you.

And he says that's what you're to do. You're to humble yourself under that mighty hand of God. You allow him to prove you in the crucible of suffering.

There is, in fact, the possibility of the joyous anticipation of suffering because in it you're going to see most clearly the work of the mighty hand of God.

A young, pregnant mother in this parish sat in my office one day, having been diagnosed as having a very serious cancer which might force the abortion of her baby and threaten her own life as well.

[5 : 48] And she said, I don't want you to pray that I am healed. I want you to pray that God's will is to be done.

And that's somebody who learned in that situation to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. And that's hard work. And she said it not lightly, but with great conviction.

It says you are to cast all your cares and anxieties upon him because he can handle it. Now what it means, in effect, is that you cast your anxieties on him because everything that causes you care and anxiety can be used by God to prove you and to establish you and to work his purpose in you. That's why you turn it over to him. You deal with this, and in dealing with it, deal with me because I'm the person that's suffering from this anxiety.

And that's how we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Not trying in our own strength to deal with the anxieties that press in on us all the time, but learning to cast our cares on him because he cares for us.

[7 : 17] Well, that's the process by which we submit to the mighty hand of God. Now what is the result? And this is, I mean, this is a magnificent passage, I must say.

I hope that it will just ingrain itself in your mind. What it says happens as a result of this, it says that after you have suffered a little while, and that may be 70 or 80 years, but in terms of the purposes of God, it is still a little while.

Time has its limitations as far as God is concerned. And the suffering, no matter how acute or how prolonged it is, as far as God's concerned, it is suffering a little while.

And after that, he says, in verse 10, after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, that God will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.

He will work out his purpose in you. He will establish you in your faith. He will strengthen you for his work. He will do this.

[8 : 44] And that is the faith in which we are called to live in a world of profound suffering. I know that the last time we had a strike like this, a teacher who had the courage to cross a picket line and another who had the courage to join a picket line.

And I am just anxious that they and you and I could approach each day in the awareness of the mighty hand of God and that we could humble ourselves under that mighty hand of God so that in due time, after a little while, God could restore, establish, and strengthen us as it is his purpose to do, God himself.

And so it's in that faith that I invite you to come and partake in the Holy Communion, that it will be for you a humbling of yourself under the mighty hand of God, an awareness of the destructive power of evil and an unwavering faith in God's ability to restore, establish, and strengthen us, to bring us to the place he has called us to be in Christ.

Amen. Amen. This morning, let us pray for Christians that we know in our own lives and those we know about around the world who are suffering for their faith.

Then shall we pray for that grace of humility which Peter has talked to us about this morning in this passage of Scripture, that humility which God wants of us before he exalts us.

[10 : 58] and then shall we pray also for our own parish life. Give us grace, Almighty Father, to address you with all our hearts.

Teach us to fix our thoughts on you reverently and with love. Hear our prayers not according to the poverty of our asking, but according to the richness of your grace.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. And so we pray for Christians who are tempted this morning. Lord Jesus Christ, you are tempted in all points.

You are tempted for us as you are tempted to forgive those whoorumfasts.

Of course there is hope that you are tempted to find out about anything else. That was the covetous Angular 9 crying with