

"HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL SERVANTS OF GOD #4 HUMILITY"

First Thess 2:6
(52-12)

The greatest plague on earth is pride. More people miss heaven for pride than any other sin. Wanting our own way is how God described our pitiful condition as lost ones.

Isaiah 53: 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (NKJV)

Pride was the first sin as Lucifer challenged God. Pride is the ultimate sin.

All conflicts and troubles have flowed downward from pride. The source of every gossip, every hurt feeling, every church division, every departed sheep is pride. At the heart of every fight is pride.

Only in Christ is true relief found. His mind is that of a bond servant. His confession was--

- John 4: 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.
- John 5: 30 "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.
- John 6: 38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (NKJV)

What we need tonight is to cultivate Godly Humility.

- Paul said Colossians 3: 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; (NKJV)
- Peter said 1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (NKJV) 1463 egkomboomai {eng-kom-bo'-om-ai} middle voice from 1722 and komboo (to gird); TDNT - 2: 339,196; v AV - be clothed with 1; 1 1) knot or band by which two things are fastened together, to fasten or gird one's self. This was the white scarf or apron of slaves, which was fastened to the belt of the vest and distinguished slaves from freemen, hence in 1 Pet. 5:5, "gird yourselves with humility as your servile garb" means by putting on humility, show your subjection one to another. Also, this refers to the overalls which slaves wore to keep clean while working, an exceedingly humble garment.

William James, in his classic Principles of Psychology, put it this way:

Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke or virtue or vice leaves its ever so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying "I won't count this time! " Well! He may not count it, but it is being counted nonetheless. Down among his nerve cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one.¹

When Paul looked back on his work among the Thessalonians? A life on a daily basis had:

¹ William James, Principles of Psychology (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1952), p. 83.

1. HABITS OF FEARLESSNESS [2:1]
2. HABITS OF INTEGRITY [2:3]
3. HABITS OF HONESTY [2:5]
4. HABITS OF HUMILITY [2:6]
5. HABITS OF LOVINGKINDNESS [2:7]
6. HABITS OF PASSIONATE LIVING [2:8]
7. HABITS OF DEDICATION [2:9-11]

Paul was humble. Listen to 1 Thessalonians 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. (NKJV)

Paul had learned a wonderful habit. So should we!

PRIDE IS EPIDEMIC

James Bjoanstad ² writes: At one time, most Christians believed that to have a close relationship with God, a person should magnify God, deny himself and the pleasures of this world, repent and confess his sins, and live a holy and separated life. Their heroes were missionaries who gave up everything to serve God and martyrs who suffered because of their faith.

Today, it's becoming a different story. Many Christians believe that to have a close relationship with God, a person should realize the importance of himself as God intended, pursue his dreams and aspirations, and become affluent and successful. Their heroes are those celebrities and self-made individuals who happened to be Christians. Behind this new gospel stands a variety of distinguished teachers, preachers, and evangelists proclaiming a variety of ways to attain prosperity and success. But examining their theological models and points of emphasis reveals one common element--they are simply not biblical.

Satan is the Father of Pride The first sin³ was pride, and every sin after that has been in some way an extension of pride. Pride led the angel Lucifer to exalt himself above his Creator and Lord. Because the bright "star of the morning" continually said, "I will, I will, I will" in opposition to God's will, he was cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:12–23). Because he said, "I am a god," the Lord cast him "from the mountain of God" (Ezek. 28:11–19).

The original sin of Adam and Eve was pride, trusting in their own understanding above God's (Gen. 3:6–7).

- The writer of Proverbs warns, "When pride comes, then comes dishonor" (11:2),
- "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (16:18), and again
- "Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin" (21:4).

Pride is the supreme temptation from Satan, because pride is at the heart of his own evil nature. Our only protection against pride, and our only source of humility, is a proper view of God. Pride is the sin of competing with God, and humility is the virtue of submitting to His supreme glory.

Pride comes in many forms. We may be tempted to be proud of our abilities, our possessions, our education, our social status, our appearance, our power, and even our biblical knowledge or religious accomplishments. But throughout Scripture the Lord calls His people to humility. "Before honor comes humility" (Prov. 15:33); "The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life" (22:4); "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (27:2).

Humility produces spiritual blessing.

- Just as every sin starts in pride, every virtue begins in humility.
- Humility allows us to see ourselves as we are, because it shows us before God as He is.

² Moody Monthly, 11/86, p. 19-20.

³ MacArthur, Ephesians 4:2.

- Just as pride is behind every conflict we have with other people and every problem of fellowship we have with the Lord, so humility is behind every harmonious human relationship, every spiritual success, and every moment of joyous fellowship with the Lord.

God is the Breaker of Pride

A lesson in Godly Humility: ⁴

HUMILITY BEGINS WITH PROPER SELF–AWARENESS, “the virtue,” said Bernard of Clairvaux, “by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness.” It begins with an honest, unadorned, unretouched view of oneself. The first thing the honest person sees in himself is sin, and therefore one of the surest marks of true humility is daily confession of sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9). “We are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves,” Paul says; “but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12). It is not only unspiritual but unintelligent to judge ourselves by comparison with others. We all tend to exaggerate our own good qualities and minimize the good qualities of others. Humility takes off our rose-colored glasses and allows us to see ourselves as we really are.

SECOND, HUMILITY INVOLVES CHRIST–AWARENESS. He is the only standard by which righteousness can be judged and by which pleasing God can be judged. Our goal should be no less than “to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6), and Jesus Christ walked in perfection. Only of Jesus has God ever said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Our business success, fame, education, wealth, personality, good works, or anything else we are or have in ourselves counts for nothing before God. The more we rely on and glory in such things, the greater barrier they become to our communion with God. Every person comes before the Lord with nothing to commend him and everything to condemn him. But when he comes with the spirit of the penitent tax-collector, saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner,” God will willingly and lovingly accept him. “For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:13–14).

THIRD, HUMILITY INVOLVES GOD–AWARENESS. As we study His life in the gospels we come to see Jesus more and more in His human perfection—His perfect humility, His perfect submission to the Father, His perfect love, compassion, and wisdom. But beyond His human perfection we also come to see His divine perfection—His limitless power; His knowing the thoughts and heart of every person; and His authority to heal diseases, cast out demons, and even forgive sins. We come to see Jesus Christ as Isaiah saw the Lord, “sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted” and we want to cry out with the seraphim, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory,” and with the prophet himself, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:1, 3, 5).

GROWING TRUE HUMILITY:

WE MUST REFOCUS: James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (KJV) The first step in experiencing humility is to turn our eyes off ourselves and to look to God. When we study His Word, seek His face in prayer, and sincerely desire to be near Him and please Him, we move toward being poor in spirit. It is the vision of the infinitely Holy God in all His sinless purity and perfection that allows us to see ourselves as sinners by contrast. To seek humility, we do not look at ourselves to find the faults, but at God Almighty to behold His perfection.

⁴ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Ephesians 4, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983

WE MUST REMOVE: Titus 2:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (KJV) We must starve the flesh by removing the things on which it feeds. The essence of the fleshly nature is pride, and to starve the flesh is to remove and avoid those things that promote pride. Rather than looking for praise, compliments, and popularity, we should be wary of them. Yet because our human sinfulness has a way of turning even the best intentions to its advantage, we need to be careful not to make an issue of avoiding praise and recognition. The evil is not in being given praise but in seeking it and glorying in it. When, without having sought it, we are praised or honored, to ungraciously reject the recognition may be an act of pride rather than of humility.

WE MUST REQUEST: 1 Peter 5:5-6 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. 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: (KJV) The third and balancing principle in coming to humility is asking God for it. With David we should pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). Humility, like every other good gift, comes only from God. Also as with every other good thing, He is more willing to give it than we are to ask for it, and He stands ready to give it long before we ask for it.

DETECTING TRUE HUMILITY: Thomas Watson gives seven principles we may apply in determining humility.⁵

- FIRST, IF WE ARE HUMBLE WE WILL BE WEANED FROM OURSELVES. We will be able to say with David, "My soul is like a weaned child within me" (Ps. 131:2). One who is poor in spirit loses his self-preoccupation. Self is nothing, and Christ is everything. Paul's humility is nowhere more beautifully expressed than in his saying, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). To the Philippian believers he wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).
- SECOND, HUMILITY WILL LEAD US TO BE LOST IN THE WONDER OF CHRIST, "with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, ... being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Our satisfaction will be in the prospect of one day being fully in the likeness of our Lord.
- THIRD, WE WILL NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR SITUATION, NO MATTER HOW BAD IT MAY BECOME. Because we know we deserve worse than anything we can experience in this life, we will consider no circumstance to be unfair. When tragedy comes we will not say, "Why me, Lord?" When our suffering is for Christ's sake we not only will not complain or feel ashamed but will glorify God for it (1 Pet. 4:16), knowing that we will "also be glorified with Him" and realizing "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:17-18).
- FOURTH, WE WILL MORE CLEARLY SEE THE STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES OF OTHERS AS WELL AS OUR OWN WEAKNESSES AND SINS. With "humility of mind" we will "regard one another as more important than [ourselves]" (Phil. 2:3) and will "give preference to one another in honor" (Rom. 12:10).
- FIFTH, WE WILL SPEND MUCH TIME IN PRAYER. Just as the physical beggar begs for physical sustenance, the spiritual beggar begs for spiritual. We will knock often at heavens gate because we are always in need. Like Jacob wrestling with the angel, we will not let go until we are blessed.
- SIXTH, WE WILL TAKE CHRIST ON HIS TERMS, NOT ON OURS OR ANY OTHER. We will not try to have Christ while keeping our pride, our pleasures, our covetousness, or our immorality. We will not modify His standards by ecclesiastical traditions or by our own inclinations or persuasions. His Word alone will be our standard. Watson said, "A castle that has long been besieged and is ready to be taken will deliver up on any terms to save their lives. He whose heart has been a garrison for the devil, and has held out long in opposition against Christ, when once God has brought him to poverty of spirit and he sees himself damned without Christ, let God propound what articles he will, he will readily subscribe to them. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (p. 47).

⁵ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 5*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983

- SEVENTH, WHEN WE ARE POOR IN SPIRIT WE WILL PRAISE AND THANK GOD FOR HIS GRACE. Nothing more characterizes the humble believer than abounding gratitude to his Lord and Savior. He knows that he has no blessings and no happiness but that which the Father gives in love and grace. He knows that God's grace is "more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14).

HABITS OF EFFECTIVE SERVANTS #5 LOVE (2:7)

Loving [2:7] What is loving ministry based upon?

- A. JUSTIFICATION A Sinner stands before God as accused and is declared righteous by His imputed righteousness.
 - B. REDEMPTION A Sinner stands before God as a slave and is granted freedom by His ransom.
 - C. FORGIVENESS A Sinner stands before God as a debtor and is forgiven by His payment.
 - D. RECONCILIATION A Sinner stands before God as an enemy and is made a friend by His peace.
 - E. ADOPTION A Sinner stands before God as a stranger and is called a Son by His choice.
- II. Passionate [2:8] What kind of heart can minister under any condition? One that is waiting for Jesus! What are the benefits of waiting for the Son? What will looking at Jesus help you overcome or at least endure? Who waited for Jesus and when?
- A. ENOCH LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH DEMON TIMES Genesis 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (KJV); Hebrews 11:5-6 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (KJV). The world was literally on its last leg. Evil was everywhere. God was almost closed out. People were so wicked they had to be exterminated! And what does one do while looking for Jesus? Jude 14-15 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (KJV)
 - B. JOB LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH SICKNESS AND SUFFERING TIMES Job 19:25-26 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: (KJV) Satan buffets, beloved children die, life savings destroyed, wife torments, friends accuse and his body wastes! That is affliction! And what did he do while looking for Jesus? He spoke of Him: Job 19:25-26 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: (KJV)
 - C. MOSES LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH DISAPPOINTING TIMES Deuteronomy 33:2 And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. (KJV) What amazing disappointments Moses faced!
 1. Meteoric career in Egyptian Politics and military but hot temper puts him in desert obscurity
 2. Quiet family life in the country, God's call puts him in the hot seat away from his family.
 3. As a willing servant he became the greatest deliverer of all time next to Christ.
 4. As a humble follower he became the greatest prophet, knowing God face to face. He glowed from the contact with God.
 5. After leading the people 40 years as a self sacrificing servant leader, they continually (10x) rebel.
 6. In one angry act he is shut out of the Promised Land!

- D. DANIEL LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH PAGAN TIMES Daniel 7:9-10 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. (KJV) Captivity, POW But listen to Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (KJV)
- E. ZECHARIAH LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH DISASTER TIMES Zechariah 14:5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. (KJV) The mighty earthquakes of life, disasters unexpected, known only to God. And what was he saying? Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (KJV)
- F. PETER AND PAUL LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH PRISON AND MARTYRDOM TIMES
1. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (KJV);
 2. 2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (KJV);
 3. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: (KJV)
- G. JOHN LOOKED FOR JESUS THROUGH LONELY TIMES Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (KJV) He was the last Apostle, disciple, last Christian? on a lonely island. . . Revelation 22:20-21 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (KJV)
- III. Dedicated [2:9-11]