

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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June 2018
True Humility

Dear Friend,

Some of my earliest memories are of attending church services. I have experienced a lot of different kinds of services and a lot of different kinds of church attenders. In all those services amongst all those various kinds of Christians I have never met anyone trying to impress me with how bad they are. Generally speaking, people go to church all adorned in their Sunday best with a desire to fit into the mold of what they believe a Christian is to look like, sound like, and act like. All too often, in their effort to portray themselves as a “humble Christian” they end up looking like they just took a drink out of a pickle jar. Is that true humility? I don’t think so.

In fact, I can tell you that trying to determine someone’s humility based on his or her outward appearance is a mistake. It’s too easy to dress yourself in modest clothing and have a downcast appearance and call yourself a worm, and convince all your peers you are the most humble person they know. The truth of the matter is that you aren’t being humble you are only demonstrating your ignorance of who you really are as a born again child of God.

True humility isn’t demonstrated by giving people the impression you think you are just a worm, or that you are of no value. **God valued each of us so much that He willingly gave His Son to die on the cross in our place.** You are valuable to God. So, portraying yourself as a worm is just as wrong as running around thinking you are God’s gift to humanity. Somewhere in the middle of these two ditches is a half way point in which we don’t take credit for that which is only attributable to God.

We need to find the balance and see ourselves as God sees us. In myself I am nothing, but in Christ I can do all things. True humility is acknowledging the truth that my strength and my abilities are not what make me a success in the Body of Christ. My success is in the fact that I know who I am in Christ and I draw my strength from Him and His ability. True humility says: “I am what I am because

Jesus is in me and I'm in Him." When I am my weakest in my own natural abilities I am strong in Him. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul is acknowledging how glad he is when he comes to the end of himself and he sees God's strength empowering him to go the rest of the way. Paul's own weaknesses activate God's strength in him to continue. If we only focus on our weaknesses and inabilities and fail to acknowledge God's strength in us we are deceived. We might think we are being humble, but actually we are operating in false humility. True humility points to God and says: "When I am weak, God, You are strong in me."

If we look at the events surrounding Paul's life when he made these statements we can see that he was actually in the midst of a battle with the enemy that would crush most of us today. (2 Corinthians 12:7)

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

Let's think about this for just a minute; the revelation knowledge at work in the Apostle Paul was of such importance that satan sent his messenger into Paul's life to buffet him. Some people want to get into all kinds of debates about what this "buffeting" looked like. I think it is safe to say that the attacks against Paul, to which he is referring, are those he had spoken of in the previous chapter.

In chapter 11, Paul had called out certain men who had identified themselves as apostles and labeled them "false apostles". (2 Corinthians 11:12-13)

"But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. (13) For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."

Paul was coming against those who had arrived in Corinth calling themselves apostles and making themselves out to be something that they weren't. In an effort to open the eyes of the Corinthians to the life of a true apostle, Paul spoke to them in a way that they could understand. In this description of the events of his life we see what I believe he later referred to as "buffeting". He starts by

acknowledging that what he was about to say was out of character for him. Clearly he was attempting to open their eyes. (2 Corinthians 11:17-18)

“That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. (18) Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.”

He then proceeded to detail his life and the trials he experienced as an apostle, endeavoring to share the great revelation he had received from the Lord. He was whipped on five different occasions thirty-nine times. Three times he was beaten with rods. He was stoned. Three times he suffered shipwreck. He was one night and one day bobbing up and down in the deep. Many other things Paul suffered as satan’s messenger buffeted him at the hands of wicked men.

False humility might say; “Well God, I’m just suffering for the Gospel’s sake.” “Hey all you Corinthians, *remember me in your prayers*. I’m suffering for Jesus. I’ve prayed and asked God to do something and all He says back to me is: My grace is sufficient. He must want me to suffer some more. Maybe God is trying to teach me something.”

I have heard some form of every one of those statements come out of the mouths of well-meaning Christians. They think they are being humble, when all the while they are just ignorant of the truth. The truth is that God didn’t want Paul suffering for one moment under the oppression of the devil or his messenger. God wasn’t using the devil like a dog on a leash to attack Paul in order to teach him a thing or two. No, the devil’s attack was of his own accord and his efforts weren’t meant to teach Paul anything. The devil and his messenger intended to destroy Paul in an effort to stop the Gospel.

God wasn’t telling Paul to relax and let the devil continue to beat him up. When God told Paul: (2 Corinthians 12:9)

“My grace is sufficient for thee.”

He was telling Paul that He did not leave him unequipped for the battle. God was encouraging Paul to stand up against the enemy, but not in his own natural strength, in God’s strength. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Whose weakness was God referring to? God certainly has no weaknesses, so He had to have been referring to Paul's weaknesses. The end of that verse is Paul's response to what God had said. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Paul finally understood that God wasn't ignoring his situation, but that He had already made provision for Paul in Jesus. So long as Paul **depended** on what the cross of Christ provided for him, in his new birth into the family of God and all that this afforded to him; acknowledging his own inabilities gave God the opportunity to work on Paul's behalf. That's why Paul was able to say:
(2 Corinthians 12:10)

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong.”

This is the perfect picture of true humility. Paul's weakness became his strength, because it wasn't strength derived from the flesh it was God's strength working in him.

Recently, I had a conversation with a friend of mine who had come in contact with a person who was recovering from substance abuse. This person had been attending church. My friend noticed something this individual kept saying that caught his attention. This person kept talking about how they were nothing. It sounds right, but at the root it is steeped in religion. The right answer is this: “I am nothing in and of myself, but in Christ Jesus I am the very righteousness of God.” This is true humility.

When a born again child of God finally discovers who they really are and their place in the family of God one of the things that happens is that they walk in a confidence that makes other Christians, who are still struggling with their identity, nervous. These confident believers sometimes get labeled as prideful when actually it isn't pride at all it is just confidence in knowing who they have become as children of God. Paul knew the unlimited possibilities for him as child of God. That's why he could make this statement. (Philippians 4:13)

“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.”

Notice that Paul didn't say he could do all things in his own strength. The limitless possibilities were only available to him **“through Christ”**.

All of the “In Him” verses in the New Testament are there to teach us who we are and what belongs to us as children of God in Christ Jesus. False humility looks at these verses and says: “This can’t be me. I’m just a worm.” **True humility says: “I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. This is who I am and this is what I have in Christ”.**

You are who God says you are. You can have what God says you can have. You can be all that God says you can be. You can do all that God says you can do. You can go where God says you can go. It is all up to you. We have to stop thinking as Paul did when he asked God three times to get the devil to leave him alone and God continued to tell Paul that His grace was sufficient.

Notice that God didn’t say His grace was insufficient. He said “Sufficient”, meaning His grace was exactly enough for whatever Paul was facing. Thank God, Paul tapped into God’s grace, which is evidenced by this statement: “when I am weak, then am I strong.” True humility is realizing that in our weaknesses we can rest in God’s strength to bring us through every battle.

You are so much more than what meets the eye. Your value to God is the price of His only begotten Son. Stop thinking that God would ever put you in harm’s way to teach you a lesson. That’s not the kind of person our heavenly Father is, nor would He ever put us in harm’s way with no way out.

We need to get it straight in our minds; our heavenly Father only has good things for us. He has no desire for you to suffer nor does He have any joy when the enemy is tormenting us. But, His answer to us wouldn’t be any different than His answer to Paul. “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Rest in God and in His strength because this is true humility.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins