

Joy for the Journey (3): Humble Joy

(Romans 12:3)

I. Introduction

- A. We didn't sing "*Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*" (or "*At the Cross*") correctly
1. Oh, we sang it like it is in the book, but not the way Isaac Watts wrote it
 - a. We sang v. 1, "*Would he devote that sacred head for such a one as I?*"
 - 1) Watts wrote, "*Would he devote that sacred head for such a WORM as I.*"
 - 2) Someone decided our self-esteem couldn't handle being a "worm"
 - b. Some of some people took issue with John Newton calling us a "wretch" (Re-edit was "*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved and set me free*")
 - c. We could change *I Need Thee Every Hour* to *He Needs Me Every Hour*
 2. The problem here is NOT one of changing the lyrics of traditional hymns. (My favorite is Crum's redux of *When We All Get to Heaven* as *When the Saved Get to Heaven*)
 - a. The problem isn't changing hymns but changing the focus of Christianity
 - 1) The focus is God, on "*His eternal power & divine nature*" ([Rom 1:20](#))
 - 2) Worship must focus our attention on God; worship is not about us
 - 3) We **are** worms without God– "*where the worm dieth not*" ([Mk 9:48](#))
 - b. I don't know about worm, but Paul saw himself as a "wretch" ([Rom 7:24](#))
What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?
 - 1) Only other time that Greek word is used is about Laodicea ([Rev 3:17](#))
*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are **wretched**, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*
 - 2) Wouldn't sing *Amazing Grace* or *At the Cross*– *not a wretch or worm!*
 - 3) They had great self-esteem, but were wretched, pitiful, poor, blind
 - c. **Point:** We will never see God as he is until we see ourselves as we are
- B. Seeing ourselves as we are demands that we avoid the temptation of pride
1. The Bible is full of warnings against the sin of pride, arrogance and conceit
 - a. Pride led to 1st sin, "*will be like God, knowing good and evil*" ([Gen 3:5](#))
 - b. Moses warns Israel that their pride would led away from God ([Deut 8:14](#))
 - c. Proverb after proverb warns us about pride ([Proverbs 15:25](#), [16:5](#), [21:4](#))
 - d. Before a church can have unity, it must avoid all pride ([Rom 12:16](#))
 - e. John warns that the way of pride is the way of the world ([1 John 2:16](#))

2. **Bible Principle:** The proud will be humbled and visa-versa (**Prov 3:34**)
He mocks proud mockers, but gives grace to the humble. Picked up all over the Bible—
- a. **First**, this is the principle of how I am to act toward God (**James 4:6**)
God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble
- 1) This launches James into a call to humility and repentance (**4:7-9**)
⁷ *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.*
 - 2) This sounds more like worms-n-wretches than gospel of self-esteem!
 - 3) We must see that we are lost without God—no SAVED w/o LOST
 - a) He calls us to grieve, mourn and wail (“*blessed are those who mourn*”)
 - b) We must wash hands/purify heart (“*hunger-n-thirst for righteousness*”)
 - 4) It’s not about us, but about God, and us seeing it is about God (**4:10**)
¹⁰ *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*
- b. **Second**, it’s the principle of how we’re to act toward others (**1 Pt 5:5-6**)
All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.
- 1) He speaks to men of church—elders and youngers (*which one am I?*)
 - a) The overriding characteristic of leaders and followers is HUMILITY
 - b) If we are humble before God, then we will be humble with each other
 - 2) We cannot live or work as a church if everyone is looking out for #1
- C. This “proud will be humble” idea must be important— *it just keeps coming up!*
1. In fact, this is one of those sermons that Jesus preaches in different settings
 - a. The conclusion to the prayer of Pharisee and Publican (**Luke 18:14**)
¹⁴ *“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*
 - b. Application of the story on choosing seats at a banquet (**Luke 14:11**)
For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted
 - c. Jesus final word before launching into “Woes” on Pharisee (**Matt 23:12**)
For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
 2. How could God possibly stress this more clearly? **Print it all in red?**
 - a. If we are going to get the gospel focused right, it can’t be focused on us
 - 1) We must humble ourselves BEFORE God, and he will lift us up
 - 2) We must humble our selves WITH each other, and God will lift us up
 - b. **Obvious Question:** What does it mean to humble ourselves before God?

II. Humble Yourself in the Sight of the Lord

A. Humility is seeing ourselves in an honest and realistic way (**Rom 12:3**)

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

1. Paul discusses the gifts God gives to church—same body, but not same gifts
 - a. God gives each of us gifts like teaching, encouraging, giving & leadership
 - b. Each of us are to use our gifts in order to bless others and to serve God
 - 1) What we can't do is think that we are more valuable because of gift
 - 2) So he begins by warning us not to think more high of ourselves
 - c. Gifts, spiritual and material, are from God—don't let it go to your head
2. Humility is seeing self “*with sober judgment*” in relation to God and man
 - a. Humility isn't putting ourselves down; it's keeping self under control
 - b. Humility is not a self-consciousness, fear or a timidity to act (**2 Tim 1:7**)
For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
 - 1) Sometimes what looks like humility is fear— of failure or rejection
 - 2) This self-consciousness is really just another kind of self-obsession

B. True humility in the Biblical sense begins with God and our relationship to Him

1. **First**, we see ourselves personally as created in the image of God
 - a. **Gen 1:26-27** twice says we are created in “image” and “likeness” of God
 - 1) The word “*image*” is same Hebrew word usually translated “*idol*.”
 - 2) The word “*likeness*” is used of a builder's blueprints (**2 Kings 16:10**)
 - b. Our self-identity begins with seeing that we were made to look like God
 - c. That is basis of humility-- every other person is made to be like God too!
 - 1) To live my value or worth above another is to disdain God's creation
 - 2) The same thing that makes me valuable also makes you valuable!
2. **Second**, we also see ourselves as fallen because of our sin choice
 - a. Why don't men and women look more like a crowning jewel of creation?
 - 1) I could give examples from headlines of depraved human behavior
 - 2) But I don't have to do that; those examples are all around us
 - b. We don't look like God's image because of sin—we are broken by sin
 - c. We exchanged the glory of God's creation for our way, for sin (**Jer 2:11**)
But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.

- d. That should be the most humbling statement I can make—we are fallen
 - 1) Rather than humbled by brokenness, we compare ourselves to others
 - 2) Sure, nobody is perfect, but I'm way more perfect than you are
 - a) Jesus calls the high and holy Pharisees as white-washed tombs. Why?
 - b) They were more holy than some... but forgot they weren't holy at all
 - 3) All sinner can do is to compare the size of piles of rags (**Isa 64:6**)
 - ⁶*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*
- e. Once we accept the fact that we are sinners, the playing field is leveled
- 3. **Third**, we see that the true goodness that is in us comes from God
 - a. The good in us is a blessing from God and spark of His deity (**1 Cor 4:7**)
 - ⁷*For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*
 - 1) I am humbled when I realize that the good in me is really from God
 - 2) I'm not better or more valuable than others, I am just blessed by God
 - b. Stephen Curtis Chapman's song "*Miracle of Mercy*" starts with words
 - If the truth was known and a light was shown on every hidden part of my soul*
 - Most would turn away, shake their head and say he still has such a long way to go*
 - If the truth was know you'd see that the only good in me Is Jesus, oh it's Jesus*
 - c. If you really know me... but when you see something good, it's all Jesus!

III. Conclusion

- A. True humility is not training ourselves to think of ourselves as worthless idiots
 - 1. True humility is coming to see God and our status in relationship to him
 - a. We are created in his image and are of great worth (*as is everyone else*)
 - b. We've sinned against Him and continue to do so (*as does everyone else*)
 - c. We have been blessed by Him and are loved by Him (*as is everyone else*)
 - 2. When we see ourselves in the eyes of God, it sharpens our focus on others
- B. We're calling series "*Joy for the Journey*." Contrast joy and selfish happiness
 - 1. There is a sense in which the happiness of the world is a zero-sum deal
 - a. If happiness comes from me getting my own way, then what about you?
 - b. The happier I get, then the more unhappy someone else must become
 - 2. On the other hand, God's joy found in humility is self-replicating
 - 3. The more joy I find in relationship with God, more I can share w/ others.