

Jesus, the Pioneer of Humility

Philippians 2:3-11

Intro

Is humility a virtue to grasp at and hold onto or is it like a commodity on a store's display window - fit to look at and talk about, but too costly to buy for oneself? The Greek and Romans would scoff at those labeled "humble of heart." They considered "being humble: a curse. Jesus, however, took the word and made a glow around the word "humility" or low-mindedness for His disciples.

The world's societies have changed in name only and for the most part still call humility a weakness or foolishness. Humility in a man is for the most part mocked at in the world.

Humility and the desire for humility of mind separate many of the religious goers from the true Christians. Religions still operate according to the rules of selfishness of the flesh and pride. They might admire humility on the outward, but they disdain it inwardly.

The Asian people seem to have greatly valued humility and integrated it into their religions and society. We often forget that the Confucian society has molded the East Asian people for thousands of years. It dictated how one should respond to another depending upon their position to them. These rules defined proper etiquette and politeness. But again, this is how they act in front of each other. It is very different than what they might think of each other. True humility comes from the heart rather than the law (1). This outward training is not bad but limited. They have the outward form but not the inward spirit. Jesus Christ showed the pathway to humility.

Paul in Philippians 2:3-11 give Christians three reasons why we should be humble in mind.

- A. [The Exhortation of the Apostle Paul](#) (2:3-4)
- B. [The Exemplification of Jesus Christ](#) (2:5-8)
- C. [The Encouragement of the Exaltation Principle](#) (2:9-11)

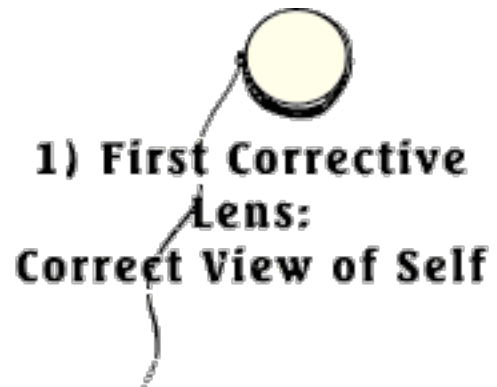
A. The Exhortation of the Apostle Paul (2:3-4)

The Apostle Paul appointed by God commanded humility of mind by the unction of the Holy Spirit. Paul outlines two correct lenses for us to see this issue correctly.

1) First Corrective Lens: Correct View of Self

"Do Nothing from selfishness or empty conceit" (2:3)

Paul didn't limit this to any people or within any specific relationship. We need to put away that erroneous perspective that we are better or more deserving than another person. The correction lens is the scriptures.



a) We are like other men - mere mortals. The Gospel has brought blessed immortality, not us.

(For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God. Man does not know whether it will be love or hatred; anything awaits him. It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean, and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead. (Ecclesiastes 9:1-3).

b) We all are made by God's hand - all creatures. We are made of the same stuff -chemicals. (Genesis 1-2)

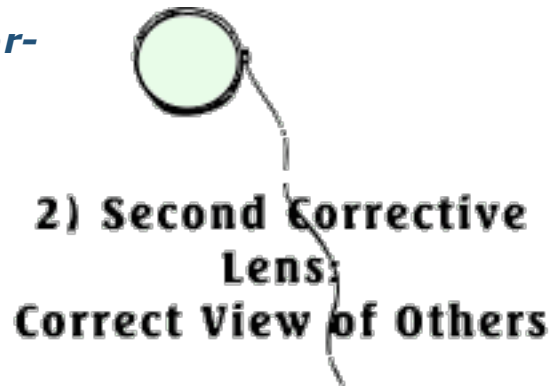
c) We all are sinners. We need to admit our weakness and flaws. Death has seized each of our throats.

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already

charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; (Romans 3:9-11).

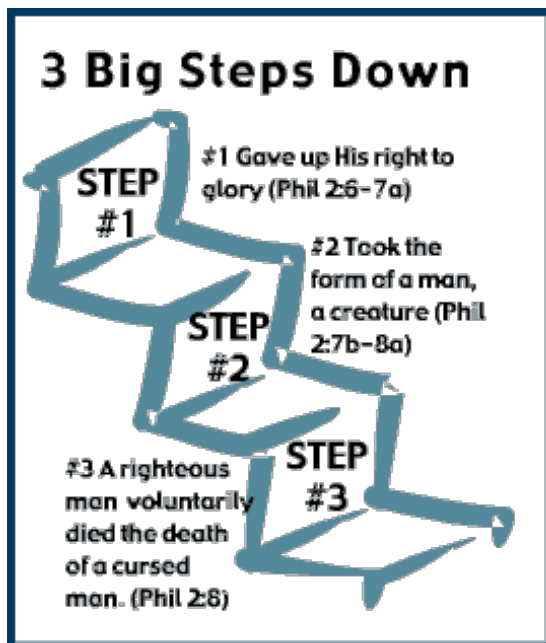
2) Second Corrective Lens: Correct View of Others -

"...With humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Philippians 2:3).



From the commandment of Jesus, we are told to love another as one would love himself. If we notice a competitive spirit, we only need to start serving the one we envy. Now we want them to win the competition! Paul commanded us to be humble. We need these two corrective lens:

B. The Exemplification of Jesus Christ (2:5-8)



In this passage we see Jesus Christ, our Master, take three steps down. We as His disciples are to possess this same spirit. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 2:5). We are not to take the same steps, but possess the attitude which will in our own lives lead to some difficult steps.

STEP #1 Gave up His right to glory (Phil 2:6-7a)

We can see this glory in Isaiah 45:5-8.

STEP #2 Took on the form of a man, a creature (Phil 2:7b-8a)

We can see this contrast in Isaiah 45:9-10.

STEP #3 In His righteousness, He voluntarily died, the death of a cursed man. (Phil 2:8)

We can see this ultimate humbling in Isaiah 53:4-7.

Conclusion

Is not Jesus' example a good enough reason to be humble in mind especially when it is for you His people He denied Himself for.

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:27).

C. The Encouragement of the Exaltation Principle (2:9-11)

The question is not whether you or I will be humbled. The question is when we will be humbled. Better now than later.

Paul probably wrote these three verses because he could not leave His living Savior in the tomb. Jesus ascended and was now in great glory. Neither could the prophets of old describe the suffering Messiah without mentioning His glorious kingdom.

This 'exaltation principle' is regularly repeated and exemplified throughout the scriptures.

For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted. (Luke 14:11).

It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud. (Proverbs 16:19).

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5).

For He who requires blood remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the afflicted. (Psalms 9:12).

This principle encourages even the faint-hearted and persecuted to be humble-minded even to ones enemies.

1) Jesus' exaltation assures us of the veracity of this truth

2) Jesus' exaltation serves as a clear warning to the prideful Christian as well as the non-Christian.

Call on the Lord to humble your heart lest you find yourself humbled one hour too late on Judgment Day.

Conclusion

No matter what your situation, ask for forgiveness for your pride. Do good to others knowing that you will be lifted up in the end. If you choose to be exalted now, you will soon be crushed. Choose humility and let Him in His time lift you up.

Summary

As a Christian, Paul gave three reasons to be humble of mind. Even if you are humble-minded, you are asked to step yet lower. Remember the correcting lenses. Paul commands us to have a right view of ourselves and others. Follow the example of Jesus who denied Himself of His rights. Be encouraged that a lifting up follows the humbling time. If you know not Christ, you cannot be humble like Christ. Even if you are brought to humbling circumstances, your pride will interfere with a humbling of heart. Call on the Lord to humble your heart lest you find yourself humbled one hour too late on Judgment Day. The question is not whether you or I will be humbled. The question is when we will be humbled. Better now than later.