

Humility: Key to God's Spirit

Jeff L Mills

A very long time ago, a man stumbled into his bedroom. Sobs racked his body and he felt so lost, so alone and empty, like everyone had deserted him. He dropped to his knees, his fists clenched palms upward and squeezed his eyes closed. Tears ran down his cheeks, dripping onto the stone floor. He sat this way for a few moments, so overcome with emotion that he was unable to move and then slowly he began to relax. He fell forward, face down, sobbing, and with tears welling up in his eyes again, he began to speak:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight. That You may be found just when you speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

These words, you may recognize, are from Psalm 51 and the man...it was King David. This was probably one of the most, if not *the* most, humbling experiences in David's life. After having sinned with Bathsheba, he was at an extreme low point in his life and realized without God, he was nothing. Not only that, he was afraid that God was going to abandon him for what he had done. David humbled himself before God and pleaded with Him not to desert him. Humility is one of the very necessary elements to having a close and meaningful relationship with God and it is a key component to gaining God's Spirit and for spiritual growth.

Did you know that without humility you cannot receive God's Holy Spirit? God gives us everything as a free gift, all we have to do is follow the instruction that He has given us. Humility is a very important first step in following God's instructions. In Acts 2:38 Peter tells the group assembled there, what they must do to receive the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Without humility how could you ever come to repentance? People don't want to admit that they are doing wrong do they? They convince themselves that what they are doing is fine, even if they are hurting someone else. There are lots of people walking around, who think that they are basically good and lead decent lives, but they also conveniently overlook and forget about the bad things that they do. When we put ourselves in the position of being our own judge, we will always find in favor of ourselves! You have to recognize that you have been going in the wrong direction. You have to be honest with yourself and admit that you have been wrong.

You must submit to God, earnestly, in humbleness and meekness. You must genuinely be seeking Him out and asking for His help. It is God's Holy Spirit working within us; that convicts us that we have been going the wrong way and helps us to see ourselves as we truly are for the first time. Only then can you come to feel genuine remorse and sorrow for your actions. Only then, can God open your eyes and help you to see yourself as you truly are. Only then, can God begin to work with you and transform you into a new person who will freely do His bidding.

We all still have to be very aware and careful when it comes to repentance, we are still required to go to God and repent when we do wrong. We must feel genuine remorse and sorrow for what we have done. If we do not seek out forgiveness, how can God grant it to us? He is ready, willing and more than able to forgive, much more than we are, but we have to go and ask! We have to confess our wrongdoings; that takes humility.

Without humility, you cannot be taught. If you are not humble and teachable, willing to learn, how can God work with you? God is making us over into new persons. He is writing His laws on our hearts and in our minds, so that they can be with us always and help us to make the right decisions and to take the right actions in our lives. How can you make the necessary changes and transformations in your life that make you acceptable to God, when you are full of pride and arrogance?

I'm sure you have all ran into someone, somewhere, during your life who was a "know it all". No matter what the subject or topic, this person has done it all, seen it all and can do it better than anyone else. Until a person that is in that state of mind repents of their pride and arrogance, God's Spirit cannot dwell in them. You have to be willing to be taught...to be shown. God wants us to connect with Him! He wants very much to teach us and lead us into truth.

I worked with a man like that. It makes for very difficult working conditions when someone thinks that they know everything, that they make no mistakes and that they need no help from anyone. Have you ever tried to work with someone who refuses to look at something in a different way, or refuses to accept that there may be a better way...who refuses to learn because they do not need any help? They are utterly and completely blinded by their own foolish pride and arrogance!

I'm sure God must feel that way about us at times! Are we stubborn and obstinate, refusing to learn and holding on to our old way of doing things, or are we teachable and willing to learn, realizing that our way may not always be the best way? Are we so stubborn that God cannot work with us, because of our own arrogance and self professed knowledge? The Christian life is about growing, overcoming and changing. We are to become new persons, to put off the old man.

Isaiah 29:15-16

¹⁵ Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?" ¹⁶ Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, "He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

We must approach God with the innocence of children, willing to be led, willing to be taught, willing to change and willing to admit our mistakes if we truly want to follow Him and if we want God's Spirit to dwell within us. When we first come into the knowledge of God, we are literally babes in Christ. There is much to learn and we are starting all over again as a new person. Our minds are opened to understand God's ways and His truth and we move forward slowly at first.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able;

For those of us that are parents raising children, it makes this all the more clearer to us. Sometimes we watch our children make the same mistakes over and over and all we do is just shake our heads. We show them, we instruct them, yet they still insist on doing things the wrong way at times and then suffer the consequences for their actions, or decisions.

God feels exactly the same way about us when we make wrong choices. I know God has shaken his head over me, and things that I have done, quite a few times. Sometimes, despite all that we have come to understand, there are times when we still let our own reasoning get the best of us and we can make some very poor decisions and some very severe mistakes.

If we could just come to the point of relying completely on God, to trust in Him fully to lead us and to be in harmony with His Spirit, we would save ourselves a lot of trouble. That is humility, realizing that we cannot do everything on our own and that we need help. God wants to help...He stands ready to help at any time, but we must be humble enough to accept what God offers!

Humility = more of God's Holy Spirit.

Pride and arrogance are deadly to the Holy Spirit. God does not force us to go His way, if we stubbornly refuse to learn and grow, then we are blocking God's Spirit from working within us. It is of the utmost importance that we connect with God's Spirit. It is through God's Spirit that He is able to teach us, to lead us and bring us to complete conversion.

When we go through trials, for whatever reason and purpose, the worse the trial is the more humble we become and the closer we draw to God and his support. Sometimes God uses trials to get our attention. When we are at our weakest, we are the most vulnerable and teachable...humble.

One of the primary reasons for fasting is to bring ourselves closer to God and to be in harmony with His Spirit and His will. We are not trying to gain God's attention by fasting; we are humbling ourselves, recognizing our complete and utter dependence on God, so that we can draw closer to him.

David prayed to God in a prostrate position, with his face to the ground. Have you ever tried praying that way? If not, I encourage you to try it. It places you in a position of humility and that is a good place to be in when you talk to God. We should never place ourselves in a position that does not show reverence and respect when we are talking to God. We are going before the Creator of the universe, the Sustainer of all things!

Sometimes I think we get to "big for our britches", so to speak, and God cuts us down and brings us back to reality. Every time that I get into trouble, it is due to my own foolish pride and trying to forge ahead on my own without God's help. God will allow me to stumble forward, getting myself in deeper and deeper, until I realize, and sometimes it takes awhile, that I have neglected to seek Him and His will. It is always God's will that we should seek and not our own. We must be careful not to mistake our own will, for what God's will is. God make His will clear to us, if we humble ourselves and we allow Him too.

In the fourth chapter of Daniel we find an example of what pride and arrogance can lead to. King Nebuchadnezzar here is boasting of building the city of Babylon by his mighty power and for his own majesty. While the words were still in his mouth, a voice came down from heaven telling him that his kingdom had departed from him. That he would be driven from the presence of men and that his dwelling would be with the wild beasts and that he would eat grass, until seven times had passed over him. We find a different attitude in Nebuchadnezzar when his punishment was complete.

Daniel 4:34

³⁴ And at the end of the time* I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.

...and dropping down to verse 37 of the same chapter:

Daniel 4:37

³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

King Nebuchadnezzar was not feeling so haughty, arrogant and full of pride after this most severe chastening by God.

Have you ever heard the term, "the seven deadly sins", or "the seven deadlies"? That term is taken from a passage of scripture that refers to a list of actions and attitudes that God is not fond of and there are seven of them.

Proverbs 6:16-19

¹⁶ These six *things* the Lord hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

The wording that is used here is very strong. The Hebrew word here that is translated as hate is:

sane' (saw-nay'); a primitive root; to hate (personally): utterly.

These are very strong words that are used here and notice what the first item on the list is, a proud look. God personally detests and despises these things. It is very clear that God does not look favorably on those who are prideful, but there is a way we can combat pride and arrogance. We are not powerless against those attitudes and states of mind.

Humility can be an extremely powerful tool when used in a Godly way. We must learn to humble ourselves and put our selfish pride and vanity out of our lives. There is no room for those things to exist along with God's Spirit within us!

Psalms 51:17

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.

Humility acts as a huge magnet and attracts God's Holy Spirit but, at the same time humility acts as a huge force field and repels Satan the Devil. Just as pride and arrogance are detrimental to the Holy Spirit, so is humbleness and meekness detrimental to the thoughts and temptations that Satan puts before us. It is through pride and vanity that Satan tempts man and causes him to fall from grace.

Humility is one of the greatest weapons in your arsenal to use against Satan. Satan always gets to people through their pride and arrogance. It is through pride and arrogance that we become puffed up and full of self-importance. That kind of attitude offers Satan a direct connection to influence, tempt and deceive us into getting ourselves into trouble. We have to constantly be on guard against that situation and to not think too highly of ourselves and fall into that trap.

Everything we have, all that we are, everything we are able to accomplish; is due to God's mercy and love for us. Without God's Spirit, His guidance and His involvement in our lives, we would be lost with no direction, or purpose. The more humble you become, the more power you have to resist Satan. But, notice this most important aspect. The power does not come from you but, from God's Holy Spirit dwelling within you. Alone...we are powerless.

We are to be humble in our dealings with each other, as brothers and sisters in Christ. We should always come to each other in love and with respect and consideration. Christ gave us the following instruction, because it forces us into a position of humility when we are dealing with each other.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established'*. * ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Humility is the way by which you can inherit the earth. In the Beatitudes Jesus said "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth". I used to think this scripture referred to the weak and downtrodden but, I came to realize that it is referring to those who humble themselves and allow God's Spirit to dwell in them and who do not act out of pride, vanity and arrogance.

During the Passover service (which is still valid for Christians today), we participate in the foot washing ceremony. Jesus Christ set this example for us, as he had one last meal with His disciples before He was betrayed and arrested. It is important to realize that the washing of feet was usually reserved for the lowest servant of the household. God's own Son, Jesus Christ, humbled himself and performed this task on that last night after the meal.

John 13:12-17

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

It is a humbling experience for each one of us that participate as well and one in which we willingly partake, but think of what Christ went through later that night and the following day after washing the feet of His disciples. Each one of us is free to go to our homes after the Passover service. Yet Christ was arrested, beaten, mistreated, abused, mocked, spit upon and then finally He was crucified and died, after He had performed this service for the disciples.

It is very humbling, to reflect on what Jesus Christ, our Savior endured those last hours of His life on this earth. His is the ultimate and greatest example of humility in the entire bible. Jesus willingly went to His death, so that we might have eternal life.

Philippians 2:8

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.

Even through the severe beatings, the horrible scourging, the mocking and finally the crucifixion Christ refused to speak evil of his captors. Indeed, asking God to forgive them even as He himself was dying. God's own son treated as a common criminal.

It's not always easy to be humble, maybe your supervisor calls you into their office and dresses you down, or maybe on the way home some inconsiderate driver cuts you off, maybe someone falsely accuses you of something, or you just sit down to supper and the phone rings and some telemarketer tries to sign you up for a new credit card and will not allow you to even get a word in to refuse.

This is not an easy life we are called into; it is a battle every single day. But, God did not say it would be easy. God's own Son, as we see in Philipians 2:8, humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death. How much more so, should we also humble ourselves before Almighty God! In closing I would like to leave you with one of my favorite scriptures:

Matthew 6:33

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Let us put off our pride, our vanity, our arrogance. Let us clothe ourselves in humility, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. Let God's Spirit work within you, to teach and to lead you and to guide you. Always keep your eyes on God, as the Provider and Sustainer of all things and let us all, humbly, be seeking God's kingdom.

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)