

A HUMBLE AND CONTRITE HEART

Luke 14:11 tells us, "*For whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.*" These are the words that Jesus spoke one day as He was invited to the home of one of the Pharisees on a Sabbath

to "break bread." Present were many other religious leaders. Who was to sit where was the issue that Jesus then used to bring forth a very valuable teaching to His disciples, those religious leaders, as well as for all of us listen and learn from, today.

Even though Jesus had some of His greatest disputes with the Pharisees, in the early stages of His ministry, they would invite Him into their house. At this particular time, early in His ministry, He was still able to associate with the religious leaders. He desired to teach them that they needed to turn from their "religious ways" and simply turn to God.

In this instance Jesus goes into a teaching of the person who "humbles" themselves. He tells them that the person who truly humbles themselves will be exalted. Humility in the Bible is a profound virtue that emphasizes a heart attitude of **lowliness and a total dependence on God**. It is not merely about modesty or a lack of arrogance; but rather, **it involves recognizing one's need for God and then submitting to His will**. The Greek term for humility translates to "lowliness of mind" which translates into a person's behavior and lifestyle, indicating that true humility is a matter of the heart, not just outward behavior

The Bible describes humility as meekness, lowliness, and a total absence of self. The Greek word translated "humility" in Colossians 3:12 and elsewhere literally means "**lowliness of mind**." So, we see that humility is a heart attitude, not merely an outward demeanor. One may put on an outward show of humility but still have a heart full of pride and arrogance. That is not good and it is deceitful!!!

When we come to Jesus, we must recognize that we all come as sinners. No one is worthy to be called a child of God. We must come to our God in true humility. We must acknowledge that we are beggars who come to Him with nothing to offer but our sinful selves and we recognize our need for salvation.

We recognize our lack of any good works that could bring us into right relationship with God. We understand our complete inability to save ourselves from eternal destruction. That is to be the true attitude of the person's heart when they come to accept and receive Jesus as their Savior. Yes, we must recognize that we are a sinner and that we cannot make it to heaven based on anything we have done or will do.

Then... when our God offers His grace and mercy, we truly accept it. We recognize that it is nothing that we have done or could have done to earn or to "make" ourselves "saved." It is only in humble gratitude and thankfulness that we now choose to commit our lives to Him, as well as to also now share His love that He has given to each of us with others.

We truly "die to self" so that we can live now as "new creations" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We must never forget that He has exchanged our sinful worthlessness for His infinite worth. He exchanges our sin for His righteousness. The life we now live, we are to live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). That is true humility.

God has promised to give grace to the humble but He will oppose the proud. Proverbs 3:5-8 tells us, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."*

"Be not wise in your own eyes." Wow!!! that is a "mouthful." Being wise in our own eyes is the basis for pride and arrogance. It is all based within you. The definition of pride is as follows: It is empty and braggart talk; an insolent and empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources and shamefully despises and violates divine laws and human rights; an impious and empty presumption which trusts in the stability of self and earthly things. We all know the scripture, *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."* (Proverbs 16:18)

Humility/humbleness is the direct opposite of pride. 1Peter 5:5-8 tells us, *"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you."*

True humility is seeing ourselves as we truly are, fallen in sin and helpless without God... But God... Yes, our God has saved us from our sin. We did not do anything. Jesus did it all. The only thing we did or can do is to recognize that we needed to be saved from eternal damnation and then we cried out to God who then gave us His love through His grace and mercy which then gives us “peace” with Him. We are “set at one” with our God. That is what Jesus did for us on that cross and in His resurrection.

In Philippians 2:3-11, Paul put it very clearly to us. He writes, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have **the same mindset as Christ Jesus**: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Notice, Jesus humbled Himself and God exalted Him. We are to be just like Jesus in the area of being humble. Jesus, who was God, exemplified humility throughout His life by serving others, submitting to the Father's will, and ultimately sacrificing Himself on the cross for all of humanity's sins. His humility was the perfect model for how we should now live our lives in submission to God's Word and His will. In His humility, He was exalted by the Father.

2Chronicles 7:14 tells us, *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* A true heart of humility allows God to hear our prayers. As we seek His face and turn from the wicked things we did, God will forgive and heal, not just the land we live in, but also His people—those who call upon the Name of the Lord and accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

If we notice, in the scriptures, the words “humble” and “contrite” are used side by side many times. That is because they go hand in hand. Many times we forget that fact. Today, believers many times, unfortunately, think to be “above it all. Oh, we remember that Jesus has given us new life but we tend to forget that this new life is now to be a life that has a **humble and a contrite heart**. Unfortunately, many believers forget that these days.

The Bible speaks often of a contrite heart. In Isaiah 66:2, the Lord says, “*These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are **humble and contrite in spirit**, and who tremble at my word.*” In Psalm 51:17, David writes, “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a **broken and contrite heart**, O God, you will not despise.*” Contrition is spoken of as something God desires in the lives of his people. It is linked in these verses and others, to humility, brokenness, and a healthy fear of knowing and believing God’s Word.

So what exactly does it mean to be “contrite?” The definition of contrite or contrition is: to crush into powder, to be crushed, to be broken, to be crushed, collapse, to be crushed, be contrite, be broken. In other words everything of self needs to be “pulverized.”

The International Bible Encyclopedia states, “A contrite heart is one in which the natural pride and self-sufficiency have been completely humbled by the consciousness of guilt.” The Hebrew and Greek words often translated “contrite” actually mean “crushed, crippled, or broken.” When the Bible speaks of being “contrite of heart,” we get the picture of a conscience that is crushed by the weight of its own guilt. A “contrite heart” offers no excuses and shifts no blame. It takes full responsibility for its wrongful behavior.

A contrite heart throws itself upon the mercy of God, knowing that it deserves nothing but God’s righteous wrath. This heart then truly repents and turns toward their God to seek His grace and His mercy which will be the only thing that will give them true peace – being set at one again with God. That is the love of God.

Jesus illustrates what a contrite heart looks like in Luke 18:10–14. The humble repentance that God desires is contrasted with self-righteousness in the parable of “The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.” The eloquent prayer of the “proudful” Pharisee did not reach the heart of God, but the humble cry of the repentant sinner, a tax collector, brought forgiveness. They both needed mercy, but only the contrite heart was in a position to receive it.

A contrite heart does not take the forgiveness of God for granted. It is grieved over its own sin and what that sin cost the Son of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are humbled by that fact. That Jesus gave His life for you, me, everyone.

Isaiah 57:15, tells us, “*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, **with him** also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, **to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.***”

Yes, our God “revives” the spirit of those who choose to humble themselves under His mighty hand. He “revives” the heart of those who are contrite before Him. In other words He gives new life to those who choose to walk in true humility; those that recognize that they are nothing without the true and living God. That person’s spirit is born again. It is given new life. The truly humble person before God will become a new creation – a born again child of God.

That new creation will also be given a renewed or revived heart of contrition. They will always recognize their need for God. They will want to share that Good News with others so that then others will be able to receive that new life and new heart by accepting Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

This aspect of humility and being contrite before our God never ceases in the life of the true believer. The Bible is very clear in the New Testament where the writers speak of the attitude of heart that should be in every believers heart – humility and contrition. We must always recognize that we are absolutely nothing without our God.

Unfortunately, in many of today’s churches, that idea has been put aside. It has become “all about us.” Or, it is all about the power that we have now. Or it is all about what we can now do because we are believers. These things are not necessarily incorrect. But...they could be a little out of step or out of place in many churches and lives of believers, today.

Humility and contrition have been placed on the back burners for many ministries. However, for the true child of God, it should be up front in every aspect of their life. We must understand that humbleness, humility and contrition are not weaknesses. If understood correctly under the leading of the Holy Spirit by the believer, it is an aspect of true strength - spiritual strength.

Throughout the New Testament, we see many believers doing the wonderful works of God. However, the only difference was that they did these works for no other reason than to be a starting point to present the Good News of salvation to those that they did these works to. The main emphasis was salvation, not the works and not themselves. Hmmm.....

This was what Jesus constantly had to overcome. People would come to Him because He would bring physical healing to the people, and not necessarily for the message He was trying to bring to them which was that they really needed to turn to God. They needed their spirit to be made brand new and to become a new creation – a child of God.

If we look into the Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus was constantly aware of this and it was upsetting to Him. He came for the purpose of bringing people back into true relationship with their God, not just to heal their bodies. He came for their spirit to be made brand new – born again. Which means that our spirit is dead. We need Jesus to give us a born again, brand new spirit which is now alive to God. Praise the Lord!!!

That is where true humbleness is priority within every believers life. We need to have the same attitude that Jesus had. He walked in total humility and humbleness. He already had a contrite heart because He was God and always wanted to walk with His Father. We must always remember that it is never about me but it is all about Jesus and getting people saved and being brought into relationship with their God.

As we stated earlier, 1Peter 5:6 tells us, "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time...*" James 4:10 gives a similar message as he implores every true believer to, "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*" If we humble ourselves before our God, He will lift us up above every trial or situation that comes our way. Why? So that we can give Him all the honor, all the glory, all the praise.

Humility, which to the world may seem to be the lowest of lows, will ultimately bring us up to the highest of places, into the presence of God. We must get off the "its all about me" attitude. We must stop trying to make ourselves look good to others if it causes us to go against the life that God desires us to live.

We must return to the lifestyle of living in true humility and contrition. It doesn't mean that we are to live like monks hidden away. Quite the contrary. We are to walk boldly in this world and in our lives but with the attitude of heart of knowing that humility, contrition and humbleness are very powerful tools that we are to use to live the life that our God desires us to live.

Remember, this world will soon pass away. The real world is the Kingdom of God, Heaven, and ultimately, the New Jerusalem. We are just passing through until that day comes when we all get to heaven. Let us live our lives, truly the way God intends us to live – in true humility and humbleness with a contrite heart. It is only then will we be lifted up and exalted by our God!!!