

## Humble Yourself

*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another, and said: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.*

*So I said: "Woe is me! for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."*

**Isaiah 6:1-8**

Picture the Christian life as a long corridor. At the end of the corridor is the most beautiful, sweet light you can imagine – the radiance of the glory of Christ. And as you walk down this corridor approaching this light, you have to unlock certain glass doors. Each of these doors is a part of Christian character – like virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, patience, forgiveness, kindness, love.

As you keep walking, you unlock the frosted glass doors, and the light of the glory of God becomes clearer and more beautiful as you keep approaching it. That's like the Christian life – as you grow in Christlikeness, God's glory will seem ever nearer and more real and more beautiful to you. But, in our allegory of the Christian life – what is the key that keeps unlocking each of the doors? What is the name of the key that we keep using to obtain these aspects of Christ, and draw nearer to Him?

The answer is *humility*. Humility is the key, because humility is the root out of which all other things in the Christian life flow. It is always the starting point. The reason is simple – humility is where we are completely in touch with reality. Pride is called being 'puffed up' – over-inflated. Humility is where we are in a state to truly know God. Humility allows God to be God in our life.

Why is pride the core of sin? Pride says, 'I AM.' 'I can have my own way.' 'I am not so bad after all.' 'I do not need, I can make it on my own.' Pride resists the grace of God by imagining itself to be self-sufficient, self-righteous, with life centred round it.

Humility is where we break out of this self-imposed fantasy world, and see reality as it really is. That's why it is the key that unlocks the doors. It is only when we are humble that God's grace can flow to us. When we are humble, we can enjoy God and love others. The proud man can neither enjoy God nor love others, because pride insists on enjoying self and loving self.

How do I become humble? I cannot become humble by myself. My pride will keep getting in the way.

There are two big perils of striving for humility:

- Trying to appear humble, instead of being humble.
- Being humble for our own sake instead of to know God.

I need the work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word of God to show me myself, and to show me God. The reaction will be humility.

We see this in the account of Isaiah seeing God's glory in chapter 6 of his book.

### **To be humble, we must be honest**

Isaiah cries out, "*Woe is me! I am undone*"—I am lost, I am ruined. He then gives the reason — "*I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.*" The prophet saying his lips are unclean! Was Isaiah crying out that he was undone and unclean all the time? No. What made him do this? It was his vision of the glory of God.

Notice Isaiah says, "*Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*" This is the reason for his honesty. He did not come to this understanding of himself by being extra tough on himself, or by being extra-diligent in self-examination. The reason is, without the light of the glory of God, you will not see yourself any more clearly. You can stare at yourself in a mirror in a dark room for three hours, and you will not be able to know what you look like, until light is added.

Isaiah comes to recognise the truth about himself. He is not being too hard on himself; he is realising his true state before God. This happened to anyone who saw the glory of God in the Bible. It happened to Ezekiel, Peter, and John.

The resulting contrast will humble you. You will see Supremacy, and be lowly. You will see Sufficiency, and be dependent. You will see Sovereignty, and you will submit. You will see Sinlessness, and you will repent. Seeing who God is, and who you truly are, will cause you to get into the right place.

Think about an everyday situation such as being in the presence of someone who knows more than you, is more athletic, more talented, etc. What is the resulting feeling? You feel smaller because of the contrast. That is the experience, multiplied by an infinite amount, when we start to see who God is, and who we are by comparison.

Spurgeon in his sermon *Pride and Humility*, said, "Humility is to make a right estimate of one's self. It is no humility for a man to think less of himself than he ought." It is not thinking less of ourselves than we actually are, nor always talking about our faults and shortcomings. It is simply recognition of the truth about ourselves, in light of the glory of God.

Where is our experience of seeing the glory of God? We see the glory of God when we prayerfully read the Bible:

- We must hear and believe what God says about us.
- We must hear and believe, and see, who God is.

*The place of the Word of God is to show us ourselves, and to show us God.*

### **To be humble, we must be hopeful**

If humility was only the truth about ourselves in comparison to God, we would be broken and discouraged. To just feel deeply convicted over sin, or terribly small in comparison to God, or terribly helpless without Him, or terribly directionless without His guidance, wouldn't be an enjoyable experience. If humility stopped here, it would not help anyone.

But our God is not that way. He wants us to be humbled so we can get in touch with reality and be honest and real. But He does not want us discouraged or disheartened. If God had left Isaiah crying out, *“Woe is me,”* he would not have gone on to love and serve the Lord.

That’s why what God did next is the next part of humility: *“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged’ (Isaiah 6:6-7).*

God gives Isaiah hope through His mercy. He takes a coal off the altar, representing the place of atonement, and cleanses his sin. Isaiah has just been acutely aware of how sinful he is, and how unworthy he is to live before this holy God. But God, in love, applies mercy – “Don’t fear, I am with you, I am for you, I have forgiven you.”

Out of the brokenness of seeing God and seeing ourselves, we are to lift our faces to the sunrise of His love. Out of the contrition is to come hope.

Humility embraces what God said He would do and be toward the humble and repentant one. Therefore, humility approaches, it does not withdraw. Humility is glad, not overwhelmingly sad. Humility might be broken, but it is still motivated to come by the promise of love. Humility has dropped the merit scheme, and is going on faith in grace. Therefore it trusts and anticipates.

The place of the Word of God is to **show us God’s love and His promises**, by prayerfully reading and meditating on God’s attitude toward us in Christ.

But humility must still go further. We are on our way to humility when we are honest before God and man. We are nearly there when we are embracing biblical hope – that God will do for us what He said He would. But humility consummates and comes to fruition with action.

### **To be humble, we must be hungry**

If Isaiah had simply come to see his true state, and then felt glad over God’s mercy, it would not have moved him further down the path of knowing and loving His God. God wants this honesty and this hope to result in something: in action, in obedience, in love – *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then said I, ‘Here am I; send me’ (Isaiah 6:8).*

Isaiah heard God asking, ‘Who will do my will? Who will be my representative?’ And filled with humble honesty, and humble hope, he eagerly volunteers. He is now desirous, hungry to see God more, to serve Him.

Honesty gets us off our self-sufficient pride and reveals to us how much we need God. Hope assures us that He does want to meet our need. Hunger then pursues God with all our might so as to come to love Him and glorify Him.

Humility feels its needs so acutely that it pursues the Source with passion. Humility makes no pretensions to want anything but the satisfaction of its soul. Humility, having recognised the truth about itself, and the truth about God, and His promises to those who pursue, pursues God vigorously.

Spiritual laziness and indifference is usually a sign of pride.

**False ideas of humility** include being passive, being reserved, shy, retiring, or demure, and being inactive. By contrast, the humblest men in the Bible were always the most passionate men, the ones

following hard after God, seeking to know and love Him with the whole heart. Because the more humble we are, the hungrier we are for God.

*The place of the Word of God, in the pursuit of God, is feeding our souls and reminding us to love wholeheartedly.*

This is what it adds up to:

- **To be humble we need to be honest** – that is, to truly see ourselves in light of whom God is. We cannot do that apart from a vital relationship with the Word of God.
- **To be humble, we must be hopeful**, otherwise we will sink into despair and discouragement. But we cannot build our hope on the promises of God, unless we are reading them in a vital relationship with the Word of God.
- **To be humble we must be hungry**. But unless we first taste and see that the Lord is good, we will not have more appetite. Unless we see our need, unless we see His inviting arms, we will not come with hunger. Unless we are in the Word of God where it tells us to pursue God with our whole heart, we will not do it. And so we will not find grace from the Holy Spirit to do so.

### **The rewards and blessings of being humble**

Humility is the soil out of which all of our Christian life grows. It is the key that unlocks grace. God gives grace to the humble. Only in humility do we know and enjoy God. Only in humility do we become like Christ. And the Bible promises that humility brings exaltation:

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.*

**James 4:10**

*By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honour and life.*

**Proverbs 22:4**

We cannot love, we cannot learn, we cannot enjoy any of the blessings of the Christian life, as long as we have 'I trouble.' The only remedy for 'I trouble' is God-given humility. It comes from exposure to the Word of God. A person's humility is directly proportional to their relationship with the Word of God – hearing it, believing it, praying, and obeying.

When we do not open God's Word, when we do not come to hear it preached, we reveal pride. The more we seek the glory of God in His Word, the more we will find true humility, and so come to love Him.