

Vanity vs Humility

Lyall Johnston—May 11, 2013

I'd like to bring you greetings from New Zealand. We have a very small group, but very dedicated, very loyal and very much, I'm sure, looking forward to hearing everything that we have covered at the conference here. I've been to many conferences in the past, but I've never come across a group of ministers that are more dedicated and loyal and friendly as we have here. No politics, no grumbling, no moaning, but just dedication and service. It's been a real privilege to be here for the very first time and spend that time with them. I'm sure that their wives serve you very faithfully, and that just comes through by talking to them.

Is anyone here from eastern Ohio, the panhandle of West Virginia, or the Pittsburgh area? I always look forward to meeting people from there because we did work in that area from the period of 1978 to the late 1980s before we were called back to New Zealand. It was a very short period of time, but a time when we came to love many of the brethren and serve them; a very poor area of the country—people who just needed to be served by a servant. I have a number on my Facebook page that I communicate with, and still very many fond memories of that.

This morning I would like to call this message: *Battle Stations!* The battle stations starts this morning in 1-Peter where Peter is talking about our enemy, a very real enemy. Fortunately, we also have a frontier's man like none other; a pathfinder, one who has blazed the trail for us. It wasn't Boone, and it wasn't Simon Kenton. I was really interested in the history of this part of the country. I've always wanted to come back to the area and visit it. But that wasn't to be.

We are under attack! We're under attack by a very powerful enemy! But we also have a very powerful being on our side, so we really don't have to fear Satan the devil, who is also called Apollyon—meaning destroyer! He really wants to destroy you and me, but he's not going to be able to do it; *he's not going to win!*

1-Peter 5:5: "In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all of *you* be subject to one another being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud..." That tells us a great deal. No one has the ability before God to put himself above his brother or above his sister.

"...but 'He gives grace to the humble'" (v 5). That's our battle, the great battle. The bottom line is the vanity of Satan vs the humility of God. In Matt. 11 Jesus said, 'I am meek and lowly in heart...' If

Jesus is that way, is the Father also that way? *Of course!* Meek and lowly is our trailblazer. He's the One Who has set the path for us. He's called us to walk in humility.

Once we have been baptized and received the Spirit of God, there's no place for us to ever go back to the position that King Saul did when Samuel had to say to him, 'You were little in your own eyes.'

I often joke and say that when God looked down, He had to look down amongst the penguins. I came from the most southerly point in the south island of New Zealand where the mid-stop is with the penguins. I always used to say that when God called me, God looked in the bottom of the barrel and he couldn't find me. So, what He did is push the barrel over and look down there amongst the mollusks and the worms and He actually did find me—one of the worms, one of the mollusks.

That's the mind and attitude we have to keep in mind, never to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

- **Humility**, the mind of Christ, is the key to the Kingdom of God!
- **Vanity** is the key to distraction!

We could go back into the history of Ezekiel and Isaiah and we could look how that Satan [Lucifer], this great being, who was beautiful, worshipping God—throwing his face on the ground and worshipping God saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy!' But then he moved away from God. What happens? *Vanity, pride, was found in his mind!*

He deserved the name Satan and Apollyon, the destroyer. He destroyed God's way of life. He destroyed one-third of the angels, and he wants to destroy it for us.

Verse 6: "Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time..." As we know, like Paul, we don't have any problem in repeating these things, to remind ourselves of what it is that God has called us to—to walk in humility before Him.

The goal eventually is immortality, a glorious body. I wish that would be tomorrow for those of us with health problems, personal problems, financial problems. But we're going to win, because we have got on our side, not only a trailblazer and a pathfinder, but One Who has promised to do everything for us:

- providing we remain humble before Him
- providing we submit to Him

- providing we depend on Him for every step that we take as we follow the path through the forest.

Oh! Satan's in the forest! What is he throwing at us? *Fiery darts!* Go to Eph. 6 and read the armor we need to put on to block those fiery darts. The last place there it talks about the 'sword of the Word' and it talks about prayer.

I want to talk about something else today that I think we too often neglect. It's something that God has given us as a tool of great power. It's a mighty tool! If I can't leave anything else with you, I'd like to leave you with that one point.

Verse 6: "Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time; casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you. **Be sober! Be vigilant!....**" (vs 6-8). That's not just from time-to-time; that's a daily process!

Satan doesn't sleep! Neither does his band of filthy followers. You have filthy mobs here in the States—gang members. You want to stay clear of them.

"...For your adversary *the devil* is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour" (v 8). But God has given us the tools we need, and we need to keep them sharp:

- prayer—the sword of God's Word
- obedience

Verse 9: "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith..." That's what we've been called to do. It says in Ephesians that we're not fighting against flesh and blood. To often we see the individual, but we've got to keep in mind that it's Satan who is behind every attack, every fiery dart that comes our way.

The Apostle John says, 'I must decrease while He increases.' John has to decrease while 'Jesus has to take more of a presence in my life'—and each one of us. Jesus made a comment where He said, 'The ruler of this world is coming, but he has not one single thing in Me.' *That's our goal!* To come to the place where Satan has not one single thing in our mind or heart.

God has given us a weapon of mass destruction. We can find that in Matt. 17. This is the key I'd like to leave with you. What happened is that a man had gone to the disciples of Jesus Christ. His son had a demon and he said, 'My son is insane. I went to Your apostles and they tried to cast the demon out, but it wouldn't go out.' Jesus made this comment to His disciples, when they asked, 'Why could we not?' Because Jesus could cast the demon out immediately.

Here is the principle; here is a mighty tool and a mighty weapon that God has given to each one of us **IF** we are prepared to use it. You can put this to the sins that so easily beset us. Sometimes we have to apply this principle not only once, but again and again until we have that mighty power of God to overcome that sin, or cast out whatever it is that's troubling us.

Matthew 17:21: "But this kind does not go out except by **prayer and fasting.**" Jesus set the path of *prayer and fasting*, and the Word of God, how He defeated Satan time and time again. He used the '*sword of the Spirit.*'

Here is how our Pathfinder, our Savior, overcame every obstacle, Hebrews 5:6: "Even as He also says in another *place*, 'You *are* a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec'; Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications **with strong crying and tears...**" (vs 5-6). Those are the times that are so important in our lives, when we're really under a challenge.

Remember what happened the night that Christ died? His *strong crying and tears* turned into like blood pouring down. He was so intense. We have the same kind of problems and He is there to support us with our trials and our problems. With the mighty power of God's Spirit, He's just waiting for us to really depend on Him, to really submit to Him. He brings in all His powers and all the power of the Holy angels to deliver us.

Verse 8: "Although He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience from the things that He suffered." Do we suffer in following Christ? If we do, we can expect the support!

The final analysis of this is found in Roman 8—the glorious future that God has ahead for us. I come back to this chapter time and time again, because it is so encouraging.

Romans 8:17: "Now, if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of [this world]..." (vs 17-18). Yes, that's hard! That's tough! And we know how much Paul had to suffer.

"...*are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation itself..." (vs 18-19). The whole creation is waiting on you and me; the vastness of the creation.

When God gives us that glory, we're going to shine, individually, more than any star that God has yet created, because He's going to place us over creation. Therefore, God is going to make us greater than the creation, because we're going to be His sons

and daughters.

Verse 19: “For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God; because the creation was subjected to vanity” (vs 19-20). God subjected us deliberately to the vanity of Satan, because He wanted us to choose His way of life. Satan turned his back on it. That’s the battle! ***Vanity vs humility!***

“...not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in hope” (v 20). God knew that eventually many sons and daughters would be born into His Family.

Verse 21: “In order that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Brethren, *let’s continue on that journey that God has called us to!*

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Peter 5:5-9
- 2) Matthew 17:21
- 3) Hebrews 5:6, 8
- 4) Romans 8:17-21

Scriptures reference, not quoted:

- Matthew 11
- Ephesians 6

LJ:bo
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