

HUMILITY

THE PRECIOUS GEM OF THE CHRISTIAN CROWN

Paul was led to prophesy nearly two thousand years ago, that in our age, the last days before the return of Christ and the new age of the Kingdom of God on earth, *HUMILITY* would be a rare gem. "For people will be.....PROUD, ARROGANT AND CONTEMPTUOUS BOASTERS.....INFLATED WITH SELFCONCEIT....." (2 Timothy 3:1-4; Amplified Bible).

*by
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We have had, and still have, those who lead nations of various political groups, who do nothing but boast of their greatness. These are individuals who are inflated with conceit about what they would do IF in a position of power. On the other hand, those that already are in powerful positions brag of the great things they and their party have done for the benefit of their nation and mankind.

We have had, in the past, those who shout and threaten to annihilate others in war. Unfortunately, these individuals are still with us.

We have those with earthly riches who are arrogant and domineering toward those with few earthly riches. Then we have those that are poor in material goods being proud and contemptuous of the rich.

There have been, and no doubt will be again, those in the world of sports who claim "I'm the greatest" and time proves they were not so great after all! Yes, and even in the place that you would least expect to find it - RELIGION - there's PRIDE and CONCEIT RAISING its INFLATED HEAD. Some religious leaders of different denominations feel they must always be in the limelight of their church papers, magazines, news letters, etc. Many individuals think they are indispensable, no matter how old they are and there is no one else that can preach, teach, or broadcast like themselves! We could go on relating examples to the opposite of HUMILITY, which is evident in our society today. Truly the genuine gem of HUMILITY is a rare jewel.

In the WORLD BOOK DICTIONARY the word HUMBLE is defined as "...having or showing a feeling that one is unimportant, weak, poor, etc...modest in spirit, not proud, deeply or courteously respectful...without wrongful pride in oneself or in accomplishments..."

EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY

There was a man who had great wealth, notoriety and prestige. He treated his servants very well. He helped the poor and needy. He gave to widows and orphans in his realm. He was not obsessed with his wealth or position and he was true to his wife in body and mind. Idolatry was not a part of his worship. This man had no hatred for anyone, including his enemies. He shared his home with travellers and was known for his hospitality. All of these accomplishments and more were this man's badge, and if any man deserved to be proud and boastful, it was this man. And that was his weakness. He was CONCEITED and SELF-RIGHTEOUS. His name was Job. Read the narrative in Job chapter 31 and 32:1.

Finally, the Lord spoke to Job and brought him to see that even with all his abilities and good deeds, he was nothing compared to the Almighty. (Read Job 38 through 41). Humility became a part of Job's character when he uttered these words, "Therefore (I now see) I have (rashly) uttered what I did not know...I had heard of you (only) by the hearing of the ear; but now my (spiritual) eye sees you. Therefore I loathe (my words) and abhor myself, and repent in sackcloth and ashes" (Job 42:3-6).

It took some drastic measures on God's part (by allowing Satan to do some painful things to Job) to bring Job to true REPENTANCE and HUMILITY. I guess God could have used another method, but for whatever reason He chose the ones He did). Human nature is such that many, it seems, have to be brought low before HUMILITY is their own experience. With many who are brought low, we find PRIDE and CONCEIT a big part of their personality too. So the proverb, "PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL" (Proverbs 16:18) becomes a reality.

On the other hand, true honor usually comes only to those who have exhibited a humble spirit. For example, the great statesman, Sr. Winston Churchill (who inspired the Allies during World War 2) found himself ridiculed, derided and made a political exile in his own country. All because he dared to warn his country that Hitler was out to conquer the world. It was not until war broke out that Mr. Churchill was honored by being called to lead the British nation against Hitler. The proverb says, "...before honor is HUMILITY" (Proverbs 18:12).

A person with true humility will exhibit the quality of character that acknowledges areas of weakness in his/her own abilities. When Moses was called of God from the burning bush to lead Israel out of Egypt, he did not answer by saying he was great and that the Lord had made a wise choice in choosing him. No, Moses humbly came before his Creator, confessing the weak areas of his character; public speaking with eloquence was not one of his gifts! (See Exodus 3:10-11 & Exodus 4:10).

Moses went down in history as one of the greatest men, and it is recorded of him in Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek (humble) above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

The great prophet Isaiah when called to prophesy against Israel and other nations, immediately saw his sins and weakness of character and confessed them (Isa. 6:1-7).

Jeremiah also humbly said he was too young, too immature to speak (Jer. 1:6).

The man God used to write more of the New Testament than any other author was Paul. He wrote, "For I am less than the least of all saints..." (I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8). Paul's weakness and sins (though under the blood of Jesus) kept him constantly HUMBLE as he reflected on his life.

How many of those that God has used to speak and do his work still remain humble, even though they have experienced success, at least as the world defines success? (It is difficult to remain humble and not become proud and egotistical when men give you acclaim). Only the resurrection and history will tell.

When John the Baptist (whom Jesus said was fulfilling the prophecy of Elijah to come, Mt. 17:11-13, and that none among men had risen who was greater Mt. 11:11) was asked if he was Elijah, or the Christ, or a great prophet, he answered, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias..." (Jn. 1:19-27). Although John must have been told of the manifestations of God to his parents concerning his birth; although he must have known as a boy and a young man that he was destined for a great commission to Israel, still he remained humble. His is one of the greatest examples of true HUMILITY in the entire Bible.

HUMILITY IS TEACHABLE

Another characteristic that exhibits itself in those that have the gem of humility in their crown, is the ability to accept and to seek counsel from others. Humility knows the wise truth of the proverb that says, "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

Notice how the meek man Moses was able to accept the wise counsel of his father-in-law (Exodus 18:13-27). He not only accepted it, he acted on it.

This example brings us to the realization that no one man is an island unto himself. It is a true saying that there is strength in numbers. A truly humble person will acknowledge that he is not the sum total of all wisdom, knowledge and understanding. That he can only do so much, spread himself just so thin, before he becomes a shattered physical wreck.

A meek and humble person will realize that others have God given talents and abilities, and will be delighted to use these attributes to enhance the whole. He will be glad to delegate responsibility and share the betterment of the whole. He will show trust and confidence in them (not forever looking over their shoulder) but always there to strengthen and assist when needed. Again, read Moses' example in Exodus 18, where he chose able men to help him govern Israel.

HUMILITY'S GREATEST TEST

Perhaps the greatest test for anyone in exhibiting humility (a test that many, who have enjoyed the acclaim of others while in a position of authority, fail) is to humbly step aside in favor of another person or group. This is the crucial test.

Many gifted and talented people in various walks of life have humbled themselves in all facets of physical living except this one area - a willingness to relinquish power and control. They always must be in control and make the final decision or veto the decisions of others, thus keeping themselves as the supreme and only authority. The failure of not passing this final test means they have not been able to achieve total or GODLY HUMILITY.

Elijah was a man powerfully used by the Lord, not only in preaching and warning, but also in performing great physical miracles (I Kings 17:18; 21:17-29 and II Kings 1:1-17). But the day came when God decided that Elijah's work should be given to another. It was time for him to step aside, to no longer be in the forefront of fame and glory. He was to relinquish his hold of power and authority. Elijah was given the ultimate test and he passed with flying colors (II Kings 2:1-18). This is one of the reasons Elijah and Moses (two of the most humble men in history) were in vision at the transfiguration of Christ (Mt. 17:1-13).

Those individuals that will be in the first resurrection, at the return of Christ, will also exhibit like Moses, Elijah and others, a humble God-like spirit. They will be the ones who will be willing to follow the greatest example of humility to ever be exhibited, our LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. He, who had all perfection, glory and power, was, next to the Father in GREATNESS. He of whom it is written, "...He, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his privileges as God's equal, but stripped himself of every advantage by consenting to be a slave and to be born a man. And plainly seen as a human being, he HUMBLED himself by living a life of utter obedience, to the point of death. And the death he died was a death of a common criminal. That is why God has now lifted him to heights, and has given him the name beyond all names. So that at the name of JESUS 'every knee shall bow', whether in heaven or earth or under the earth. And that is why every tongue shall confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, to the glory of God the FATHER" (Phil. 2:6-11, Phillips translation, emphasis mine).

Truly, before praise must come HUMILITY!

HUMILITY IN SERVICE

If there is anyone who is reading these words and is seeking for personal greatness in the eyes of mankind, whether it be in the field of politics, finance, economics, science, sports, or even religion, let him take to heart the admonition of Jesus in Matt. 20:25-28, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles rule it over them, and their great men hold them in subjection, tyrannizing over them. Not so shall it be among you; but whoever wishes to be GREAT among you must be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of man came not to be waited on but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many..." (Amplified Bible, emphasis mine).

One of the main ingredients in HUMILITY is service to others. This calibre of humility comes at great cost. It is the epitome of a laid-down life, poured out, lived out on behalf of others. Yes, it costs a great deal to experience and know true humility. For most people it's a price that is prohibitive; they simply will not pay it!

THE MEEK ARE NOT WEAK

The humble person is a gracious, congenial individual who is easy to get along with. These good natured souls win friends on every side because they refuse to shove, push, and throw their weight around, they don't win their wars with brutal battles and fierce fights. They win their way into hundreds of hearts and homes with the passport of a lovely, loving spirit. But this quality of life does not come from a position of feeble impotence but rather from a tremendous inner strength and serenity. Only the strong, stable spirit can afford to be gentle. Moses was, in many ways, a powerful, strong man, yet he was the humblest of all men during his day.

Jesus Christ was the perfection of humility, yet He was by no means a weak individual. Notice how He dealt with those who misused the TEMPLE of God (Jn. 2:13-17) and how, on occasions, He answered the hypocritical religious leaders of His time (Mt. 23). Jesus is the center of Christianity - He set us the complete example (I Peter 2:21) for us to follow. And as *Phillip Keller*, in his book "A GARDENER LOOKS AT THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT" so aptly put it on page 68, "Unless we keep clearly in view the life and the character of Christ we will succumb to the eternal temptation of living like our contemporaries, giving tit for tat, insisting on our rights, demanding our pound of flesh, stepping on anyone who trespasses against us, while all the time pushing for PROMINENCE AND RECOGNITION. This is the world's way; Christ calls us to tread In His footsteps. He tells us to deny ourselves dally (give up our right to ourselves). He asks us to take up our cross continuously (that which cuts diametrically across my selfish interest), crossing out the great "I" in my life to produce peace. None of this is very appealing. It goes against the grain of our old nature. It is not a bit glamorous or romantic" (emphasis mine).

THE BENEFITS OF HUMBLENESS

Humility has a basic fruitage of three fantastic benefits. They could not be stated any better than Mr. P. Keller does in his aforementioned book, I quote from pages 169 and 170:

1) "Humility is the only seedbed from which faith can spring...In brokenness and contrition the humble person cries out to God for help. He reaches out to Christ for restoration and healing. He exercises faith in another because he knows he must touch someone greater than himself.

2) It is to such souls that God gives Himself gladly, freely. He draws near to those that draw near to Him. He delights to dwell with those of a broken and contrite spirit. 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken and contrite heart; and saves such as be of a contrite (meek) spirit' (Ps. 34:18)...In vivid and shattering contrast we are warned explicitly that God actually RESISTS the PROUD. He does not just tolerate or indulge arrogant souls. He actually opposes them actively. This is a terrifying truth that should make any self-centered, haughty individual tremble (James 4:4-10).

3) In contrast to this, the third amazing reality about humility is the impact it makes on our fellowman. It is the genuinely humble, gentle soul who wins friends and draws around him a circle of loving associates. This quality of life draws others as surely as nectar in a blossom draws bees. The gentle genial person is the recipient of affection. People bestow on him their blessings. He is lavished with love and surrounded with compassion. The proud, arrogant, haughty person has few friends, if any. He stands upon his little pedestal of pride in grim and gaunt loneliness. Others leave him alone. They ignore him deliberately. If he is so independent, let him live his own Life; let him go his own way; let him suffer the agony of his own selfishness."

I will add *one more benefit* of HUMILITY, in fact. the *greatest benefit of all*.

Those who humble themselves now, under the mighty hand of God, will be exalted in due time and inherit everlasting GLORY as a child of the Father in His Kingdom.

"By HUMILITY and fear of the Lord are RICHES, AND HONOR, AND LIFE" (Proverbs 22:4).

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Written in 1982