

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Fundamental Attitudes of Christian Maturity

1 Peter 5:5-14

Part 4

We are continuing to examine a series of imperatives that conclude the epistle of First Peter. We have discovered that these imperatives deal with fundamental attitudes of Christian maturity. If we are ever going to behave right we must come to the point in our lives that we think right. And we will never think right until we have incorporated these very basic fundamental attitudes of Christian maturity into our lives. What specific attitudes have we considered so far?

An attitude of submission - “**(5) You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders.**” If we do not learn to be submissive to the authorities that God has established we will never be able to live right. It is a sad thing to see so many people struggle with such an important and fundamental attitude of Christian maturity. We need as Christian parents to work very diligently to teach our children the benefits of submission.

An attitude of humility - “**and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. (6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.**” Hopefully you will remember that “humility” means to “bring low.” If we are going to be humble people we must be willing to bring ourselves low in order to serve. If we do not incorporate within our lives the attitude of humility toward others and toward the Lord we will never be able live right.

An attitude of trust - “**(7) casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.**” If we do not truly believe that God cares for us we will never be able to get our Christian life together. If we do not develop an attitude of trust in the Lord we will forever suffer under a load of crushing and disabling anxiety.

And finally last week began to consider the basic fundamental attitude of vigilance.

An attitude of vigilance - Let us read **V. 8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”** If we do not develop an attitude of vigilance we will never be able walk in victory.

Last, we learned that to live free of anxiety does not mean that we are to live free of watchfulness. Why? Because the devil is seeking to devour the righteous. Not that he can remove our salvation but he can, if we are not vigilant, weaken our faith. Satan is seeking by attacking our faith to rob us of the victory that we have in Christ. Satan is seeking by attacking our faith to render us powerless and useless in the cause of Christ.

We also learned last week as we looked at **Rev. 12** that Satan is not alone in his efforts to weaken our faith. He not only has at his disposal a certain number of fallen angels assisting in His efforts. But he also has those who have not yet been set free from his kingdom through a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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We need to appreciate the fact that three times in the Gospel of John, Satan is referred to as the “prince of this world.” He is referred to as the “prince of this world” in **John 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11**. We need to understand that the Lord has allowed Satan as the prince of this world to have authority over the things of this world. This is why Satan could say when he was tempting Jesus in the wilderness after showing him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, **“all these things will I give you, if you fall down and worship me.”** Satan was not blowing smoke. His offer was legitimate.

But not only is Satan referred to as the “prince of this world” but he is also referred to as the “prince of the power of the air” in **Eph. 2:2**. We need to understand that Satan can not only attack us from the ground using the things that we can see. But he can attack us through the air using things that we can’t see to effect the things we can see.

Why would God permit us to be buffeted so persistently and so fiercely by His enemy and ours? Let us consider some of those reasons.

TO PROVE US - Certainly we have already seen in the epistle of First Peter that tribulation and trial is allowed to come into our lives in order to prove our faith. In **1 Pet. 1:6-7** it says, **“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials (7) that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** It is a wonderful thing for us to know that our faith is genuine and saving. And certainly we now know from **1 Pet. 5:8** that much of that buffeting that comes into our lives is coming to us through the activity of Satan. But we need to understand that Satan’s attack upon our faith is not only proving our faith to ourselves but also to who else? To Satan himself.

Let us consider the story of Job once again. Job was the most righteous man on earth. But the Lord permitted Satan to buffet him. In fact the Lord went even further than just permitting Satan to buffet him he actually pointed Job out to Satan. I am sure you remember the incident. It says in **Job 1:6-12**, **“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. (7) And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.” (8) And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. (9) Then Satan answered the Lord, Does Job fear God for nothing? (10) Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side” Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. (11) But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse thee on Thy face. (12) Then the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.”** And of course you remember what happened. In less than a 24 hour span everything that he possessed was taken from him. And do you remember how Job responded? **“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”** Then what happened?

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At the beginning of Job 2 it says, **“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. (2) And the Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth, and walking around on it. (3) and the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.” (4) and Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. (5) “However, put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse Thee to Thy face. (6) So the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”** And of course you remember what happened immediately Job was covered with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet.

Why? Why was all this happening to Job? The Lord wanted Satan to see the faith of Job. He wanted Satan to see the integrity of Job. Could the Lord do the very same thing in respect to our own lives to achieve the very same purpose. And the answer is yes. Hopefully not only would Satan’s attacks upon us which are permitted by the Lord would not only be used of the Lord to prove our faith to ourselves but also to Satan. I want and I hope that you want to send a clear message to our adversary, that the Lord, whom we serve is truly worthy to receive our glory, honor and praise. And that this belief is so deeply rooted in us that we will do so this even in the midst of the most adverse circumstances.

But not only is the Lord permitting Satan to attack us to prove us to ourselves and to others. But also to perfect us.

TO PERFECT

Certainly I believe most of us are familiar with **James 1:2-4** which says, **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.** Again knowing that trials can be used by the Lord to produce these kinds of positive results certainly it should not surprise us that the Lord would permit Satan to attack us and to use him in His perfecting work.

Let us consider Job one more time. Not only was all this adversity in Job’s life bore witness to Satan of the strength of Job’s faith in God but it was also used to perfect Job. The book of Job begins with a heavenly debate between God and Satan, moves into an earthly debate between Job and his friends, and closes with a series of divine questions. Job’s trust in God (1-2) changes to complaining and growing self-righteousness (3-31), but his repentance (42:1-6) leads to his restoration (42:7-17). The man after the process is different from the man before the process. If you doubt this let us read his statement of repentance that really was offered only after he had been buffeted by Satan. **“Then Job answered the Lord, and said, (2) I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. (3) Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?”** Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

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(4) Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me. (5) I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees Thee; (6) Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”

This perfecting ministry of the Lord through the trials brought into our lives by Satan not only perfects us personally but also in respect to ministry.

The Lord said in **John 15:1-2**, **“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser, (2) Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.**

I am sure you remember Satan’s attack upon Peter. In **Luke 22:31-34**. Jesus in a conversation with Peter shared him the following **“Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; (32) but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, and you when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”** And did he in fact do this? He became the leader of the New Testament Church in Jerusalem. But the path to this important and fruitful ministry was through Satan’s sifting.

God not only allows Satan to buffet us in order to prove us and to perfect us. But also to protect us.

TO PROTECT US

To protect us from what? Well it might be many things. But one example can be found in the life of the Apostle Paul. Let us read **2 Cor. 12:7-8**. Before we read these verses it is important to note that he had in an attempt to defend his apostolic authority shared a number of very incredible personal experiences that he had enjoyed. And following this disclosure he went on to say, **“And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, thee was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. (9) And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”** The thorn in the flesh is considered by most to be a physical affliction. Satan brought a physical affliction upon Paul and the Lord used that affliction to remind Paul of his own limitations and personal weakness. Which was necessary for Paul?

The Lord knows how to balance our lives. If we have only blessings, we may become proud; so He permits us to have burdens as well. Paul’s great experience in heaven could have ruined his ministry on earth; so God, in His goodness, permitted Satan to buffet Paul in order to keep him from becoming proud.

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CONCLUSION

We are commanded to be free of anxiety as we cast our cares upon the Lord, but this does not mean that we should not be watchful. We have an adversary and he can be vicious. And through his attack he can weaken our faith removing from us the joy of our salvation and rendering useless in the Lord's work of tearing down the strongholds of Satan.

But even though all this is true be assured of this truth that God will use even what appears to be Satan's victories to accomplish His purposes. If there is any doubt consider the death of Christ.

Was it not Satan who orchestrated the death of Christ on the Cross. And yet it was through the cross of Christ that God provided atonement for our sins and not only our sins but atonement for the sins of the entire world.