

Humbling Ourselves Before Our Fellow Men



Pride vs Humility (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

We've been studying together the outworking of the eternal universal law: whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

In my last two talks I've explained how this principle applies in our personal relationship to God. Self-humbling is an essential requirement for coming to God initially, and then for all subsequent progress in the spiritual life.

Today I'm going to take this principle one step further. I'm going to show you how it applies also in our relationship to our fellow men. You see, our true attitude toward God is often revealed in our attitude toward men. And this applies also in the matter of humility. It must be expressed, not only toward God, but toward men. So often we tend to deceive ourselves in a thing like this. We claim to have the right attitude toward God, but in our dealings with our fellow men, we demonstrate a completely different and a wrong attitude. The truth of the matter is that if we really have the right attitude toward God, it will be demonstrated also in our attitude and our dealings with our fellow men. But if wrong attitude toward men manifests itself, then it's an indication that somewhere our attitude toward God is not right.

So in this matter of self-humbling, we have to apply the principle not only in our relationship directly with God, but also in our relationship with our fellow men. This requirement is stated in various places in the New Testament. I'll just give you three examples. In Philippians 2:3, Paul says:

> "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." (NIV)

Notice, humility is manifested in considering other people better than ourselves. It's the opposite of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

And then a short but very important statement in Ephesians 5:21:

> "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." (NASB)

You see the implication. If we really fear and reverence Christ, it will be manifested in our attitude toward one another. We will not merely be subject to Christ, but we'll also be subject to one another. If we claim to be subject to Christ but we are not subject to one another, then our claim of subjection to Christ is not valid.

And then again in 1 Peter 5:5:

> "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (NIV)

Last week I quoted Phillips translation of that particular verse which says, "Wear the overall of humility as a servant." Because the word that's translated "clothe yourself" in the Greek means specifically, put on a certain type of apron which was worn only by slaves. In other words, wear the attitude of a slave towards others. That's the true expression of humility.

Now I want to give you an example of the outworking of this principle; in fact, two examples, both of them taken from the Old Testament. One is from the life of Abraham, the other is from the life of Jacob. We'll start with the example from the life of Abraham. It describes Abraham's relationships and dealings with his nephew, Lot. The record is found in Genesis 13:5–17, a rather lengthy passage but I need to read it all.

> "Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, 'Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers.'"

You see, there's an implication to that statement "we are brothers." Because the Scripture said there were other peoples living in the land—Canaanites and Perizzites—who were potentially enemies of both Abraham and Lot. So Abraham reminded his nephew, "We can't afford to quarrel, we're brothers. But we've got enemies who exploit any division between us." How true that is of God's people in the world today. Now let's go on with what Abraham said to Lot:

> "'Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.' Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord. The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.'" (NIV)

I want you to see the implications. I want you to see Abraham's humility. Abraham was the senior man; the man of God's choice, the man with the special calling, the man to whom the inheritance belonged. Lot was his nephew who had just come along, following as it were in Abraham's train. But when the time came for them to separate, Abraham didn't take an arrogant position. He didn't say, "I'm the senior, I'll have first choice. This is what I want." He did something that really astonishes me. He freely gave Lot the first choice. He said, "Whatever you choose, that will be yours. I'll take what's left." Isn't that humility? But you see the reward of humility. I want you to read the closing verses again.

> "The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever... Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.'" (NIV)

You see, that only after that act of self-humbling did Abraham see his inheritance. Up to that time he'd been in the inheritance, but God had not really revealed it to him. And God only chose to reveal it to him after Abraham had humbled himself before his young nephew, Lot. What a picture of the reward of self-humbling. You see, God watches our actions, He sees our motives, and He's always working out that principle: the one who humbles himself will be

exalted.

I want to take my second example of self-humbling from the life of Jacob. I want to show you how Jacob could not get back into his inheritance until he'd humbled himself, not merely before the Lord, but before his brother Esau. Jacob had initially got the birthright from Esau by a rather shabby trick. He had been deliberately deceptive in order to get the father's blessing and it had got him exactly nowhere. As a result of those two rather mean actions, he had had to run from his inheritance as a fugitive with nothing but a staff in his hand. And he'd had to spend twenty years in exile, working as a servant for his uncle Laban. But in his exile, and in his service, God blessed him, gave him a family and great possession. Then the Lord spoke to him and said, "Now it's time for you to go back to the land that I promised to give you."

And so Jacob turned his face westward with his wives and his children and his flocks and went back. He reached the border of the land he'd been promised and he had a remarkable experience. He was left alone at night and the Scripture says that an angel wrestled with him—wrestled with him all night. And the angel could not prevail against Jacob. Jacob was so strong in himself. Eventually the angel just put out his finger and touched Jacob's thigh. His thigh was put out of joint and he was helpless. And then he clung to the angel and pleaded for the blessing and the angel granted him the blessing, but from then onwards, Jacob always walked with a limp. What does that limp mean? It means the end of our own strength, our own confidence, our acknowledgment that we cannot progress except in dependence on the Lord.

But, Jacob still had to meet his brother Esau, who was just the other side of the ford. And he'd heard that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred armed men. He was terrified. He thought it would be the end of himself and his family and everything he had. But this is what happened, Genesis 33:1–4:

> "Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept." (NIV)

You see that beautiful picture? Here's Jacob, the man to whom belonged the birthright, the blessing, the meeting with the Lord, the whole inheritance, the man of God's choice. Coming to meet him was Esau, the carnal man, the man who despised his blessing, the man whom God couldn't accept because of his wrong attitude towards spiritual things. But when they met, Jacob, the spiritual man, bowed himself seven times before his offended brother.

What does that seven times speak of? It speaks of the Holy Spirit. It speaks of humility worked by the Holy Spirit. Jacob had learned the lesson. Pride would get him nowhere. He'd humbled himself before the angel, but that was not sufficient. Now he humbled himself before his brother and his self-humbling brought reconciliation with his brother and opened the way for him to enter safely into the inheritance that God had promised.

So we see that though God promised the inheritance, Jacob could not receive it until he humbled himself both before God and his brother.

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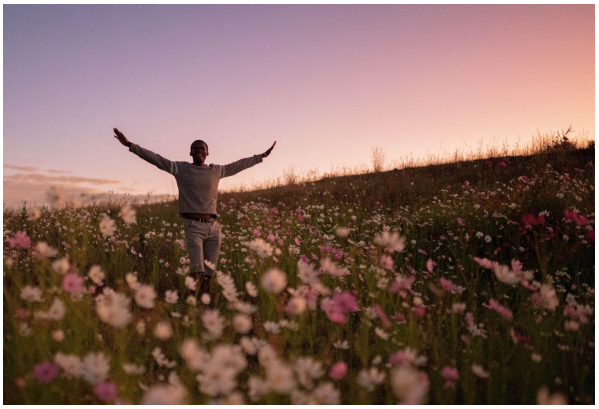

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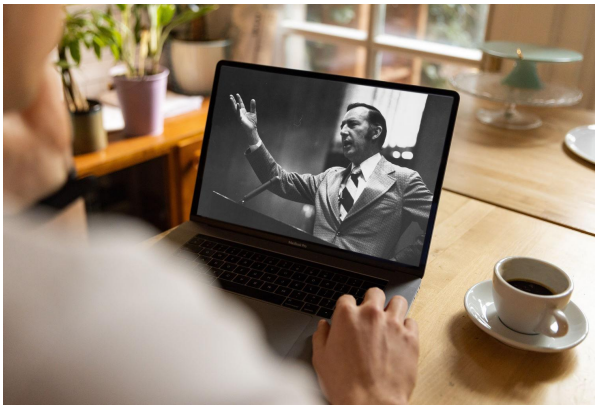

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