

Humility is not popular

“I live in a high and holy place, but also with him
who is contrite and lowly in spirit,”
Isaiah 57:15 (NIV)

Two preachers were in an argument on which had the better sermon on humility. One was clearly getting the best of the argument. Finally, in exasperation, the other preacher said, “Well you may have a better sermon on humility, but I can preach it better than you.”

The scene may cause us to laugh but it is certainly clear that neither preacher really understood the spirit of humility, regardless of any merits their sermons had. It is certainly difficult to speak about humility without the risk of sounding proud yourself.

So often in the Christian church we talk a lot about what qualifies a person for service. However, we rarely speak about what disqualifies a person from serving the Lord acceptably. Regardless of how gifted the individual, the presence of pride is the death knell to effective service for the Saviour.

A great paradox of humility is that those who have it are not aware of its presence in their lives. People who believe themselves humble are desperately proud. Pride was the way that

Satan tempted our first parents. He appealed to their sense of personal identity and how they would be like God if they ate the forbidden fruit.

Jesus spoke of Himself as being “meek and lowly of heart”, and that is the spirit in which all of us should serve the Lord Jesus. Our lives should be lived for the good and benefit of others and not ourselves. We sometimes speak of “self serving activity”. By this we mean that the person’s “activity” is purely for their own benefit.

What is the way forward in our search for this much needed trait of humility? I regret to say that one of the most efficient ways God has for creating humility in us is through the furnace of affliction. In Psalm 119:67,71,75, we read, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word...It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees...in faithfulness you have afflicted me.” (NIV)

Trials in life are the lessons to teach us humility. Often we speak of a difficulty humbling us. By that we mean that the problem has caused us to see

that we are not self sufficient and we are not able to meet life’s alternatives with our own resources.

It has been well said that trials make us bitter. We either submit to our sovereign Lord’s unsearchable purposes or else we will curse Him and depart from Him. In this life we shall not know all the reasons why our Creator leads us home on the path of adversity. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:12 “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully...” (NIV)

Submitting to our heavenly Father’s unsearchable ways is always difficult, yet with the grace of humility it is indeed possible. Humility is certainly unpopular, but oh how it strengthens us to continue to run the race set before us. Also, and most important, it is the humble to whom God comes and makes their home, His home.

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