

## 1. Humility is Blessed Self-Forgetfulness

- a. Philippians 2:3-8
  - i. Commanded to be humble, like Jesus humbled Himself
  - ii. This word, *humility* (*ταπεινοφροσυνη*) ( $\nu\beta$ ), 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)
    3. Rich to Poor
    4. Life with the Father to death on a cross
  - 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 ourselves as “lower”
      - 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. Our society places confidence upon our own performance, our adequacy
    1. The ego 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. Ego says, “I am acceptable *because* I am beautiful and attractive”
    2. Ego says, “I am acceptable *because* I am wise, wealthy, or strong”
      - a. Gospel humility is the *forgetting* of the ego, 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.
  - ii. Your ego 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. We’re constantly saying “You hurt my feelings.” What does that mean? Do your feelings have feelings? It wasn’t your feelings that were hurt, your ego was hurt! Somebody made you feel worthless, insignificant, or not acceptable. Your feelings are working fine. It’s your ego that is having bad feelings. It hurts too much because it’s not working correctly. It is caring too much about proving itself as adequate and not enough about Christ’s adequacy before God. So it grabs attention like any other broken body part.
  - iii. You don’t go around talking about how great your toes feel, yet you can’t get through the day without feeling ignored, or feeling snubbed, or feeling mistreated, or looking down on yourself. “There’s something wrong with your identity, your ego, because it’s never completely at rest. It always wants to be noticed.

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

- a. Counterfeit Fruit:
  - i. Love = Co-dependency
  - 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
- b. The ego busies itself trying to make itself feel important by (1) comparing and (2) defending.
  1. We lack gentleness because our ego 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).

- a. 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.
    - i. Test: Gossip, Boasting, Demeaning Talk, Harshly Critical spirit, talking about your success in the midst of another's success
  - b. 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.
2. We lack patience with each other because our ego has been hurt and we must defend it. We don't forgive each other because we must defend our verdict of righteous, good, acceptable.
- a. 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!
    - i. Test: Irritability, Complaining, Gossip, Critical Spirit, Expecting people to make retribution for their sin against you (unforgiveness), etc.
  - b. 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 ego's desire to honor itself.
  - ii. Self-Forgetful 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 is our keystone to bold humility
  - i. Romans 12:3
  - ii. God has apportioned to each one of us a measure of faith
  - iii. We cannot become arrogant with each other when even our faith was measured out to us
    - 1. Ah! But God has measured it out! So, take heart and rejoice!
- b. 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.
  - ii. So, God had to do it for you (Rom 3:23; 5:6-10; 6:23)
- c. Christianity is the only religion/worldview where the verdict comes before the evidence:
  - i. Romans 8:1-4
  - ii. Galatians 3:11-14

"The heart of most religions is good advice, good techniques, good programs, good ideas, and good support systems. These drive us deeper into ourselves, to find our inner light, inner goodness, inner voice, or inner resources.

Nothing *new* can be found inside of us. There is no inner rescuer deep in my soul; I just hear echoes of my own voice telling me all sorts of crazy things to numb my sense of fear, anxiety, and boredom, the origins of which I cannot truly identify.

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*

- d. In every other religion/worldview the evidence must be conclusive for the verdict to be won. You must prove that you are adequate before you are accepted.
  - i. “I’ve got 10 seconds to justify my existence” – Harold Abrams in *Chariots of Fire*
    - 1. Every time we accomplish something we think “Now I’m somebody!” I am a good person! Our ego, however, cannot be satisfied. We think that we can get it from what people have said, our position of success (however that is defined), etc. But we never really get the verdict big enough for our ego, but we continue to try and justify our existence through performance.
    - 2. Every religious and irreligious person seeks the verdict that will fill up their sense of significance. Everyone is searching for some law, some righteousness, some system that will tell them that they are adequate and accepted. Only Christianity gives a person worth, value, and significance based upon a promise and not upon their performance. Only in Christ do we get the verdict of “accepted” and “adequate” *before* we gain the evidence to justify ourselves! Only in Jesus Christ can we freely proclaim that we are inadequate in ourselves, that we desperately hopelessly when left to ourselves and in need of complete salvation.
      - a. Understanding this, at the heart level, is what leads us gospel-centered relationships.
        - i. There is nothing within any of us that makes us better, or more important, or more significant, or more acceptable to God because we are all saved completely by His grace!!!
          - 1. There is nothing within any of us that makes us worse, or less important, or less valuable, or less significant, or less acceptable to God, either!!
        - ii. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Christ Himself is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption

#### 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 insignificance, but it is Christ esteem, 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 stands face to face with God *for us* (v4).
- d. 1 Corinthians 4:3-6
  - i. Paul doesn’t care what their verdict is of him (not seeking man’s approval)
  - ii. Paul doesn’t care what his verdict is of him (not seeking higher self-esteem)
  - iii. It is the Lord’s verdict that matters (Christ for him)
- e. 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. A person that lives this kind of humility looks weird, stupid, or foolish to the world.
- b. 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
- c. Confidence is in Jesus and His work

A believer may be in the saddest and darkest condition imaginable. Even so, the Holy Spirit is able to break through all this and bring to mind the promises of Christ. By this work, the Holy Spirit enables Christians to sit in dungeons, rejoice in flames and glory in troubles. If he brings to mind the promises of Christ for our comfort, neither Satan nor man, neither sin nor the world, nor even death itself, shall take away our comfort. – John Owen

- d. 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
- e. A gospel humble person accepts criticism and is not devastated by it, they are humbly bold
  - My personal and particular sins are *so great that Jesus had to die* to remove them
    - Honest about my particular sin, humbly repenting daily
  - Jesus loves me enough that *He did die* to remove them
    - Not devastated by repentance, praising Jesus, confidently taking risks to obey Christ and serve others
- f. This person steps out and takes risks for Jesus, because even if he should fail, his performance does not determine his acceptance before God.
  - i. *Servant* of the new covenant where it is heart change that God effects, not merely moral restraint, and this heart change is life!
  - ii. The letter of the law, mere moral restraint as the means to our adequate performance to merit God’s approval, leads to death, for we are all inadequate and cannot perform well enough to make ourselves acceptable to God.
  - iii. When he is successful, he is not proud or harsh, but rather humble and gentle, seeing that Jesus is the one who is performing any real and lasting change within others, not him.
    - All that he is called to do is proclaim the gospel and to humbly live out the gospel.
  - iv. When he fails, it is because he is inadequate in himself, so he merely turns to Jesus once again and finds that Jesus has never left him, and his verdict is still secure in His redeemer. Jesus dines with those who acknowledge their deep need of Him.

### 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 are self-forgetful and 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 perfect love, 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 (egos) 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. 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. 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 and even in our Christian ministry. Jesus, though He was the perfect

One, was completely humble. Though he was always right, 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.

Let us see that we walk in-line with the truth of the Gospel to which we have been called. Make it a point to closely examine the severity and the depth of the sin within you, your will to power and self-righteousness. Let the HS work His magic of conviction and the reminder of His radical gracious love within your heart. This is what repentance means, from confession to utter dependence. We do not deserve anymore blessing than Satan Himself. God set His love upon you because He chose to.

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, who are inadequate to perform the good, 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 love to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to purify your hearts and the desires that well up within you. Take heart as you struggle with your ego 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, in Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen!