

Humility Before Honor

“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.”
—Proverbs 15:33

The grace of humility is an important mark of the consecrated child of God. Jesus taught his disciples, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom

of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 18:3,4

Wisdom From Above

This wise counsel is echoed by the Apostle Peter. He wrote, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed

with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”—I Pet. 5:2-6

The Apostle Paul also said, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:3-5) Thus our Lord Jesus, and the Apostles Peter and Paul, have all expressed the admonition in our featured scripture, that “before honour is humility.”

This lesson was also set forth by Jesus in a parable. “When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke 14:8-11

Satan’s Pride

This attitude of humility is in direct contrast with the aspiration of Lucifer. In this connection, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine

heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”—Isa. 14:12-14

In keeping with the divine principles, the time will come when Lucifer, who sought to exalt himself, shall be forever abased in the minds of all God’s intelligent creatures, and will ultimately be destroyed. “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell [Hebrew: sheol, grave, death], to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”—vss. 15-18

Contrasting Attitudes

Jesus taught a powerful lesson in humility by contrasting the attitudes of the Pharisee and the publican. “He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the

other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke 18:9-14

The Pharisees were the religious leaders in Israel while the publicans were looked upon as being outside of God’s favor. Many of them collected taxes for the Roman government, and to the Israelites this made them appear as traitors to God’s people.

The parable states that the Pharisee “stood and prayed thus with himself.” Rather than humbly approaching God, he was assuring himself of his own righteousness and his own superiority over the publican, who had also gone up to the Temple to pray. There has always been much of this type of praying, but we can be sure that our loving Heavenly Father pays little heed or attention to such prayers.

The publican had the right attitude, that of humility before God. He stood “afar off” and “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” This man knew that he was a sinner and, therefore, believed he was unworthy of receiving God’s blessing. He realized that the only basis upon which he could be blessed by God was that mercy would be shown to him. This publican had the type of character to whom the ministry of John the Baptist, a preacher of repentance, had appealed. (Matt. 3:1,2) When the way was pointed out to him, he repented. In the parable, Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

The word “justified” as it has been used in this scripture, and with respect to the publican, does not

have the same connotation that describes the life-justification of the consecrated followers of our Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age. This type of justification is possible only through the merit of the shed blood of Christ. However, the lesson for us, as taught in this parable, is that the publican's attitude of humility and repentance was pleasing to God.

The God of the Universe

The great God of the universe is spoken of as being humble. The psalmist wrote, "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."—Ps. 113:4-8

Our loving Heavenly Father, symbolically speaking, looked down upon the earth, saw our need, and was willing to help his human creation. When our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed the divine law and were sentenced to death, God could have turned away from them and their children forever. However, he humbled himself from the standpoint of making provision for them to be given another opportunity, under more favorable circumstances and with much greater experience, to have life. It was God's abundant love and mercy that provided us a Savior, our Lord Jesus. Paul wrote, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. 5:8

The Apostle John also testified of God's great love in providing his Son as man's Redeemer. "God

is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [Greek: atonement] for our sins.” “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—I John 4:8-10; 2:2

Our Attitude of Heart

The Christian's attitude toward God should be one of humility. We must humbly accept the experiences that our Heavenly Father's wisdom sees best to give us, so that we may be qualified to share in Christ's heavenly kingdom. (II Cor. 3:5,6, *International Standard Version*) This consideration should awaken us to realize that we need to develop a proper attitude of heart as the Lord's people. Our Lord wants us to be humble toward each other, and to learn the needed lessons that he provides for our growth as footstep followers of the Master.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (I Cor. 12:18) This is true with respect to “The Christ,” and it is also true of each one of the Lord's consecrated people. We should accept with rejoicing the Lord's appointments for the church. Certainly, we all rejoice in Jesus as our Head and Master, and recognize and honor the twelve apostles that were chosen to assist us in our walk in newness of life. We acknowledge with thanksgiving and praise the many rich blessings that we have received through all the appointments of our Heavenly Father and his Son.

What the Lord Requires

The Prophet Micah wrote, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8) To walk humbly before God is to hearken diligently to his Word and, with a ready mind and heart, obey his every precept to the best of our ability. In Jesus, we have the perfect example of what it means to walk humbly before God. He was willing and ready to die as the world’s Redeemer. However, he purposely avoided those who were seeking to take his life until he knew that his Heavenly Father’s time had come for his sacrifice to be consummated in death. —John 7:30; 16:32

During his earthly ministry, Jesus was humble in acknowledging that there were certain things he did not know. One of these concerned the time of his Second Advent. He gladly acknowledged this was information that, at the time, was possessed only by his Heavenly Father. We read, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”—Matt. 24:34-36

Jesus’ humility was also displayed in his willingness to render small services. He was just as zealous in proclaiming the message to the Samaritan woman at the well as he was in preaching to the multitude at the Sea of Galilee. How very appropriate it is that we accept Jesus’ invitation: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of

me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

We should thus learn of Jesus with the view of being like him. Jesus freely acknowledged that of himself he could do nothing; and that it was only because the Father worked in and through him that he was able to do the works that he had been sent into the world to do. (John 5:19,30) We should realize that the same thing is true of us. Although we do not have the same outstanding works to do, we realize that even the little things assigned to us would be impossible of accomplishment except as the Heavenly Father blesses us with his wisdom and strength.

When testifying of his own experiences, the aged Apostle Paul provided us these wise words: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:11-13) Such should be the same attitude of each humble Christian. Sometimes we are abased. Sometimes we abound. At all times and in all experiences, however, it is only by the strength found in Christ that we can accomplish the “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:2

He Reviled Not

Jesus was also an example of humility in dealing with his enemies. Peter wrote, “Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his

steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”
—I Pet. 2:21-24

The natural tendency of the fallen human nature is to strike back when attacked, if in no other way than an attempt to vindicate oneself. Jesus, however, did not do this, and we are to be like him, humbly submitting to whatever misrepresentation may be heaped upon us.

We recall these words of the Master, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. ... Be ye therefore perfect [Greek: complete], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:44-48) This is a severe test of humility; but, by the Lord’s grace, his people can be victorious.

Let us remember that our exaltation is not to be made manifest on this side of the veil, but on the other side and in the spiritual condition. The Apostle Paul proclaimed, “To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.” (Rom. 2:7, *English Standard Version*) Only those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God may expect to be exalted by him in due time. ■