

The Necessity and Value of Humility

“How can I, except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:31)

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humility: a prominent Christian grace (Rom. 12:3; 15:17, 18; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 4:11-13). It is a state of mind well pleasing to God (1 Pet. 3:4); it preserves the soul in tranquillity (Ps. 69:32, 33), and makes us patient under trials (Job 1:22). Christ has set us an example of humility (Phil. 2:6-8). We should be led thereto by a remembrance of our sins (Lam. 3:39), and by the thought that it is the way to honour (Prov. 16:18), and that the greatest promises are made to the humble (Ps. 147:6; Isa. 57:15; 66:2; 1 Pet. 5:5). It is a "great paradox in Christianity that it makes humility the avenue to glory." (*Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary*)

In the book of Acts, we see numerous examples of those who are humble, but perhaps none greater than the record of the eunuch in Acts 8:30-31:

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

We see here a man of great authority, a man who had what most did not have. But it is not the physical wealth that perhaps sets him apart, but the fact that he is a man who has the Holy Scriptures, something that most did not have. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way back to Ethiopia and during this travel, he was reading the Scriptures. He was not just reading silently but verbally so that any in ear shot could also hear. In fact that is said that Philip “heard him read the prophet Esaias” (30). Though he was reading, he could not understand, realizing he needed guidance from another (31). We read that Philip then began teaching at the same scripture in Isaiah 53 and taught him about Christ. The humble nobleman listened to Philip’s teaching and he then understood.

Here is a man of some authority and yet one who was striving to follow God and do His bidding. He was a man who was free from pride and arrogance. He read, trying to understand. When he didn’t understand, he didn’t just put it down and forget it. He kept reading! When someone came and was willing to help him understand, he didn’t ask for credentials, he didn’t ask if Philip had a degree, he didn’t ask Philip if he was an ordained priest or anything other such thing. He simply and humbly asked him to come and sit down with him and guide him. Here was a man who understood the necessity and value of humility in order to do God’s bidding.

What does humility do for us today? Humility shows us our sinfulness, our unworthiness and our limitations. In Luke 15:17-21, we see one who had done it all. He had tasted the “good life” and was unfulfilled. He had the best of all possible worlds and then he squandered it and soon had nothing. The scriptures say, “And when he came to himself...” He finally looked at all he no longer had and realized there was something lacking. He understood there was something he needed to do. In fact we see humility overtaking him as we read, “And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” He

came to realize that he was sinful, that he was unworthy of his Father's love and that he had limitations.

Solomon is another one who reminds of our need of humility. In 1 Kings 3:6-14, Solomon had been made leader over God's people. He had power and authority far beyond what we can understand. Yet he had limitations. Solomon understood he needed something more. When God asked him what he wanted, he didn't ask for more treasures, more empires but for something he truly needed to help him. He asked for wisdom. Even though he was a most powerful man, he had humility enough to know that he still needed God's help. Solomon was rewarded for humility.

In Proverbs 22:4, we see humility leading to riches. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, 15 we see humility brings blessings. True humility will bring exaltation, James 4:10. Humility insures Gods presence, Isaiah 57:15. 1 Peter 5:5 tells us God gives grace to the humble. What greater thing can we have than God's grace?

As Christians, we are exhorted to be clothed with humility. In Colossians 3:12 we read, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering..."

We read the same sort of exhortation in 1 Peter 5:5: "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."

As we strive to be humble, we need to certain that we do not put on a false form of humility. Paul warns against such in Colossians 2:18. We are not humble when we feel we are greater than others. We are not humble when we think of no one but ourselves. We must have a genuine spirit of humility. We must constantly remember that God is working with a fallible person. We need to remind ourselves that there is no room for pride which will cause our downfall. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Some today believe that to have humility means to not knowing or not believing that there is a certain or genuine truth. Today's culture tells us that we can have a truth but others can also have truth even though it is in complete opposition to what you believe. It's the "I'm ok, you're ok" attitude or perhaps "we're all going to the same place but just traveling different roads" mentality.

Many today have been led astray by the teaching that humility demands that we do not defend the truth. We are told such things as: "After all everyone has there own truth," or "Matthew 7:1 even tells us not to judge others," and "If we're truly humble we won't tell others they're wrong, will we?" Yet the bible stills tells us to "teach the truth in love," Ephesians 4:15 and to refute those who contradict, Titus 1:9. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." There is only one truth when it comes to salvation, even as Ephesians 4:4, 5 teaches us that there is only one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father.

God gave us a book we can understand. He gave us a biblical truth that we can know. He also gives us the knowledge that we need to have humility toward God and man so that we can properly teach the truth. Without humility we cannot obey the commands found in James 1:21:

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Humility demands humility toward God, recognition of His truth from the word and then the unashamed sharing of His word with others.

How long will it take for us to humble ourselves before the Lord? Will the same question be asked of us as it was Pharaoh? “And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me” (Exodus 10:3).

As we return to the Ethiopian nobleman, let us never forget the humility that he showed forth. When he realized that there was something lacking in his life and understood what he needed to do, he humbly complied. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (Acts 8:36). He humbled himself, have you?