



Light from the Word

Walking in Broken-Heartedness (Humility Part 2)

“Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”¹

Having considered the nature of pride and humility last month, we will now look at how these attitudes of the heart affect our relationship with God and others.

God has made it clear that humility is a condition for serving Him. Both Peter and James—disciples of the Lord—record in no uncertain terms that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.² And Paul’s teacher—the great Pharisee, Gamaliel—warned of the grave consequences of fighting against God.³

This key to God’s heart is valued above any sacrifice we can bring to Him. As in the theme verse from Isaiah, we see in David’s beautiful prayer of repentance just how much God values humility above any other offering. *“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”⁴* And again from David, *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”⁵*

A literal definition of the words broken-hearted or contrite is to be crushed. In biblical usage, the crushing comes from the burden of sin—our awareness that we have sinned and the crushing realization that sin separates us from God and condemns us eternally.⁶ As redeemed believers, we rely in faith on the shed blood of Jesus Christ to

cleanse us from sin.⁷ And we heed the words of Paul which remind us of our flesh and the ongoing battle to live free from sin, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”⁸* Mindful of the great price with which we have been purchased⁹ and realizing our need for daily grace to overcome, we are convicted to walk humbly before our God.

There are beautiful examples of humility and broken-heartedness in the Bible. David is described as being a man after God’s own heart.¹⁰ We know he was not a perfect man. Sadly, he sinned greatly in the affair with Bathsheba, even committing murder to cover his sin. No one—and David least of all—would excuse his sin. But in crying out to God for mercy and pleading for His forgiveness and the renewal *“of a right spirit within (him),”¹¹* David brought a sacrifice to God that was acceptable in His sight.

Isaiah the prophet, when given a vision of God and the work He had for him, responded with great humility of heart. *“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because 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 King, the LORD of hosts.”¹²* In that vision, a heavenly being symbolically cleanses Isaiah with a hot coal pressed to his lips. In gratitude for deliverance, Isaiah offers himself for any service his Savior might ask, *“I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”¹³*

Likewise, Peter, came to a point of brokenness after denying his Lord. The cock’s crowing reminded him of Jesus’ words, *“which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”¹⁴* Was it of this time that Jesus spoke of Peter being sorely tried in preparation for the work before him? *“And the Lord said, Simon,*

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*Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*¹⁵ Peter's faith did not fail—undergirded by the prayers of the Lord Himself!—and he was of great use in God's kingdom. But only after being broken.

Humility and meekness of heart is of benefit as we interact in this world as well. Pride is off-putting and repulsive—it can create resistance in others against the very things we are trying to accomplish. And as with God, men tend to be gracious to those whose hearts are soft and humble. Sadly, when we are lifted up in pride we are quite unable to approach either God or men for help.

A heart of humility towards others is also rooted in the ongoing recognition of the sinful state out of which we were called to His marvelous light.¹⁶ In light of how much we have been forgiven, we remember the

extent to which we are called to forgive.¹⁷ In the depths of the mercy which we have received, we discern the limitless mercy we are called to extend.¹⁸ In the shadow of the Cross we behold the love of the One who calls us to love as we are loved.¹⁹ Indeed, when Jesus taught His disciples (and us) to pray, He included these words, *“And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.”*²⁰

Evidence of our broken-heartedness will include our esteem one for the other, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”*²¹ Humility will cause us to *“condescend to men of low estate,”* readily associating with anyone regardless of their wealth or social standing.²² We will never be *“puffed up”*²³ or *“think of (ourselves) more highly than (we) ought to think.”*²⁴

Rather, the humble man or woman will rejoice to follow the words of Paul to be, *“kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”*²⁵

(Footnotes)

- ¹ Isaiah 66:1-2
- ² 1 Peter 5:5, James 4:6
- ³ Acts 5:38-39
- ⁴ Psalm 51:16-17
- ⁵ Psalm 34:18
- ⁶ Rom. 6:23
- ⁷ 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 John 1:7
- ⁸ Rom. 7:18
- ⁹ 1 Cor. 6:20
- ¹⁰ Acts 13:22
- ¹¹ Psalm 51:10
- ¹² Isaiah 6:5
- ¹³ Isaiah 6:8
- ¹⁴ Matt. 26:75
- ¹⁵ Luke 22:31-32
- ¹⁶ Eph. 5:8
- ¹⁷ Matt. 18:23-35
- ¹⁸ Luke 10:30-37
- ¹⁹ John 13:34
- ²⁰ Luke 11:4
- ²¹ Phil. 2:3
- ²² Rom. 12:16
- ²³ 1 Cor. 13:4
- ²⁴ Rom. 12:3
- ²⁵ Eph. 4:32

Meekness is the noblest virtue.