

Misconceptions About Humility

Philippians 2:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Humility is a disposition most people believe they possess, but in fact, very few do.
2. One thing is sure: Jesus Christ is the absolute ultimate example of humility.
3. Once that truth is established, several misconceptions about humility can be laid to rest.
4. **3** Let's examine some misconceptions about humility so we can better emulate Jesus' humility.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Humility is not weakness:

A. Jesus' friends and enemies both testified to His power.

(1) It was demonstrated over Satan, over nature, and over every force that opposed Him; even death itself (Jn. 11:43; **Mk. 6:2**: "And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!"; **Matt. 8:27**: "But the men marvelled, saying, 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!").

(2) Yet in the exercise of His power He was humble, acknowledging the works He did were the works of His Father (**Jn. 5:19**: "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.").

B. Humble individuals who recognize their own weakness and allow the power of God to work in them are the only ones who are truly strong (**Phil. 4:13**: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.").

C. The Lord said to Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9), causing Paul to respond, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10; 1 Cor. 11:1).

2. **5** Humility does not preclude leadership:

A. Jesus is the ultimate leader! He is the great "Chief Shepherd" of the flock (1 Pet. 5:4), the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).

B. Recall how Jesus described Himself? **Matt. 11:29**: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart ("gentle and humble"; NIV); and ye shall find rest unto your souls."; but this did not prevent His exercising leadership.

C. Some individuals, citing humility as their reason, refuse to accept the responsibilities of leadership, especially as elders.

(1) The fact is that elders must be humble.

(2) They are to be "sober-minded" (1 Timothy 3:2), and this is defined in Romans 12:3 as "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly,"; isn't that humility?

(3) 1 Timothy 3:6 says that an elder should not be a novice, "lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil."; isn't that humility?

D. Rather than hindering leadership, humility defines the only style of leader that pleases God.

- E. Christ-like shepherds are not lords over those entrusted to them but examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:3; like Christ they are “servant leaders”).

3. **6** Humility does not forbid rebuking sin:

- A. Many believe that humility is inconsistent with rebuking sin; “Who do you think you are!” (**Matt. 7:1**: “Judge not, that you be not judged.”).
- B. Jesus is the ultimate example of humility (**Matt. 19:14**: “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’”), but recall what else He did:

Money changers:

Matt. 21:12-13: “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 And He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

Scribes and Pharisees:

Matt. 23:13, 14, 23, 25, 27, 29 (6 times): “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,”

Matt. 23:16: “Woe to you, blind guides,”

Matt. 23:17, 19, 24: “Fools and blind!” or “Blind guides”

Matt. 23:33: “Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?”

- C. One cannot dismiss this by saying, “Well, Jesus was the Son of God so He could do whatever He wanted, but we can’t.” (**Eph. 5:1**: “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.”; **Phil. 2:5**: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”).
- D. In each case He was expressing in His words and actions the will of God, not His own.
- E. Humility, however, should affect our manner of dealing with sinners and those in error.
 - (1) “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).
 - (2) “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).
- F. Rebuking that is done from a spirit of self-righteousness and pride will never be effective in accomplishing God’s purpose; and certainly is not exhibiting humility.

4. **7** Humility is not inconsistent with personal initiative:

- A. Humility does not mean one cannot take the “bull by the horns” and motivate themselves and others to get things done.
- B. The church needs the input of every spiritually-minded Christian in planning and, executing its work (**Eph. 4:16**: “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”).
- C. A song (*Take My Life and Let It Be*) we sing says, “Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.”
 - (1) Yet some who have useful ideas fail to offer them, feeling that to do so would be inconsistent with humility.

- (2) Of course, if one demands that his way be accepted and becomes angry if his suggestion is not taken, he lacks humility.
- D. Humility demands that we “*each esteem others better than himself*” (Philippians 2:3), but it does not forbid our offering our wisdom on any subject for whatever it may be worth.
5. **8** *Humility does not require we think of ourselves disdainfully, speak of ourselves disparagingly or grovel in the presence of others:*
- A. This is what many people think of as humility; however, this is the opposite of humility.
- (1) In actuality, such a person is thinking too much of himself, however negative his thinking may be.
- (2) When one is constantly thinking: “How inferior I am, how worthless I am, how useless I am, how poorly I do compared to others” he is thinking of himself all the time.
- (3) Pride is his problem; he is too proud to be comfortable among those whom he considers superior to himself.
- B. Humility is not the cause of such negative thinking; it’s the solution - not thinking of self at all.
- (1) A Christian can rejoice in the superiority of his brethren.
- (2) Furthermore, he can hold up his head in the presence of all men, not because he himself is so worthy, but because he is a child of the God of heaven, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.
- (3) Jesus didn’t grovel to any man, yet He wasn’t lacking in humility when He said to Pilate, “*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above*” (Jn. 19:11).
- C. We shouldn’t be seeking credit; just swallow our pride and do what we can do! **Mk. 10:31:** “*But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*” We don’t need recognition! God knows! God will reward us even if not one person gives us notice.

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. True humility replaces:
- ✓ Self-seeking with seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33),
 - ✓ Self-will with doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21),
 - ✓ Self-reliance with reliance upon God (2 Cor. 3:5),
 - ✓ Self-confidence with confidence in God (2 Tim. 1:12), and,
 - ✓ Self-exaltation with exaltation by God (1 Pet. 5:6).
2. These were the qualities that made Jesus humble and the qualities He seeks in us (**Phil. 2:5-11**; **1 Pet. 5:6**: “*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*”).
3. May we bring ourselves to say truly, even as we sing: “Lord, thy love at last has conquered: None of self, and all of Thee.”

Adapted from a sermon (*Correcting Misconceptions of Humility*) by Sewell Hall.