

Humility: Key to God's Grace



Learning by Living (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for this week: "Learning by Living." I trust you have found these practical truths helpful and inspiring and perhaps challenging, too.

In my talk yesterday I spoke about the fortresses that Satan builds in our minds; fortresses of pride, prejudice and preconception; fortresses that block the way against God's Word and so keep it from entering and imparting the light and the understanding that we need.

I explained that we have to break down these fortresses by a process of self-humbling. I would like to quote in this connection the words of James in James 1:21:

> "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

Notice the essential condition for truly receiving the Word of God is humility. Pride excludes the Word of God from those areas of our lives where we need it. So in order to receive the benefits of the Word of God, we have to cultivate humility—humility primarily toward God and toward His Word but also toward one another.

In my talk today I am going to share further about this process of self-humbling. I personally believe humility is the greatest need of most Christians and pride is the greatest danger. And I want to emphasize that in that statement I am not excluding myself. It is true of me, as it is true of you. Our greatest single danger is pride. I can tell you over the years I have seen so many Christians tripped up and stumbling and falling and coming into disaster because they yielded to pride. I want to warn you against it. And I say again, not only am I saying these words to each one of you, I am saying them to myself.

I want to read from 1 Peter 5:5–6:

> "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because [now Peter quotes from the Book

> of Psalms:] '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."

I would like also to read Phillips' translation of those two verses:

> "You younger members must also submit to the elders. Indeed all of you should defer to one another and wear the 'overall' of humility in serving each other. God is always against the proud, but he is always ready to give grace to the humble. [I want to read that sentence again,] God is always against the proud, but he is always ready to give grace to the humble."

You see, if you are proud God is against you. Now that is a disastrous situation. So Phillips goes on:

> "So humble yourselves under God's strong hand, and in his own good time he will lift you up."

There is a phrase there that I want to explain a little. It says in the version I read first, "...clothe yourselves with humility." Phillips says, "...wear the 'overall' of humility." The Greek phrase that is used means to put on a certain kind of apron which was worn only by slaves. So anybody who wore that apron indicated openly he was a slave. The New Testament is saying put on this apron of humility and let everybody see you are a slave. You see? Immediately, anybody putting on such an apron had put themselves at, so to say, a lower level than the people around them.

So it is something that you do. It is something that can be seen, it is visible. You see, both pride and humility stick out.

And then I want to point out to you that God's grace is only for the humble. You want God's grace? You have to learn to be humble. God does not give grace to the clever, the correct, or the famous unless they are also humble.

And thirdly, I want to point out to you that humility proceeds from our own decision and action. Humility is not an emotion. You do not have to feel humble. I do not even know what it would be like to feel humble. I will tell you what you have to do: you have to "will" humble. You have to make a decision and follow it up by action, like the person who made the decision to put on the slave's apron and then put it on.

There are a number of really powerful Scriptures about this, especially in the book of Proverbs. I will just read two. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." A lot of people quote that wrong. They say, "Pride goes before a fall." But it is not so. Pride goes before destruction.

And then in Proverbs 18:12: "Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor." I understand that to mean that if ever a person has a downfall, the root cause is pride. The word "destruction" is related to the Hebrew word for "breaking." I have seen so many Christians, many of them leaders, who had to be broken because they had yielded to pride.

Jesus sums it up by a universal principle in Luke 14:11:

> "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now that applies throughout the universe. Do you want to be exalted? You know what you have to do? Humble yourself. You have to do it. Do not ask God to make you humble, it is not scriptural. God can humiliate you, He might have to, but only you can make yourself humble. It is a decision followed by action.

I have been pointing out to you that humility is achieved by a decision followed by the appropriate action. Jesus Himself illustrates this in one of His parables about the banquet. In Luke 14:7–10, it says this:

> "When Jesus noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: '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.'"

You see, I pointed out, it is a decision followed by action. So picture yourself walking into that banquet, there is the high table, where all the people of distinguished distinction and honor are going to be sitting and there is the other tables, and there is one right in the corner, far away from the high table. Now you have got a choice, you can walk up to the high table and sit there, or you can walk to that little table in the corner and sit there, it is your decision. But Jesus points out that if you put yourself at the high table and you do not belong there, your are going to have an embarrassing

experience. Whereas if you sit at the low table, there is only one way you can go and that is up. That is why it is so safe to humble yourself.

You see I believe this forward to that last great banquet which is spoken of in Revelation 19:9 where the angel said:

> "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"

You see I think this has a application which goes beyond time into eternity. This same picture is given by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs 25:6–7:

> "Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; For it is better that it be said to you, 'Come up here,' than you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, when your eyes have seen him."

You understand, the banquet is going to begin when the prince walks in. But meanwhile, everybody has seated himself. I think that is a picture of that great banquet that is going to be held in heaven. And I think in a certain sense we can take our place now and then one day our eyes will see the prince when he walks in.

You see what I am saying? Jesus spoke about the same thing in Luke 13:29–30:

> "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

You see what he is saying? Some people will have seated themselves at the high table, will be moved down. Some people will have seated themselves at the low table, will be moved up. Let me share with you a decision I have made: I want to seat myself at the low table now, so that when the banquet actually begins and the prince walks in, there is only one way I can be moved and that is up.

See I think there are going to be a lot of shocks in that day. A lot of men and women who've esteemed themselves very highly and considered themselves particularly distinguished as God's servants are going to be told to move to the lower table. And humble dedicated, sweet servants of God who nobody ever heard about in this world are going to be moved to the top table. That is, to me, so vivid.

I would like to close with the words of John Bunyan, which I love so much and quote so often, this little poem which really says it all:

> "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."

Do you want God to be your guide? Do you want God to give you grace? Then humble yourself. God guarantees the result.

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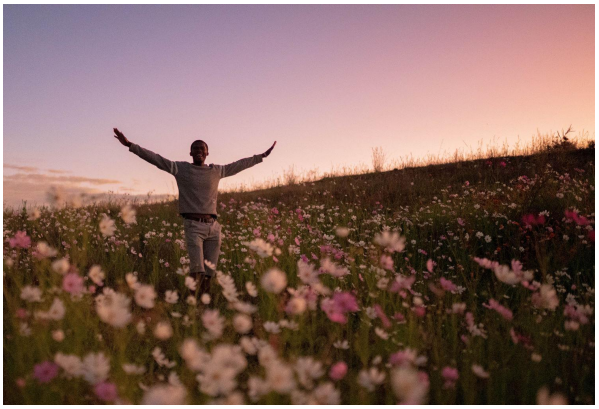

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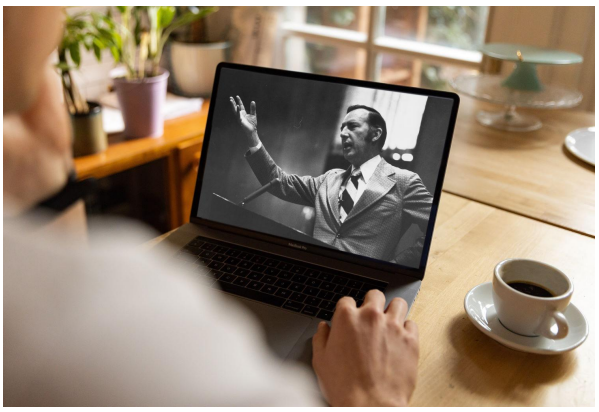

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