

Revolution – Love is Humble

11/15/20

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Sunday AM

Mo-Ali was a great boxer – he also was renowned for his cocky quick-wit – saying things like – *I float like a butterfly and sting like a bee*, and – *It is hard to be humble when you're as great as I am*. My fav – *I should be a postage stamp. That's the only way I'll ever get licked*. The day finally arrived when someone got the best of him. Just before takeoff one day, a flight attendant asked Ali to fasten his seat belt. He smarted off – *Superman don't need no seat belt*. The attendant replied – *Superman don't need no airplane either*.

If you're just joining us, we're in a series entitled, **Love Revolution** – looking at the *agape* love Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 13 that God puts in us thru the H.S. so that He can love others the way He loves us.

agape love refers to a self-sacrificing or God-inspired love – and this is the kind of love God gave to us thru Christ and He expects us to give to others in Christ.

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, **it does not boast, it is not proud**. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices w/ the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails... Now these (3) remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Here in **1 Corinthians 13**, Paul explains what *agape* love is when it's set into motion. Today, we're going to look at (2) phrases that speak to *agape* humility – *love does not boast* and *it is not proud*.

In these phrases, Paul was saying *agape* love isn't prideful but humble – never thinking more highly of oneself than we ought, but thinking rightly of oneself.

Of course, **pride is the opposite of humility** – always seeking for self, lusting for more, and thinking I am better than others – more deserving, more capable, more, more, more. Always at the center of pride is "I".

Pride is a spiritual cancer that eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense. C.S. Lewis

Pride is the carbon monoxide of sin – it silently and slowly kills you w/out you even knowing. *Keller*

It reminds me of the pastor who received a card from a lady in his church complimenting his preaching and comparing him to Billy Graham. At the close of the letter, she wrote, "I think you're one of the greatest preachers of all time." Later, the pastor proudly showed the card to his wife. She asked, "Who is this woman?" He said, "Obviously, a very bright woman in the church who loves great preaching!" He then asked his wife, "How many great preachers do you suppose there really are in the world?" To which his wife replied, "Apparently, one less than you think!"

Here's the thing about pride – it is always *me-deep* into itself, unconcerned about anyone else.

I DEFINING Humility

humility isn't putting yourself down as much as it is *elevating others before yourself* and not thinking of yourself at all. Humility is not about you!

I think Martin Luther was onto something when he said – *God created the world from nothing; so long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us too.*

Why? Its b/c humility realizes that all it has and is has been generously given to us by God. So, no matter how great our talents/gifts, everything we are is the result of His blessing. In *agape* love, humility shines b/c it remembers who we were before grace found us and where we'd be now apart from His grace.

To be fair – humility is a tough concept to grasp b/c it goes against our human nature. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, the idea of humility was so despised there didn't even have a word for it, and yet Scripture is clear that humility is **the greatest, most essential quality a person can possess** – meekness, kindness, gentleness, and selflessness all wrapped into one. *We are never more like Jesus than when we're humble.*

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality w/ God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave being born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-8

Humility honestly recognizes our insufficiency while seeing ourselves/others thru God's sufficiency.

II REFINING Humility

How does a person discover/experience humility?

A The Humble SEEK God

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. Isaiah 55:6-8

The most essential activity in developing humility is drawing close and submitting to God. The closer we get to Him, and the more our lives are pressed against His nature/character – we are more likely to realize how big He is and how small we are, how holy and righteous He is and how sinful/fallen we are; and how much we need Him. We see this all thru Scripture, from Abe, to Moses, to Isaiah, to Paul – when a person truly sees themselves for who they are in light of who He is, it has a profound effect on them.

There was a day when I died; died to self, my opinions, preferences, and will; died to the world; its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren or friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God. George Mueller

B The Humble SERVE Others

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:26

Humility isn't measured by our attitudes, but by our actions – especially in how we engage w/ other people. Humility treats others better than the way they want to be treated thru gracious, forgiving, kind service.

Two of the greatest preachers of 18th Century were John Wesley/George Whitfield and yet they disagreed greatly over a point of doctrine. Whitfield was a Calvinist, while Wesley leaned Armenian, believing man has to choose to accept Jesus to be saved. Their disagreement/debate was a matter of public record. Once a reporter wanting to stir up the religious debate, asked Whitfield if he expected to see Wesley in heaven? Whitfield said, "I don't expect to see Wesley in heaven." To which the reporter gleefully wrote down those words knowing it'd fan the controversy. Until Whitfield continued. "No, I don't expect to see Wesley in heaven b/c He's such a faithful servant of God, he'll be so close to the throne of God and I'll be so far away, I don't expect to see him."

C The Humble **SEARCH** Self

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar w/ all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain... Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:1-6, 23-24

The humble welcome the spotlight of God to shine the light of His truth into every dark crevice of their lives to ensure there is nothing out of joint or hurtful to their ability to walk w/ God and be used for His glory.

The humble never think more highly of themselves than they should – they almost always have a right estimate/perspective of themselves.

William Carey, the father of modern missions, was a brilliant linguist. Although he was raised in a modest home in England and worked as a shoe cobbler, he was responsible for translating parts of the Bible in some 34 languages. One evening while in India, he was being ridiculed for his *low* birth and former occupation when a snob of Indian society remarked, "Mr. Carey, I understand you were once a lowly shoemaker in England." Carey looked at the man, and w/ absolute spiritual humility said, "Oh no, your lordship, I wasn't a shoemaker, only a shoe repairman."

III **FINDING** Humility

If we're ever going to find humility, it'll require we take a long, honest look into our soul w/ a willingness to be pleased/content w/ who we are before God and how God has blessed and gifted us.

In fact, I believe there are (4) essential actions every person must make if they are to truly experience and exhibit genuine humility.

A Get **OVER** You

For by the grace given me I say to you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think of yourself w/ sober judgment. Romans 12:3

It all begins w/ thinking honestly/rightly of ourselves – b/c in the end, no matter how talented, beautiful, and fortunate we might be, we're all just fallen, desperate people who are mortal/fallible in need of God's grace.

Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a yr. there, carry on business and make money. Why, you don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As

it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. James 4:13-17

James was saying that in the grand scheme of life we are but a blip on the timeline of God's creation – a vapor that passes quickly. So, don't ever think you are bigger than God or that your plans are greater or more significant than His plans. **Have a little perspective!**

Once Winston Churchill was on a platform awaiting to speak to a large crowd in London. The chairman of the event leaned over and said, "Isn't it exciting, Mr. Churchill, all these people came just to hear you speak?" Churchill replied, "It's quite flattering, but whenever I feel this way, I always remember that if instead of making a political speech I was being hanged, the crowd would be twice as big."

B Get **UNDER** God

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:7-8, 10

The key to humility is found in accepting who is in charge; and it's not you. It begins w/ trusting Christ.

C Get **IN** the Word

Nothing can help us more in developing humility than meditating/living out God's truth. The Bible confronts and addresses who we are and who God desires for us to become. **Hebrews 4:12** describes God's Word as a surgeon's scalpel useful for dissecting the attitude, actions, and ambitions of our heart to help have a right understanding of ourselves.

D Get **AROUND** Humble People

Walk w/ the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20

Truth: If you hang out w/ the arrogant; you'll become arrogant; but if you hang out w/ the wise/humble, they'll help you to have a proper perspective of self. **Surround yourself w/ grounded people who'll be gently, yet brutally honest w/ you for your good.**

When Harry Truman was thrust into the presidency upon the death of F.D.R., Sam Rayburn gave him some fatherly advice: "From here on out you're going to have lots of people around you who'll try to put a wall around you and cut you off from any ideas but theirs. They'll tell you what a great man you are, Harry – but you and I both know you ain't."