

Humility

The most basic virtue in human life is humility. For the Christian, it is a must! For the unbeliever, it is essential! Without humility, no one can be saved. The most known quality of the Christian character is humility. Even unbelievers know that Christians are supposed to be humble, and sometimes try to use it against them. Many unbelievers who think to be humble to be a wimp, or to be a door mat, and will never be saved because they think salvation does not fit their personality. Humility in the Biblical sense means none of that. We should look deeper into this word to orient to its proper meaning in the scriptures; without which, unbelievers cannot be saved, and Christians cannot grow up.

Humility is TAPEINOPHROSUNE in Greek and defined by Thayer as: "The having a humble opinion of one's self; a deep sense of one's (moral) littleness; modesty, humility; lowliness of mind." Humble is TAPEINOS in Greek and Thayer says: "not rising far from the ground, lowly, of low degree, lowly in spirit, humble." The verb form of TAPEINOS means "to make low, bring low, to bring into a humble condition, to abase, to assign a lower rank or place to, to humble or abase one's self, to be ranked below others who are honored or rewarded, to have a modest opinion of one's self, to behave in an unassuming manner."

Humility in scripture is looking at self in the light of the reality given us in God's word. Humility is the absence of arrogance, human pride and selfishness. Humility recognizes human and divine authority and responds with submission, obedience, compliance, and acquiescence. Humility is being teachable, like a child. The Bible definition is "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*" (Phil 2:13).

Why do I say that unbelievers need humility to be saved? I am not trying to add works to a perfect salvation which requires that you receive salvation as a free gift, excluding any and all human effort or works. The only condition for salvation is faith or believing which is the only non-meritorious perceptive ability we have. But what does humility have to do with salvation? Before anyone can be saved they must realize they are lost. How do they know? Where do they get the information about their true condition? God's word, the Bible. "*The fear of the Lord teaches man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.*" (Prov 15:33). Yes, there is Someone and something greater than us! Without an attitude of basic humility, man does not care what God has to say, he is his own authority, he is sovereign, he says his reality is based on his own perceptions, he is his own god. Man must in humility accept the divine testimony about himself. Two things man

must accept before he can be saved: 1. Man is lost, condemned, spiritually dead and in desperate need of salvation. 2. God's terms of salvation as defined in the Bible, not man's terms as determined by subjectivity, human reason or satanic thinking.

Without humility man fails in three areas:

1. Man may reject the concept of God who is over all, and can possibly tell him something. He then becomes his own god, the universe revolves around him.
2. If he accepts the concept of God, he could reject the idea that God condemns or rejects him. He feels God should accept him, after all, he is pretty good he may reason. He may emphasize God's love and rationalize that God will never condemn anyone as good as he.
3. Man may refuse to accept the divine terms regarding salvation. God will never compromise! Either you accept God's salvation by grace or not be saved at all. Humility accepts what God says as reality, even in the face of contradicting circumstances. A man with humility submits to God and His word to teach him the way of salvation. Humility is devoid of arrogance or self seeking.

Of course, this kind of arrogance or pride goes back to the original sin of the angel Lucifer who became Satan through his rejection of God's authority. Satan says that there is a reality apart from what God says. He is often called the deceiver, because he deceives those into his false system of thinking independently of God. Satan promotes his system of thinking as rational, logical, reasonable and ridicules God's system as unreasonable, illogical, irrational and nonsense. Satan's system unfortunately appeals to man's sin nature which is totally depraved and vile. God's truth as far as unregenerate man is concerned is: "*There is no one righteous* (no one who can meet God's perfect, uncompromising standard of righteousness), *not even one* (There is not even one who has met or will meet this standard in the entire span of human history from Adam to the last person to be born.); *there is no one who understands* (Unregenerate man cannot understand spiritual things being spiritually dead does not possess the equipment to even understand God and His ways of righteousness), *no one who seeks God* (Left to his own, man would not naturally seek God, His salvation or righteousness. With a nature that is sinful, he is not inclined toward righteousness, he will not naturally seek God.). *All have turned away, they have together become worthless* (The result is that man naturally knows, understands, or seeks nothing of righteousness, therefore, he has turned away. As far as God is concerned, man is worthless or useless in this state). *There is no one who does good, not even one* (There is not one act that unregenerate man can do toward God or his fellow man that God will recognize or acknowledge as divine good)" Romans 3:11, 12.

Without humility, the Christian cannot reach spiritual maturity. First for the Christian, humility is a state of mind motivated by Bible doctrine and produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22,23). The Christian must recognize the authority of God in his life. He may say that Christ is his Lord, but may not submit to Christ and the authority of the Word in his life. Although man's authority is evident, being seen and felt directly if we step out of line, God's authority is unseen, but even more real. Therefore, our humility toward God is a matter of spiritual growth. It is expressed in our personal love for God. If we love God, we will be motivated to be submissive to Him. The apostle John says it this way, "*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love* (Jesus' relationship with the Father is the pattern of our relationship with Jesus and the Father. But how do we remain in His love?). *If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love* (we remain in His love by submission to his authority, by our obedience to His commands demonstrating that we do indeed esteem Him. We will see later how Our Lord set the example by submission to the Father and his commands.). *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you* (we can actually share the joy of Christ!) *and that your joy may be complete* (You can have the same joy that Christ had, and you can have it to the fullest. Do you have this joy?). *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends.*" (John 15:9-13). We are to love one another with the same type of love that Christ loved us. Our Lord says there is no greater display of love than a man laying down his life for his friends. The greatest demonstration of Love is that of God sending the Son, and the Son's total humility expressed in service. "*Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man some one might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Rom 5:6-8).

From these verses we see the supreme sacrifice of God for sinful man. At the cross of Christ, God's character is fully revealed for all to see, even angels. Who is this Almighty God, what is He like? We know about His omnipotent power, but what is he really like? "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...*" (Heb 1:3). When we examine Jesus Christ, when we look into His face, we can actually see God. "*He is the image of the invisible God.*" (Col 1:15). Not only did we see the greatest demonstration of love and humility in Christ, but in God the Father as well, for "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself...*" (2Cor 5:19). God has infinite humility! Here you have it, a God who only wants to give. A God who "*did not even spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.*" A God who is always seeking to serve all creation. A gracious God who just wants to be God, not lording it over us, but

giving of Himself totally. He says finally of wayward Israel, "*I will be their God and they will be my people.*" (Heb 8:10). When we look in the face of Christ, we see a man who fully reveals God. A man who never sought his own interests, a man who in love served the Father. "*But the world must learn that I love the Father* (Jesus Christ is totally occupied with the Father and only the Father's interests) *and I do exactly what the Father has commanded me.*" (John 14:31). The result of being totally occupied with the Father was to follow His commands to the letter! To render total obedience, in complete submission to the Father.

The way we have humility in the Christian life is certainly supernatural. It cannot come from anything we have, for it is directly opposed to our nature. It is produced in us by God the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit teaches us about Christ (John 15:26; 16:13-15). When we see God, when we understand what Jesus is really like, we should be motivated, for to know Him is to love Him. "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus* (our state of mind, our thinking should be humility, like our Lord.): *Who, being in very nature God* (the essence or being of Jesus Christ is the same as God the Father, if He has the very nature of God, He is God.), *did not consider equality with God something to be grasped* (even though He is God, He did not cling to it, seize and hold on to the fact of who and what He is.), *but made himself nothing* (this is what our Lord did for us!), *taking the very form of a servant, being made in human likeness* (he voluntarily restricted the independent use of His mighty attributes, refusing to use them to benefit His person. But took the form of a servant, was actually born a human being, but without the sin nature. He became a man, He lived as a man, He depended on the Father's provisions for everything.). *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!*" (Phil 2:5-8).

He submitted in humility with total disregard for Himself. He did not focus on Himself and His own interests, and even when death was required, He did not shrink back, He stepped forward and presented Himself as a lamb being led to the slaughter. Man will never know the excruciating, agonizing pain our Lord went through when the pressures of the sins of the whole world were upon Him. With all the physical torture of the ignominious and disgraceful crucifixion, the Bible says "*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*" (Isa 53:7). Never did He complain, become bitter or angry but had only forgiveness for his abusers. But when our sins were imputed to Him, He kept screaming "*My God My God why have you forsaken me.*" This pain we will never know, He says "*I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint.*" For our benefit, He did not come down and He certainly could have at any time. He was intent on doing the Father's will, "*Yet it was the LORD's will* (God

the Father) *to crush him and cause him to suffer...*" (Psalm 22 & Isa 53). When the last sin in human history was imputed to Him and judged, He said "*It is finished.*" Our salvation was complete!

From this we can begin to see a principle developing. The disciples of Jesus were slow to learn this principle, but argued constantly about who would be the greatest. Jesus used a child to illustrate humility and said "*For he who is least among you all--he is the greatest.*" (Luke 9:46-48). Another example is when James and John said "*Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.*" and again the disciples were arguing, "*When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man (Who is God.) did not come (into the world as true humanity) to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (Mark 9:35-49).

God's system is totally the opposite of this world system. We are here to serve. If we would be great, we must learn the way to greatness, through being like Christ. Not looking out for only our interests, but for the interests of others. We must look at what others need and give of ourselves, just as God did for us. This is the attitude that is developed in us by the Holy Spirit as we "*fix our eyes on Jesus.*" This attitude is the basic foundation for us to "*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" This attitude of humility will affect every aspect of our lives, it will permeate every relationship we have. We will not always look at everything and everybody in terms of how we can benefit. We will look to serve in the capacity God has given us.

Because of Christ's great humility we read, "*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place.*" We can look back at the disciples and criticize them for their being so slow to understand, but we do exactly the same kind of things. We are always looking for ways to exalt ourselves, receive honor and glory and put ourselves first. In many ways they were just like us. If we just have humility we can have it all. Humility is the key to spiritual greatness, "*Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.; For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted; Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.; Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.; God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*" (See accompanying scriptures).

This should serve as an introduction to this great subject. Hopefully, the principle of humility can shine through all the clouds of human pride and

arrogance. The way to learn humility is to look at Christ our Lord, to whom we will be eternally beholden.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt 11:29).

In Christ, Doug...

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