

Humility, trembling and obedience

So we have considered the nature of humility and some of its basic characteristics which are;

- It is an **awareness** of true **spiritual reality**. It sees and/or perceives clearly its proper place before God and others.
- The **mindset of Christ**, a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a **desire to glorify and please God** in all things and by all things He has given.
- It recognizes one's own spiritual bankruptcy before God's holiness and sees itself then in need of **grace for its sinfulness** and in need of **mercy for its weakness**.
- It is a **self-denial** at its core that focuses on God, and a willingness to lose one's life for Christ's sake.
- It is to be of a **servants mind**, servile, and also **to be lowly, yielding, submissive**, meek and gentle. It is **contrite** and seeks to amend its failures. It is to be modest and unpretentious, to see others as more important than itself
- It seeks to draw attention **to God and His glory**, and to honor, appreciate and commend others for their virtue.
- One last important point is that **humility is a goal** we are always striving for but never actually attaining. We may grow in humility by degree, but **never fully arrive** in this life.

Having seen to some degree what the nature of humility looks like, let us consider how it should progress in us, and how we may know that we are making this **downward progress** of **contrition**. As we grow in **humility we grow** in the **awareness** of **spiritual reality**. We become like that tax collector of Luke 18:13, he is **mourning** and **broken** over his **sinfulness**. He is **humble** and **yielding** and submissive. He is so **contrite** that he is **fearful to even approach God**, his eyes see reality, he is **spiritually aware**. Being filled with **humble child-like faith**, he realizes his total dependence on God for grace and in his own **weakness** needs mercy from God, and therefore he is trembling and contrite. Let us make no mistake, this is the **heart attitude** of one that is **pleasing to God**.

Isaiah 57:15 - 15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order **to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite**. NASB

Isaiah 66:2 - 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But **to this one I will look**, To **him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word**. NASB

Matthew 5:3 - 3 "**Blessed are the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. NASB

And this heart attitude leads to a healthy fear, a **reverence** for **God and His Word**. As it sees God and His holiness, there is a **trembling**, a fearful reverence, a **contrition** that seeks to amend its failures to glorify Him. Because humility has such clear vision of God, it cannot but see the awesome **beauty** of **God's holiness**, and **His magnificent love** and rejoice at the sight (or perception) of it. Moreover in this sight of God, is the perception of His forgiveness, and His loving-kindness in giving the ultimate sacrifice to reconcile us to Him, even His sinless Son, Jesus the Christ. So with this humility and contrition comes an inner rejoicing, yet with holy fear. This **humility with joy** combines to be a powerful motivator toward our growth because with the reverence for God's holiness comes the perception of His love and the desire to please Him. It not only adores His beauty and virtue, but it also longs to be like Him. This is the deep inner **work** of the **Spirit**, causing us to grow in the perception of God's love to us in the Gospel, and

also causing us to long to be like Him, which results in virtue being perfected within us. As we grow in this union with the Father and the Son, we are powerfully changed into His image.

1 John 4:16-18 - 16 And we have **come to know and have believed the love which God has for us**. God is love, and **the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him**. 17 **By this, love is perfected with us**, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear**, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. NASB

This **joyful trembling** is the stuff of spiritual growth and the motivation that causes the **downward progress of humility**. Bill Farley comments; *"The person growing in humility see his gifts and faults, his strengths and weaknesses, with increasing clarity. Ironically, this humility lays the sure foundation for real contentment and healthy self-image because the humble Christian also increasingly sees and feels God's great personal love. The truly humble believer has a low view of himself, but an increasingly high view of God and his fellow man."* As we understand God, ourselves, and others more clearly, we are empowered to change and become like Him. More than this, it is the motivation for obedience to God's Word. Humility is the fuel that causes us to want to **amend our failures** and to truly be changed and become like Him. When we see the wretchedness of our own sinfulness, and the beauty of God's love and forgiveness, we long to be changed and take on His virtue, not only in our thoughts, but even more in our words and actions. We begin to desire to glorify Him and enjoy Him by loving Him and serving Him and others. We begin to act on the **vision that humble faith has clearly given** us of God. As we **grow** in this **joyful trembling**, we grow in **spiritual awareness**, we perceive reality more clearly. And so the Bible calls us to **tremble** before God's holy **Word** from a heart of **contrition** and **humility**. It tells us that God is not only pleased with our contrition, but blesses the humble and contrite.

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Psalms 25:9 - 9 He **leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble** His way. NASB

Psalms 138:6 - 6 For though the Lord is exalted, Yet **He regards the lowly**; But the haughty He knows from afar. NASB

So the Bible calls us not only to a **trembling before God's Word**, but calls us to a **lively obedience** that produces a godly life, a life of true worship, which looks like **Spirit empowered virtue**, and purposeful **service to God and others**. This is **spiritual growth** and maturity. It is becoming like Him, **bearing the image** in greater degree, as we are changed through the Word and by the Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13 - 12 So then, my beloved, **just as you have always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work** for His good pleasure. NASB

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB

James 1:21-22 - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls**. 22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. NASB

1 Peter 5:5-6 - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble**. 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

But what does it look like to humble yourself? How do we offer our **God dependent effort** in this cooperation with God? What practical steps does the Bible tell us to take in this Sanctifying work of the Spirit? The New Testament is filled to the brim with practical exhortations toward