
CORE VALUES: WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

THE ADVANCEMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM THROUGH THE HUMBLE/AFFLICTED CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CHURCH

I. Humility is a reflection of the image of God, as much as justice and mercy are.

A. Humility in Adam, Christ and the Church

1. Before the fall into sin, Adam's Covenant relationship with God required a measure of deep humility. Adam was obligated by God to trust and rely on Him completely for a deep, full understanding of good and evil, Gen 2:8-10, 15-17. Humility is not a trait that is only required of sinful man after the fall; nor is it only related to "teaching sinful men a good, necessary lesson." Rather, humility is an expression of the image of God. In fact, God Himself acts in humility towards his people and creation repeatedly throughout the Scriptures.

Psalm 8; Isaiah 66:1-2; 1 Peter 5:5-7 all reflect on the willingness of the Lord to "condescend" (lower himself; stoop; humble) to bless and meet us as his people

The word humility is strongly related to gentleness and is one of the fruits of the Spirit in the life of the Christian, Gal 5:22, 23. Jesus describes himself, the express image of God, as "gentle and humble in heart," Luke 11:29.

2. The very nature of rebellion and breaking the Covenant is an act of arrogance and pride on the part of man in which he seeks to overthrow the rule of God and become a "god to himself," Gen 3:4, 5. This pride becomes the core element in the human heart that leads to oppression, injustice and indifference in the world, Gen 3:12; 4:8, 23,24; 6:11,12; 11:4, Rom 1.

3. After the fall, the experience of humility in a broken, proud, abusive world takes the look of "affliction," "oppression," and is connected to the poor.

The Hebrew word for humble here is ANAH- humble; afflicted; meek -- Used 32 times in the Psalms and 25 times in the Prophets.

Psalm 9:11,12, 17-18; 10:12-15; 25:8-10, 16-18; 37:10-11; 34:2 cf 6,7, 17-22; 76:8-9; Isa 11"1-4, 53:7 cf Psalm 22;

Humility, like all other moral traits in Scripture, has a look to it. It is not less than, but certainly more than an attitude of the heart. Our understanding of the call for the church to walk in humility (Micah 6:8) as we seek God's kingdom, means both a call to turn away from an internal heart and mindset of

arrogance and pride, and also a call to walk in humble, even “afflicted” circumstances in order to see the kingdom come. The nature and purpose of the kingdom and the nature of the pride of the human heart require this.

II. The Call to Humility/Humble/Afflicted Circumstances in the Old Testament

The Covenant Message to the People of Israel in Genesis – Deuteronomy: God leads His people into ‘humble circumstances’ in order to advance His kingdom

A. The Patriarchs - Abraham

1. Abraham’s call Genesis 12: 1-3

The call is to trust God to make him a great nation

The focus is to bless all the nations of the earth

The requirement is to follow God to a “place I will show you”

The means is to give birth to a child by an elderly, childless couple

2. Genesis 12:10 – 25:11 - The litany of humble circumstances

On arrival, the drought and the oppressive Egyptian Pharaoh

The division of the land with Lot

The war with 4 conquering kings

The lengthy delay of the birth

The sign of the covenant: circumcision

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the lessons on prayer for justice

The oppression of Abimelech

The birth of Isaac

The sacrifice of Isaac

The death of Sarah and the burial plot

The wife for Isaac

3. Isaac/Jacob/Joseph -- Gen 25-50

Oppression, injustice, weakness, humble circumstances repeated. The commentary of Psalm 105.

B. The humble circumstances of Israel's birth as a Nation

The 400 year slavery and the Exodus

Moses the Sheep herder (cf Genesis 46:34) and a shepherd's staff, Ex 4:17

The desert experience -- Deuteronomy 8:1-20 all a gift

The warfare: The Red Sea deliverance; the Amalekites' defeat Exodus 17:8ff

All of this puts Israel in the position of being the "poor and needy," the "humbled and afflicted" who must look to the Lord for their deliverance.

C. The call to maintain a position of humility in the law

1. The Kings -- Deuteronomy 17:14ff

2. The army -- Deuteronomy 20:1ff

3. The Feasts and the Year of Jubilee "returning to the humble circumstances" Exodus 3:14-17, cf Leviticus 23:42, 43; Leviticus 25:4-12, 18-22

D. The experience of Israel throughout her history: the paradigm applied

1. Joshua and the Judges -- 360 years of history

The lessons of Jericho – Joshua 5:8; 6:8

The lessons of Ai - defeated because of sin; not because of failure of military might

The "sun stands still" against the Amorites - Joshua 10:12-14: key "the Lord was fighting for Israel"

Othniel - Judges 3:28, Ehud - Judges 3:28, Shamgar - Judges 3:31, Deborah/Barak - Judges 5:20-27; Gideon - Judges 7:2-8; Samson - Judges 15:14, 16:17

2. The Kings and Prophets

a. David and Goliath - I Samuel 17:45-47; David and the Philistines - II Samuel 5:22-25; Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 21:14ff. Cf. the sin of David- 2 Sam 24:1-4, 10ff.

b. The anti-paradigm of Solomon - Deuteronomy 17 cf. I Kings 9:6,7 10:14 – 11:12, especially the Temple, cf Acts 7:47-53

c. The anti-paradigm of Rehoboam - I Kings 12:1-4, 12-15 cf. Jeremiah 22:15-17

d. The early prophets - Elijah – Mt. Carmel - I Kings 18:22ff and Elisha - Namaan - II Kings 5

e. The later prophets-

Isa 52:13 – 52:12; Jer 31:1-9; Hosea 2:14, 15 cf 12:7-9, 13:4-6; Zech 4:1-10; Joel 2:28-31

III. The fulfillment of Righteousness and Humble/Afflicted circumstances in the ministry of Christ

A. In His Birth

Born of poor parents instead of an established royal family Luke 2:22-24

Born in an animal manger instead of a king's palace Luke 2:4-7

Born under persecution by a ruthless oppressor, leading to a refugee status Luke 2:13-18

B. In His Development

Raised in a frontier town on the southern edge of Zebulun, overlooking a desert plain (not at the center of power) Matthew 2:19-23 cf. John 1:43-46

Raised without formal theological education Luke 2:41ff, 4:20ff

C. In his ministry Jesus associates with the "humble circumstances" of Israel's journey

The wilderness experience Matthew 4

Homeless Matthew 8:20

Supported by "women" Luke 8:1-3

Associating with the "dregs" of society Luke 5:27-32

Focusing on the marginalized Luke 7:18-23

Refusing to "broadcast" His ministry in order to keep close to the broken Matthew 12:15-21

Inviting others into His meek and humble heart Matthew 11:25-30

D. In His death and resurrection

Enduring the humiliations of unjust trials and the indignities of abuse from unjust authorities - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Psalm 22

Crucified between two thieves, naked and exposed, ridiculed even in His death - Lk 23:32-43

At His resurrection, permitting the oppressors to malign His authority - Matthew 28:11-15

IV. The Call to Humility/Humble Circumstances for the New Testament Church

A. Mary as the humble servant – Luke 1:46,47 (cf Hannah - I Samuel 2)

B. The Beatitudes - Luke 6:20-36

C. The Disciples - oppressor and oppressed; common fisherman and poor zealots - Matthew 10:5-10

D. The church in Acts and the Epistles

Acts 1:4 - wait for the power of the spirit

Acts 2-4 - political, socio-economic weakness

Acts 3:6 - “silver and gold I do not have...”

Acts 8:1ff - the persecuted, weak church becomes the paradigm - I Peter 1:1-7, 2:9-12, 4:12ff; James 1:1,9-11

1. The paradigm applied: Corinth

I Corinthians 1:18-31; II Corinthians 12: 7-10

2. The anti-paradigm: Laodicea

Revelation 3:7-22 Philadelphia vs. Laodicea

V. Major Biblical-Theological themes on God’s commitment to Humility/Humble circumstances

A. The power is clearly of God and with that comes the freedom to not be driven by anxious fears of to reduce the work of God to humanly manageable terms

Deuteronomy 8; Luke 4; Acts 2

B. Boasting in human strength is removed and therefore the occasion to oppress

Romans 3:27ff; James 4:1-12; I Corinthians 1, cf Jeremiah 9:23,24

C. Liberty in generosity is increased

Exodus 20:2- leads into 21:1ff; Deuteronomy 10:1ff ; II Corinthians 8:1-4

D. Compassion and justice are real because they are coming from a vulnerable position vs. Paternalism that comes from a position of perceived superiority and strength.

Deuteronomy 9: 4-6

Romans 3:23,24

E. The message of salvation by grace, as a gift, is clearly reinforced

Genesis 17:17, 18:12, 21:1-7; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

VI. Implications for ministry

A. We expect the real work of the kingdom to involve our being led into humble circumstances

Romans 8:17-18; Philippians 2:10, 3:10-11; see esp. 1 Cor 4:8-15

B. We do not seek to shift the paradigm to building “humanly sustainable Systems of ministry”

Becomes oppressive/ineffective to move with the real needs of people because ministry is questioned /measured by sustainability

The more bureaucratic we become the less responsive to needs because the multiplicity of organizational rules actually replaces the need for dynamic wisdom from the Holy Spirit in applying general biblical principles.

In the end we become protective of the old wineskin - i.e. protect institutions for the institution’s sake

C. We freely approach DEEP needs of ministry with Humble Acts of kindness and love

Luke 6

D. We look for God’s Blessings to go beyond what we can “control” - Acts 8; Matthew 14