

# 1. Humility Means Emptying Yourself of Your *Rights*

- a. Philippians 2:3-8
  - i. Commanded to be humble, like Jesus humbled Himself
  - ii. This word, *humility* (ταπεινοφροσυνη) (v3), means “lowly minded” or “unassuming”
    1. It is used in opposition to “selfish ambition” and “conceit” and is further expounded as “regard others as more important than yourselves.”
    2. Master (Deity) to Servant (Man)
      - a. Jesus did not empty Himself of any Deity or Godness, for the comparison is to the form of a Servant, not the form of a man
      - b. “form of God” to “form of a servant”
        - i. Servant is then further expounded as “likeness of man”
        - ii. But the point is that Jesus gave up His right to be the Master, submitted to the Father, and came to serve (Matt 20:28)
        - iii. Jesus gave up His divine rights and submitted them completely to the Father, so is our humility to give up our rights and submit to God, and to die for the sake of others
  - iii. Jesus “forgot” or “emptied Himself” of His own rights in order to glorify the Father and save you and me.
    1. This emptying ourselves of our rights, of our mastery, of our lives, is what it means to be humble
    2. It is to “forget ourselves for the sake of another” to think of others first
      - a. This humility takes two primary forms, just like all the other marks of a Christ-centered heart:
      - b. Vertical – humility before God (foundational)
      - c. Horizontal – humility before others (contingent)
- b. The world’s vision of confidence is vastly different:
  - i. This word, “low-minded”, was always a negative word in the Greco-roman world
  - ii. Our society places confidence upon our own performance, our adequacy
    1. The flesh is that part of yourself that works for a verdict of acceptable, significant, and special based upon its performance (determined in different ways for different people)
    2. Thinking of our own glory (reputation and worthiness)
  - i. For example:
    1. Flesh says, “I am acceptable *because* I am beautiful and attractive”
    2. Flesh says, “I am acceptable *because* I am wise, wealthy, or strong”
      - a. Gospel humility is the *forgetting* of the flesh, like a body part that is functioning normally. You don’t notice a body part until it doesn’t work correctly, until there’s something wrong with it.
      - b. Your flesh does the same thing: it is always drawing attention to itself, because it has something incredibly wrong with it, about how it looks, how it was treated, how it feels.

# 2. Pride Produces Counterfeit Fruits That are Self-Centered

- a. Isaiah 14:12-15 – King of Babylon “shining one, Son of the Dawn” may refer to Satan (Luke 10:18)
- b. Counterfeit Fruit:
  - i. Love = Co-dependency: serving others so that I will be the savior
  - ii. Joy = Pleasure in the gifts rather than the Giver
  - iii. Peace = Appeasement so *that people aren’t mad at me*, Indifference or apathy
  - iv. Patience = Fear – “I don’t want to upset her”, Cynicism – “this is beneath me to deal with”
  - v. Kindness = Niceness
  - vi. Goodness = for the sake of being seen as good by others, Self-congratulatory
- c. The flesh busies itself trying to make itself feel important by (1) comparing and (2) defending.

- i. We lack gentleness because our flesh is comparing itself with superiority over another. We look down on them and treat them as lower than us, even puffing ourselves up if we help them and appear kind (Galatians 6:1, 14-15).
  - 1. Loving each other is not about proving how right I am! It's about desiring the growth in grace of the other person, not merely showing someone his/her error so as to merely correct their behavior. In the Gospel we desire heart change, for which we are completely inadequate to effect in our own power.
    - a. Test: Gossip, Boasting, Demeaning Talk, Harshly Critical spirit, talking about your success in the midst of another's success
  - 2. Being Christ-adequate rejoices in other people's successes because you have pleasure in the success itself. Gospel adequacy never says "I told you so," or "I thought of that first." It simply rejoices in the success. It's not about the competition. It's not about your role in another's success, either. It's about the success itself, the other person herself.
- ii. We lack patience with each other because our flesh has been hurt and we must defend it. We don't forgive each other because we must defend our verdict of righteous, good, acceptable.
  - 1. We are presumptuous and assume that we are good, not merely good but that we are better, that we are more important than another. That we are right and we're going to let the person who has sinned against us, or provoked us, know that we are right!
    - a. Test: Irritability, Complaining, Gossip, Critical Spirit, Expecting people to make retribution for their sin against you (unforgiveness), etc.
  - 2. We're still trying to present evidence to everyone (including ourselves) to defend that ultimate verdict that we are adequate in ourselves, good enough, acceptable, honorable because we have performed successfully. We are operating out of our flesh's desire to honor itself.
- iii. Humble love is unconcerned about itself, its recognition and glory. It is only concerned about the glory and honor of Jesus and the well-being and salvation of the other person

### 3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ humbles us to blessed self-forgetfulness

- a. The Gospel of JC is that the Verdict Precedes the Performance
  - i. One of the foundational truths of the Gospel is that you cannot, are not able to perform well enough to place yourself in God's favor. There is nothing that you can do to make yourself good enough.
  - ii. So, God had to do it for you (Rom 3:23; 5:6-10; 6:23)
    - 1. **Romans 5:6-10** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die - <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
- b. Christianity is the only religion/worldview where the verdict comes before the evidence:
  - i. Romans 8:1-4
  - ii. Galatians 3:11-14
  - iii. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

"The heart of most religions is good advice, good techniques, good programs, good ideas, and good support systems...But the heart of Christianity is Good News. It comes not as a task for us to fulfill, a mission for us to accomplish, a game plan for us to follow with the help of life coaches, but as a report that someone else has already fulfilled, accomplished, followed, and achieved everything for us."

-Michael Horton, *The Gospel Centered Life*

#### 4. The Gospel of Jesus Christ Gives Us Confidence *in Jesus*

- a. What was the Holy Spirit's answer in Philippians 2 as to how we are to humble ourselves? Look to Jesus!
- b. The Gospel: the answer to all of our problems is not higher self-esteem, nor thinking less of ourselves, but it is Christ esteem: thinking of ourselves less and of Christ more, which both emboldens and humbles us.
  - i. Emboldens me because it shows me that I am more deeply loved than I can even imagine
  - ii. Humbles me because it shows me that I more deeply sinful than I can even dare to see
- c. Our confidence is in Christ, who gave up His divine Mastery in order to die on our behalf (v8)
  - i. Note also the foundation of Christian doctrine. This appeal for love by the apostle is not wrested away from its context, but it grounds its context in the strong doctrinal truth of Jesus' person and character and work
    1. Doctrine grounds Christian living
      - a. NOT "Doctrine is useless, we just need to love each other"
      - b. Doctrine (teaching) is the foundation of love
        - a. If Jesus did not preexist His incarnation, of what did He empty Himself? How did He empty Himself? What would this mean about His love and humility?
        - b. Paul's intent is to show the vastness of Christ's humility, and that means that Jesus emptied Himself willingly for you and for me.
    2. There is no life beyond the life which is grounded upon the person of Christ
      - a. Secure in righteousness before God – for Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us by faith – so competition between brothers is stymied
      - b. Victory over sin – Christ is risen and reigns in you through His Holy Spirit – so moral victory and transformation of your heart will happen
  - ii. Galatians 6:14 - "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

#### 5. What Does it Look Like to be Self-Forgetful According to the Gospel?

- a. This person looks at their successful performance as *not their own*, but as JC's, so they give up their rights and their recognition freely
- b. Confidence is in Jesus and His work: a praiser of Christ!
- c. This person is never hurt badly by criticism (doesn't bother him, isn't devastated, doesn't keep him up late)
  - i. Putting too much stock in what other people think
    1. Self-Centered Aggressive: "I know what I think and that's what's important."
    2. Self-Centered Passive: "I am a nobody! I am hopeless! I need to protect myself"
  - ii. So, you have either a person devastated by criticism (thinking too much of what others think) or a person who can't accept criticism (thinking too much of what they think)
  - iii. We don't know how to heal low self-esteem except with pride, and they are both devastating nuisances to our souls and to our communities
- d. A gospel humble person accepts criticism and is not devastated by it, they are humbly bold
  1. My personal and particular sins are *so great that Jesus had to die* to remove them
    - a. Honest about my particular sin, humbly repenting daily
  2. Jesus loves me enough that *He did die* to remove them
    - a. Not devastated by repentance, praising Jesus, confidently taking risks to obey Christ and serve others

#### How do we get this?

Every day we are living our lives in a courtroom, trying to win a verdict, with everything that we think, feel, or do either being admitted for the prosecution or the defense. Some days you feel like you're winning the trial and some days you feel like you're losing the trial and are buffeted by fears and tossed about with the anxious awaiting of the verdict. Paul

has found the secret: The trial is over for him. He is out of the courtroom, the ultimate verdict is in: innocent in Christ. Only the opinion of the Lord counts. How is this possible? We are out of the courtroom because Jesus Christ went into the courtroom. He became the Lamb, the sacrifice, the substitute in our place and accepted the verdict of guilty and gave us His evidence for innocence. He bore the verdict that we deserved and gave us His. So now, for the believer in Jesus Christ, His verdict of innocent applies to us and it comes before our performance (Romans 8:1). We perform knowing the verdict is in already. We can now work without fear and with humility. You see, it is only the Gospel of sheer grace that brings true humility. It is the Gospel that sets us free from our overly sensitive voracious egos and gives us peace with God and with each other. When we empty ourselves of our rights and are instead boasting in the Cross, we can love others for their sakes and not ours. We can make peace with others in truth and not pretense. For now when God looks at you he sees one who is infinitely valuable and lovely, for you are in Jesus. How can you worry about being snubbed now? How can you worry about how you're treated now? Where is the power of fear? It is gone. It has been cast out by His perfect love. Jesus makes us confidently inadequate and humbly bold.

Humbly inadequate because our value, worth, and significance is based upon Christ's sacrifice and His grace, not upon what we have done or who we are (There is no room for boasting, except in Christ.)

Boldly confident because we have nothing to fear from losing reputation or glory in anyone's eyes (for God calls me His child), losing our lives (I am a citizen of Heaven), or losing God's love or His verdict (My redemption is not based upon my weak performance. I am acceptable to Him, justified completely based upon Jesus Christ's merit and sacrifice).

Only as the Lord works out His miraculous and powerful work within our inner person by His Holy Spirit are we able to be unified as a body. The work of the Spirit is the work of bold humility among His people, placing our eyes upon Jesus again and again, not upon our "intrinsic worth" or our rights, but upon Christ's intrinsic worth and His glorious work for us. Spiritual maturity in Christ is not merely a question of one being moral or immoral, it is rather the question of one being humble or proud in relation to God's Word. Every sin with which we struggle comes from the sinful fountain of pride and works itself out as competition or defensiveness, trying to prove our adequacy in life. Jesus, though He was the perfect One, fully God, was completely humble. Though he was the One who made the heavens and shaped the earth, he was humble, gentle, patient, and endured great duress for us, even bearing the wrath of His Father. You see, ultimately, to be proud is not merely to be anti-God, it is to be completely unlike God.

We are called by His grace, saved by His grace, adopted by His grace, loved by His grace, made heirs by His grace, and glorified by His grace. Walk like ones who don't deserve the verdict anymore than your neighbor deserves it; who are inadequate to perform the good by our own power, yet have been declared righteous, adopted by God, and given these wondrous riches in Jesus. Walk in bold humility and serve each other and the world around you with confident inadequacy, for God is at work through His Spirit. Walk with Jesus, love Him, see Him, worship Him, and boast in Him and His greatness. Ask the Holy Spirit to purify your hearts and the desires that well up within you. Take heart as you struggle with your flesh knowing this: He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power of His Holy Spirit working within us. And to Him be the glory in our lives, in our relationships, in our ministry, through Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen!