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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton, on Wednesday evening 19th December
1928

1 Peter 5 verse 5

"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";

The Apostle Peter concludes this first Epistle with exhortations. He exhorts ministers, he himself being a minister. The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He was one of those of whom the Apostle John writes "That which we have seen and heard and handled and tasted of the Word of Life". Here he says he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He denied his Master, when his Master was suffering, but he was restored, and knew he could write as one who saw everything from the beginning of Christ's ministry, to His resurrection and ascension into heaven, and then he knew what here he speaks of, so beautifully and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. What a prospect he had. O what a prospect it was. God has set the same prospect before some of us, in a different measure, far different, but the same prospect, the same glory. Whatever sufferings may be appointed us between now and the end, this is before us. God has set the crown of life before the eye of faith, and whenever a fresh view, of this glory to come is given, then new alacrity, zeal, fervency of spirit, and hasting unto the day of the coming of the Lord, are felt. You know what I mean, those of you to whom this prospect has been given. A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. That glory the Apostle John speaks of when he says "We shall be like Him" "When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". Think of it. There is a veil now, between us and that glory. Faith sees the glory through the veil. There is the weary veil of the flesh, mortality that hangs heavy on the soul; ignorance, profound ignorance, and yet faith looks through all the veils that may be, and says there is a glory and I am going to partake of it, and that glory has this in it, no change, unchangeable. No going out once you

go in. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go in and go no more out. This will be wonderful seeing we change so frequently, are hot and cold in half an hour. Now zealous, now nearly asleep if not quite so. Now simple in our spirit, then duplicity, the deceit of our own hearts will come up. Now confessing sin, and now hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What changes we experience. But the glory of which we shall be partakers has no change in it. Press on dear friends. Paul did. "I press" he said, "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ." And the exhortation to the ministers, the elders, is this. "Feed the flock of God which is among you" Feed the flock of slaughter. Feed the beautiful flock. Feed the flock of God, the sheep purchased with the blood of Christ, quickened by the Holy Ghost, led in the spirit of things to hunger and thirst, never to be satisfied without nourishment and the ministry is ordained for that particular thing. Feed the flock of God. To the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul spake in the same way. He said "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." What will feed the flock? The gospel of God's grace. The flesh of Christ, the blood of Christ. How can a minister feed the flock with such nourishment? By testifying of the gospel of the grace of God; by preaching, as enabled, the word of the living God, and testifying concerning the Person and the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That is how a minister must feed the flock of God. What a wonderful thing it is that God has ordained the ministry of the gospel for this end. When people go to hear the word of God by a sent minister, they will find at times nourishment, because he is led to speak of the person of the Lord Jesus who said of Himself "I am the bread of life". "I am that bread that cometh down from heaven". And every minister ordained by God the Holy Ghost, will have this for the burden of his ministry, the Person of the Lord Jesus and His perfect work, and you who come from time to time here, should look for this, and if I am left to bring anything else before you in a way of salvation, you must not only reject it, but think of me as not being faithful. Here is an exhortation. God give me grace to walk in it. Feed the church of God which is among you, taking the

oversight thereof, not by constraint, not being forced, though there is a divine constraint on ministers by the Lord Himself, who makes them say, "Woe unto us if we preach not the gospel," but willingly as it was with Isaiah when he said "Woe is me for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord." Then flew one of the seraphims unto him and took a live coal with tongues from off the altar and touched his lips with it, and said, now your sin is purged, your iniquity is taken away. Then the prophet heard a voice saying "Whom shall I send and who will go for us", and he, thus blessed, said "Here am I send me". He went willingly, not by constraint. Though his message was heavy, yet he went willingly. So everyone, deeply convinced of his ignorance of God, of his inability to preach, of his incapacity in respect of divine things, yet has to go, does go willingly. If I were to tell you some of my concerns about this pulpit, you would think that sometimes it is far from willingly with me, but there have been times when it has been just willingly. A comfortable willingness to do what I trust the Lord has bidden me to do, - feed the flock of God which is among you, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind. That unwillingness God will take out of a man's heart from time to time when he may say to him, ye are not your own. The wondrous power of that, I can never forget I hope, when it was spoken to me on two occasions, ye are not your own with respect to the ministry, and then there is a willing mind. Here am I send me. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage but being ensamples to the flock. The Apostle Paul writing one of his epistles said, We are not masters, not lords, but we are helpers of your faith. We write, we preach, to help your faith, not to lord it over you, not to domineer over you, but just to help you by bringing God's blessed testimony to you and when these testimonies are made spirit and life, then they help your faith. Helpers of your faith. And O what a prospect is before these ministers. And when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. When He shall come a second time, without sin unto salvation, and when some shall be there, who are the crown and joy and rejoicing of ministers, being their children, having been begotten under the ministry, then, says the word, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Not a crown of laurels, withering in a few days,

but a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and I hope some of you will be my crown.

Then the Apostle comes to the text, the words I have read to you "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder, yea all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility," I hope I may not forget the shining of this word - "Be clothed with humility", as it shined in my heart yesterday evening. "Be clothed with humility" I believe there are moments when godly humility is an element in which a living soul can rejoice and live, comfortably walk. It is a beautiful spirit. Here it is spoken of as a garment. It will cover many imperfections if you have got this; clothed with it, for God resisteth the proud. Some of us know how He has resisted our proud spirit. I know it. But He giveth grace to the humble. He hears the cry of the humble, for He has prepared their heart with humility.

Look at this then. Submit yourselves unto the elder, yea all of you, be subject one to another. That should cause people to walk together in peace. It will enable them to love with a pure heart fervently. It will give each one to see himself least of all saints, the biggest of all sinners. He is afraid, every child of God, I may say, is afraid of an opposite spirit, when this blessed spirit is in him. Then he can walk in Paul's exhortation, an exhortation I have often thought about and mentioned to you - "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of another" which says - be interested in each other, take notice of each other. Pray one for another. Do you see a brother or sister weak, pray for him or for her. Do you see one as you can judge not in a healthy state. Pray for that one. Do you at any time find in your heart something rising up against so and so? Then seek to go flat down before God. All of you, without exception, every saint, every member of a gospel church, be subject. Do not lord it. Do not walk as if you were something other and better, but every one go flat down in his spirit before Almighty God. What a church that must be, when this scripture is realised and walked in. Now my brethren and fellow members, take notice of this. Take particular heed to your spirits with regard to this exhortation, and be afraid of a spirit that would be rebelling in you against this word. Submit yourselves one to another. Let every one in his judgment, in his affections and in his walk, aim at obeying this divine precept.

Now I want, because it was so particular to me, to speak to you about this being clothed with humility. We ought to be humble

and I will give you some reasons why we should be humble, and then show you, as enabled, what this humility is that is likened to a cloak or a covering and then look at the word following - "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Now first of all humility becomes us on the ground, the universal ground of creature-ship. God has created us. He has given us the honour of creature-ship. We came out of His hand without fault, without a crook in our nature. We came just upright from the Maker, and this creature-ship of ours has deeply stamped upon it, without any possibility of its being eradicated, dependence, and a dependant is not, or should not be, a proud person. We live as creatures on the bounty of God. We live by the sufferance of God because we are sinners, but as creatures, we live on the bounty of God. It is as the Apostle Paul preached "In Him we live and move and have our being", What a sin is pride. Pride is a bitter opposition to God. Pride of creature-ship, pride of works, pride of this and pride of that, pride of your attainments, pride of what you have done, of what you secure, of what you have attained to. O what a horrible sin it is, because we live in God as our Creator. We live in God, by His will, and we do everything in that way. We live and move and have our being as creatures in God. But then this is intended in the text. I name this because it is true of every person here, and true of every man and woman and child in the whole world, yea in hell, in heaven, elect angels and spirits of just men made perfect; fallen spirits and devils and lost men in perdition. The being of a creature is from God, and the maintenance of that being is from God. This is altogether apart from sin. It is just being. God created heaven and earth. God created angels and men and being, simply considered, is a dependent thing, but above that, deeper and sweeter, and more comely and lovely than that, is the humility of a living soul, a child of the living God. And the reasons for that humility are these. The new creature is a creature, The hidden man of the heart is a creature. Created grace cannot sustain itself. Created faith, created hope, created love and all the graces of the Spirit in an elect person born again are just dependent, as dependent on the communications made by Jesus Christ and brought by the Holy Ghost, as our bodies are dependent for their nourishment on the food which God daily gives to us. And this is a very humbling truth, but to a living soul a very blessed truth, a truth for which it is thankful and if

it were given, put to a child of God, would he be independent of the communications of grace, and somehow manage to live without them, he would say, No. Let me be plunged into debt every day and every hour, and every minute, every moment, for the Lord's communications are brought down to that. Every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it; take care of it, watch over it, nourish it, every moment. Is not this a case of being humble? Is it not a reason why we should endeavour to walk in this precept - "Be clothed with humility". Another reason is this - the weakness of grace in us; the weakness of grace in us. I say us. If there is one weak saint in this chapel he is in the pulpit. O the weakness of grace, the weakness of faith, How soon faith is put out of countenance. How soon faith begins to falter. The least opposition comes, and faith is ready to give way. The weakness of love. How soon are we offended in the Lord. Providence, when it is across, offends us. The hidings of God's face, His delays to answer prayer, His sending affliction to us, either to our persons or to our friends, how soon we find that we have very little grace. You must acknowledge this, I am sure you do acknowledge, those of you who have grace, how little strength you have. How little endurance. What quick changes come, what quenching of the Spirit are we guilty of, what turning away to vain jangling in our minds are we guilty of. How many many things there are that tell me how weak I am. God said, by the prophet Ezekiel, to His people "How weak is thine heart." and if He were to speak to us about that matter, He would say just the same, how weak are your hearts. Well this is a cause, a reason for humility. Ought a man who shows weakness at every step to be other than humble. Does it not become a sinner who cannot take one step aright without God, not to boast as if he could walk by himself. In everything we should be in this point truly humble, clothed with humility. And dear friends, another reason is our constant (shall I use that word, I will concerning myself) our constant failures, coming short of the glory of God. Jesus explains it in the fifteenth chapter of John. He says "Without Me ye can do nothing". How true it is, solemnly true. We cannot pray without Him; we stumble without Him; we separate ourselves from Him in certain ways, though there is no separation from the blessed, eternal union that the people of God have with Him. But in practice, in spirit, there is a turning away from

Him. "My people have forgotten Me days without number." Is not it true of some of us, and if it be so, is not this another reason why we should be humble. Many, many causes there are for humility. I will be content with just naming this.

Now what is this humility? It is a lowly spirit. A lowly view and feeling of yourself. It is a solemn feeling before Almighty God that you are a poor, empty, weak, ignorant, falling, failing creature, that you stand in daily, hourly, momentarily need of communications from Him. Is that so? Can you subscribe to my brief description of humility? Is not it a lowly spirit, a meek, quiet spirit, a solemn feeling that whatever your proud fallen heart says to the contrary, you, as a quickened soul, as a humble, you hope, a humble believer, you can only, as enabled, take the proper place of a sinner, to lie low and flat before God. That is true.

Now in the next place, this is a case, a truly humble man is a teachable man. A fool is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason, but a humble person is just that, a teachable person, and his teachable spirit expresses itself thus in scripture language - "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." "That which I see not teach Thou me!" "Give me this day my daily bread", not only for my body, but for my soul. Lord give me the Holy Spirit. Take not from me that Holy Spirit, whom I have so often grieved. Grant me communications from Thy fulness, strength from Thine arm, light from Thine own fountain, life from Thy glorious self. Oh this is what a poor humble sinner feels. He needs teaching and he needs communications from God. Perhaps some young people, young in grace, are apt to think as they get older things will improve. But as we do get older that vanity gives way and we come to this - we are more and more needy, and again and again come down to be a little child, a teachable child. "That which I see not teach Thou me!" What are the things we desire to be taught? Are not they concerning the Person of Christ, concerning the electing love of God, electing His eternal Son to be the Saviour of the world? Are they not concerning the incarnation of the Son of God? Who knows much of the glory of that mystery, the coming of the Son of God into the womb of the virgin, that mystery of God Himself, dwelling in our nature. Do we know much of it? I do not know, and I expect every child of God who has seen by faith this mystery,

says he does not know much of it. "That which I see not teach Thou me." Let me see the glory of the incarnation of the Son of God. Let me see why He came

"And why, dear Saviour, tell me why,

Thou thus wouldst suffer, bleed, and die; "

Tell me why Thou wouldst come down from heaven into my poor frail nature. So dear friends, that is a point in which a humble man will be again and again praying about. Then do we not need to be taught how Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfil, and what it meant for Him to fulfil the law, to fulfil the law as it was broken by us, to fulfil it in every precept, every commandment, and then, O mystery of mysteries, then to have its terrible curse poured out into His soul. We have not much strength for this. I do not think any child of God in this world, could bear much of the glory of the death of Christ, but every soul, feeling its need of the death of Christ, does pray, that again and again, the glory of that may be opened. And this takes us a long long way from notion. It takes us a long, long way from an empty idea of the death of Christ and brings us into the reality of it. The awful reality of the death of Christ, and the blessed reality of that death to a soul. We live by His death, if we live at all. This is humility, begging, as a teachable person, to be taught of God, and also to be taught concerning the burial of Christ. I do myself believe that there is a mystery and a mercy, a blessedness in the burial of the Lord Jesus, in the choice of the grave, a grave that had never been occupied by a corpse before. There is a mystery in it, and when you attach to that blessed, that wonderful burial, what Peter teaches concerning it, namely, that He could not be holden of death, you may see a glory there. He could not be holden of death and no saint, who is led into the mystery of it, will say simply that omnipotence explains it. It does explain it, but not alone. There is more than omnipotence in the quickening of Christ, after His death and in His burial. It was the glory of God that raised Him, and the glory of God is the glory of love, and the glory of justice in love, and the glory of the goodness of God, and the glory of the mercy of God, and the glory of the satisfaction of God, and all this is in the burial of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ following immediately. Are we teachable enough to ask the Lord to open the mystery, the mercy, and the glory of this? I believe it will nourish you, as this is opened to you. It will nourish

me if God opens it to me. There are many many things in us that are wrong. There are many many things in us that are vile. But, if we have life in our souls, we are teachable in our feelings, again and again, and we want the Lord to teach us these things. We need Him also and if we are humble we shall feel it and pray about it. We need the Holy Ghost. Can you walk into any truth that you like, and when you like? No. Can you take up a doctrine in the word of God and walk into it at pleasure and leisure? No. What do you need? The Holy Ghost. Can you walk into the Person of Jesus as you will? No. The promise concerning the Spirit is this - that He shall receive of Christ's things, and show them to His people. And then again is not this humility seen in a child of God asking this - "Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee"; The providence of God may often be a mystery to you, and you want the Lord to show you how to walk in it. Affliction may come and you want the Lord to show you how to walk in affliction, how to behave yourself, and how to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God"; And then again you will want Him to enable you to cast your care upon Him, believing that He careth for you. In all the matters of this life, all the cares of your position. The husband, the wife, and the child, and the man of business and the master and the servant blessed with grace will have this in it, Lord do teach me. Keep me in Thy fear. Help me to walk as I ought to walk according to the gospel. "Be clothed with humility". This spirit will keep you, if you have it, from strutting about as if you were somebody. You will say I am the chief of sinners, I am the least of saints. If you belong to the church of God, you will say sometimes, I am not fit to be a member. And in some of your frames of mind, you may say I do not feel fit to go where the saints are, and you may even sometimes feel you ought to visit a saint, and the devil may stop you and say are you in a fit state to go, and try to hinder you. Now true humility will walk according to the dispensations of God by which you are brought to see and feel your vileness and poverty, and ignorance and weakness and then to walk by faith in the Lord Jesus. We walk by faith, not by sight. Does this humility that I have feebly spoken about commend itself to your hearts? Many religious people will tell you that it is a poor, mean, spirit. Does it commend itself to your hearts? Do you wish you had got it? If you feel you have got a little of it, do you pray for an increase

of it?

Now whether you admire it or not, God does, and that is a great thing, for God resisteth the proud. He may resist you when you try to pray. He has resisted me. He has not allowed me. On a very special occasion He would not allow me to pray, but told me to do something which I said I would not do. O this wicked spirit, this wicked spirit, this proud spirit. When you have been dealt with by God for it, when you have been made sore by His Spirit's teaching, when you have had a bruised heart, and when you have found God resisting your proud heart, and then after that, when He has turned in His mercy to you, then you will value humility. Ah you will value it. Many and many times you look back and say - O wicked pride, O hellish pride, that kept me from the Lord, that worked by fraud and by force and kept me in a bad place, in a bad spirit, in a bad condition of soul.

I will tell you briefly one or two ways in which He will resist you, if you are proud, and first He will withhold all comfortable communications from you, and He will speak some reproofs on your hearts. I know what I am saying and without mapping out any particular course for the Lord to work, speaking generally, according to His word, you will find this, that if you walk in pride, He will abase you, and He will speak some solemn, penetrating reproofs on your hearts. Such things you will never forget when you have had them. I shall never forget some of my experiences in this matter. O the reproofs, heavy, piercing, cutting, painful reproofs, but they are the reproofs of life. O that has been a beautiful word to me. The ear that heareth the reproofs of life. 'Tis a wonderful thing, the reproof of life. Well that is one way in which God will resist you. Another way is this. You won't get near and dear access to Himself for the time. No. He will keep you at arm's length, if I may use that word, until that word takes place in you: - "I will go and return to My own place, till they acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they will seek Me early." What a word. God going away from you. O that will trouble you. "I will go and return to My own place." And when He does that, the devil will come in, sins will rise, fears will rise, and you will get into a strange, and sad state till grace comes and you begin to say - 'Lord I have offended.' Offences will rise before you in your memory, and your conscience and you will begin to confess with many a sigh, many a sigh. What then? When He sees your strength gone, then He will

pity you. Then He will help you and bless, you and bring this word into your experience, "and giveth grace to the humble". When Ahab humbled himself, God looked upon it and dealt with him according to that, and when a child of his specially is brought to this, to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, then, O then, the Lord loves this spirit. He is so pleased with it because it is in a man; it is His own work. He is so pleased with it, that like the Father seeing the prodigal son coming back, He runs to meet him and falls on his neck and kisses him. He giveth grace to the humble. He giveth more grace, sweet showers of blessing. He giveth grace to the humble. Now brethren may the Lord give you and me to take very close attention to this text, look at it, and do, in particulars, as God may help you, look at this beautiful word, this precious garment - "be clothed with humility." Lie low my friends, get down into the dust as you can. God raiseth the poor out of the dust. He lifteth the beggar off the dunghill, and setteth him with princes, even the princes of His people. May it please Him to work in us all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in us and we in Him.