

Humility is a Decision



The Decision is Yours (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same in yours.

This week I'm continuing with the theme which I commenced last week: "The Decision is Yours," a theme that can revolutionize your whole outlook on life.

In my talk yesterday, I focused on the decision to forgive. And I pointed out certain things about this decision to forgive other people. First of all, in connection with prayer. Failure to forgive others blocks the answers to our prayers. Jesus gave a wonderful promise of God's willingness to answer our prayer but then He went on "...and when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him." Otherwise it will block the answer to your prayers.

Secondly, the initiative is with us, not with other people. We don't wait for other people to come up and ask for forgiveness, we forgive them freely by a decision of our own will. We don't even have to tell them that we've forgiven them. What matters is the change in our attitude.

Thirdly, the proportion in which we forgive others determines the proportion in which God forgives us. Jesus taught us to pray "...forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." In the same proportion that we have forgiven others, we can ask God, our Father, to forgive us. And I gave the example of tearing up I.O.U.'s. A debt can be represented by an I.O.U. from somebody. You may hold in your hand a whole sheaf of I.O.U.'s from some other person. They're legal, you can hold on to them, you can claim them. But God says, "Up here in heaven in My hand, I have a much bigger sheaf of much larger I.O.U.'s from you to me." Then God says, "Let's make a deal. You tear up your I.O.U.'s, I'll tear up Mine. But, if you hold on to yours, I'll hold on to Mine."

So, every one of us has to make a decision. Will I keep my I.O.U.'s? Or will I tear them up? That's not an emotion, that's a decision.

Well, today I'm going to share another example of something very important in the Christian life which comes by a decision and one which may surprise you because you probably have

never considered that this is the result of a decision. And the aspect of the Christian life that I'm speaking about is humility. I want to tell you that humility is not an emotion, it's a decision. And, once again, as with all these decisions, the initiative is with us.

Listen to what James says in his epistle in chapter 4, verse 10:

> "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

Notice, the initiative is with us, it's not with the Lord. The word of God says, "Humble yourselves..." I've heard Christians from time to time pray, "Lord, make me humble." I question whether that's a scriptural prayer because the Lord says, "Don't ask Me to do it, you do it. Humble yourself. You humble yourself. I'll lift you up. That's My side of the bargain." But the act of humbling yourself, the decision to do that, is yours.

And then this is stated more fully in 1 Peter, chapter 5, verses 5 and 6, where Peter says this, and he begins with the young men but he goes on to all believers:

> "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Notice, Peter says the same as James. He says, "Humble yourselves..." Don't ask God to do it. That's your responsibility. And he uses a very vivid metaphor which is worthwhile looking at. "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." Again, that's our responsibility. In the natural, we don't ask other people to clothe us, we see our responsibility to put our clothes on for ourselves. So it is with humility. "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another."

In the original New Testament Greek, there's a very vivid metaphor there which I would like to bring out. One of the words that's used refers to a certain garment called in Greek an enkonboma, which was a white apron worn by slaves that distinguished slaves from freemen. And so Peter says, "Put on the white apron of humility as an indication that you're a slave willing to serve your brothers and sisters." J. B. Phillips translation modernizes that and says, "Wear the overall of humility in serving each other." The "overall," the kind of garment worn by a humble workingman, not a white-collar worker, but a man who makes his living with his hands. So, whatever way you represent it, the fact is it's something we have to do. We have to take a decision, we have to adopt a certain attitude. "I'm not here to be served, I'm here to serve." Jesus said that that was what He came for. He didn't come to be served. He came to serve. We have to have the same attitude. That's the result of a decision.

When you walk into a situation you can look at it two ways: You can say, "What's in this for me? What are people going to do for me?" that's pride; or you can say, "Is there something here I can do for others? How can I help? How can I serve?" that's humility. Whichever you do, it's a decision.

You see, Galatians 5:13, speaks about the freedom that we have but how we're to use that freedom.

> "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

Humility and serving go very closely together. After all, the servant or the slave is one of the types of the humble. Paul says, "We're free in Christ, but let's be slaves. Not because we have to, not under compulsion, but because we've made a decision to serve our brother." That's the decision that expresses humility. You put on the overall. You put on the white apron, which means you are a slave. I'm not here for what I can get, I'm here for what I can give. Can I help you brother? Can I serve you? Is there anything I can do for you? That's the decision that you need to make.

I've been saying that humility is a decision and I want to take now an example from the teaching of Jesus, one of His very practical down-to-earth parables as to how to make this decision, what's involved. It's a parable about the people invited to a wedding banquet and how they should respond and conduct themselves. And in it there's the example of pride and there's the example of humility. This is what it says. Luke 14, verses 7-11:

> "When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: [Everybody wanted to sit at the high table, you see. But this is what Jesus says:] 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place,

> so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

Notice that last statement which is a principle that applies all throughout the universe. If you want to be exalted, humble yourself; but if you exalt yourself, you'll be humbled or humiliated. And notice, each alike is a decision. To humble yourself is a decision, to exalt yourself is a decision. And you'll see that Jesus illustrates it there by choosing where you will sit. When you walk into the banquet, do you look for the most honorable seat and put yourself down in it? Or do you look for the lowest place and sit there? Very obviously, that's a very simple decision: Which seat are you going to sit in? But it's a pattern of how to live. When you walk into any situation, which seat are you going to choose? The highest or the lowest? Jesus says that if you choose the highest there's only one way you can go and that's down. But likewise, if you choose the lowest, there's only one way you can go and that's up. So the decision is yours in every situation. You can aim for the highest place and be in danger of being demoted and humiliated or you can choose the lowest place and know that there's only one way you can go after that and that's up.

There's a verse by John Bunyan, which has stayed with me for many, many years. I'm not a great student of John Bunyan but this particular verse has spoken to me and continues to speak to me. Very simple, very practical, this is what it says:

> "He that is down need fear no fall,
> He that is low no pride.
> He that is humble ever shall
> Have God to be his guide."

That's a simple message really, when you're down there's no further down you can go. You're safe. How often I myself like to take that posture before God. Maybe I'm going to a meeting that I'm not sure just how it will go. I like to cast myself on my face before God and say, "God, here I am. I'm on the floor. I don't have the answers. I'm totally dependent on you. If you don't come to my help, the whole thing is going to be a failure." I feel so safe when I've taken that decision, when I've taken that place. And I always think about what Bunyan said. "He that is down need fear no fall, He that is low no pride." If you are on the floor, no one can insult you. You're un-insultable, if I can use that word. "He that is humble ever shall have God to be his guide." Remember, it's a decision. As you walk into each situation from now on, make up your mind: Are you going to go for the highest place or the lowest? May God bless you.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. My theme tomorrow will be another choice that we have to make, the choice between life and death.

Radio Program

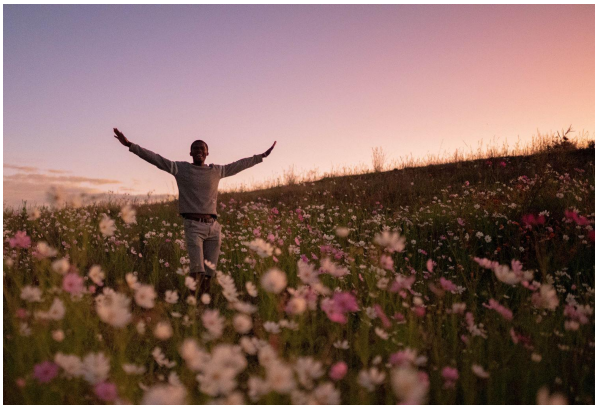
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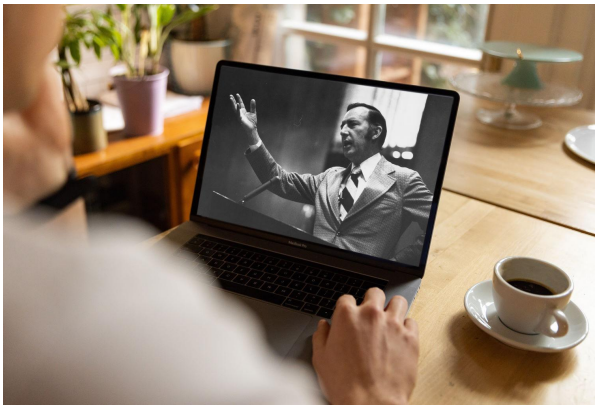
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