

Lesson 2: The Necessity of Humility

As we learned in the previous lesson entitled, “The Selfishness of Sin,” what makes sin sinful is when one puts oneself above others. This is the common trait of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Even so, further examination of the relationship between these three yields necessary application for all those who desire to pursue the Lord whole-heartedly.

Turn to Genesis 2:9 and read aloud

In this verse, we see that God made the fruit of the trees pleasurable for food and pleasing to the eyes. These were characteristics given by God for the good of man and for His own glory.

Turn to Genesis 3:6 and read aloud

In this verse, we see that two out of the three reasons Eve decided to eat the fruit of the tree were mentioned in **Genesis 2:9**. This is because the desire for fruit and its pleasing affect on the eyes can be either good or bad depending on whether you enjoy these things within the confines of God’s design for them. When one acts outside of God’s design and will for something, it becomes a rejection of God’s way and God’s rule (**I Thess. 4:7-8**). Rebellion against God’s design is a result of self love or loving one’s own way more than God’s own way.

The third temptation, which immediately preceded the culmination of the sin of Eve, was that the fruit of the forbidden tree was “desirable to make one wise” (**Gen. 3:6**). What’s interesting is that this quality is not listed in **Genesis. 2:9** as an inherent characteristic of a tree and its fruit. This temptation was toward the pride of life. Eve had the choice to continue to find her dependency on God and His way. She had the choice to submit to God or to submit to another, and in the face of temptation she chose the latter. Though she was deceived by Satan, the deepest deception was truly from the pride of her own heart (**Jere. 49:16, Ob. 1:3, Jere. 17:9**).

Pride is the first step in all sin and the gateway to all spiritual death. Anything that comes not from faith in Christ is sin and finds its source in pride, as it is to trust in oneself and one’s own way above God and His way (**Rom. 14:23**). Satan fell from pride (**I Tim 3:6**). Pride comes before the fall (**Prov. 16:18**). Another verse reads “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (**I Cor. 10:12**). Picture Jesus on the cliff being tempted by Satan to jump in **Matthew 4** – had He been a sinner and submitted to the temptation to test God, then pride would have come before the fall.

Humility, in much the same manner, is the first step in all true obedience to God. The first beatitude in **Matthew 5** speaks of the poor in spirit, which are those who recognize their neediness for God in all things. According to **John 15:5**, without Jesus we can do nothing. He sustains all of creation from moment to moment. All would crumble should He decide to withdraw His mighty hand from upholding all things. Eve’s mistake was that she chose to take God’s place in her own life, seeking to depend on her own thoughts and ways. We make the same mistake today. As the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, God’s rightful place in every creature’s life is that of Lord and King. The creature’s rightful place is simply to be a vessel for the expression, work, and glory of the Creator. This relationship was severed and lost consequent to the rebellion and fall of mankind.

Christian author Andrew Murray, in his book entitled, *Humility*, explains that “Jesus came to bring humility back to the earth.” Our lack of humility is the gateway to all of our sin, because the prideful heart does not allow God his rightful place as Lord. When this great and foundational principle of God’s design is neglected, the creature is sure to be outside God’s blessed will for his life. Jesus made atonement for our sin by His humility. Though He suffered much, other people have possibly suffered more physically, yet have not been qualified to carry the sins of the world. Only Jesus could be as humbled as He was, because only Jesus could lower Himself from an infinitely high position. He alone was in the place to exchange a most high and exalted throne, for a crown of dreadful thorns and a horrendous trail to slaughter on a seemingly inglorious tree, which is held for the most heinous of criminals, so that we might have opportunity to be saved from ourselves and our lack of humility before God.

Turn to Philippians 2:1-11 and read aloud

This passage takes us into the humility of Jesus Christ. We are taught to follow His example as the meek and lowly One. Jesus often spoke of Himself as a servant and as one who was completely subject to the will of the Father. He also believed that He did nothing of Himself, but rather said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work” (**John 4:34**). In verse 1-4, we are exhorted to “esteem others better than ourselves,” for the sake of godly unity and brotherly love. Selfish esteem, ambition, and conceit bring death and destruction, whereas, esteem and value for others above self brings forth life and liberty. We are told that this is the way to follow in Jesus footsteps. Humility was His way, and His humility ought to be our way.

Murray explains, “Humility towards men will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real.” It is a much more difficult task to esteem your fellowmen above yourself than it is to esteem a perfect God above yourself. The outworking of Jesus humility in life was His sacrificial service to those around Him. He made Himself of no reputation for the sake of building His Father’s reputation. He gloried in His nothingness before His Father so that His Father could be all in Him. Jesus served the very people who owed Him their all. He served them simply because they were created of God and loved by Him. We ought to follow in this model and serve others above ourselves, no matter who they are or from what walk of life they come. Our humility and service before God ought to be an overflow of the humility and servanthood of Jesus Christ. This is the only humility that is pure and true, because it is not of us, but a gift from God.

“The question is often asked, how we can count others better than ourselves, when we see that they are far below us in wisdom and in holiness, in natural gifts, or in grace received. The question proves at once how little we understand what real lowliness of mind is. True humility comes when, in the light of God, we have seen ourselves to be nothing, have consented to part with and cast away self, to let God be all. The soul that has done this, and can say, “So have I lost myself in finding Thee,” no longer compares itself with others. It has given up forever every thought of self in God’s presence; it meets its fellow-men as one who is nothing, and seeks nothing for itself; who is a servant of God, and for His sake a servant of all. A faithful servant may be wiser than the master, and yet retain the true spirit and posture of the servant. The humble man looks upon every, the feeblest and unworthiest, child of God, and honors him and prefers him in honor as the son of a King. The spirit of Him who washed the disciples’ feet makes it a joy to us to be indeed the least, to be servants one of another. The humble man feels no jealousy-or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised and

himself forgotten, because in God's presence he has learnt to say with Paul, "I am nothing." He has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and sought not His own honor, as the spirit of his life" (Murray). Do not seek to prove and glory in self, but choose rather to seek and to prove the glory of God.

Jesus taught that only those who humble themselves like a child will inherit the Kingdom of God (**Matt. 18:1-5**). Just as a child is dependent on its parents for every need and nurture, we ought to come to our heavenly Father in like manner. Humility is the place of entire dependence on God for every need. The glory of man is to know and show that he can do nothing of himself; to be the vessel and representation of God. The glory of man is his own humiliation for the sake of God's glory and the only place of blessing, the place of highest joy, is to confess one's own identity as a sinner saved by the grace of God – a saint by no merit of self. The need for this grace ought to be felt moment by moment, day by day, in greater and greater measure.

There are certain dangers that threaten our pursuit of Christ's humility. They can be identified as false humilities, or more subtle and deceptive forms of pride. Be careful when examining one's own sinfulness and shortcomings. Jesus Christ was humble and yet without sin. One needs not to remain in sin to be humble. It is the grace of God, and not our sin, that will truly humble us (**I Cor. 12:1-10**). Being truly humbled will always yield the fruit of greater focus on and glorification of God as opposed to self. Focus on oneself, even on one's own sinfulness, can never bring salvation from self. Only the presence of God can bring true freedom from self.

Another danger is the false humility portrayed by the Pharisees. The Pharisees sought to be pleasing in the sight of men rather than God. They created their own arbitrary regulations and made all of their acts of service public attention. They wanted people to know they were praying and fasting, as their desire was to receive glory. And it was this corruptible reward that they did receive. They missed the blessedness of fellowship with God for the glory of men.

A last danger involves many movements of today toward Eastern philosophy and concepts concerning relative truth. Many, in the name of humility, say that they cannot stand on the truth of God's word as final, authoritative, and sufficient for all matters of faith and practice, because that is too proud a notion. Let this be understood: there is not a more humble view of religion or scripture than that of Christ who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but through Me" (**John 14:6**). A number of other assertions from Christ lead us to the conclusion that to sincerely stand for the perfection of God's absolute truth and His way, is the truly humble position, because it calls for people to humble themselves and their own wisdom under God and His wisdom.

Suggested further reading:

Andrew Murray's *Humility* is highly recommended for further study on this topic.

-All verses in NKJV unless otherwise specified