

5. Open-minded Humility versus Quenching the Spirit

July 14, 2013

I. Open-minded Humility

A. Introduction

1. Need

2. Definition

B. Humility

1. Acknowledgment

2. Risk

3. Distrust

4. Love

In the context of mutual up building (of encouraging and exhorting one another in the knowledge of Christ *for holy living*, we need a humble spirit. By the practice of love in how we learn, we prove that we are disciples of Christ (Jn 13.35: **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another**).

a. A description of humble love

Thus, Paul says, **love...does not boast; it is not arrogant or rude** (1 Cor 13.4-5).

1) Love is not arrogant

Arrogance is distinctively a way of thinking about yourself. This stress of thinking is strikingly evident in Romans 12.3 where Paul refers to thinking four times in the same verse, literally, "Do not *think* more highly of yourself than you ought to *think*, but *think* so as to *think* soberly." Moreover, thought shows up in a corresponding manner of life. What the proud think reflects itself in words to oneself, to others, and in mannerisms that reflect words like: "my view is better than all other views; other views are not worth considering," thus, other views are quickly dismissed. Or, "I have heard it before, so I do not need to hear it again." In dialogue, you treat others with scorn (perhaps unwittingly) making them feel uncomfortable, small, worthless, or stupid. The proud person embarrasses others and cannot see or admit doing so. Instead, if humble, we will engage discussion without a leveling spirit, which means giving merely destructive criticism (to tare others down is to lift self up). If humble, then if I must criticize, *I will start with myself and be hard on myself* in the sense that I must hold myself to any standard that I expect from others. If I must criticize I must do so tenderly (taking a speck from someone's eye). Thus, before I criticize, I begin with earnest self-criticism; otherwise, I display a proud spirit. Of course, we should have answers (1 Pet 3.15), and we should engage in earnest refutation (Titus 1.9), but we must always consider other views fairly and treat others kindly.

2) Love is not boastful

When tempted to boast, we are concentrating the wrong way on what we have attained (or think we have attained) in prestige, accomplishments, possessions, knowledge, etc. Being boastful refers to self-applause showing that the proud person wants the elevated view he has of himself to be shared by others. In applauding oneself, praise is being sought from those who hear. The proud person wants others to see, hear, and acknowledge his accomplishments. It is being proud not to acknowledge that all the distinguishing advantages you have come from God (1 Cor 4.6, **who made you to differ? What do you have that you have not received? Then why boast?**).

3) Love is not rude

Do you intuitively connect rudeness with pride? From one angle, rudeness is a wrong view of oneself coming out *in contexts of God ordained human authority structures*. Pride is

what often drives disrespect, poor manners, and the lack of common courtesies (Titus 3:1-2). Unkind actions have deep roots in a proud spirit.

b. Duties of humble love

We can infer to the opposite of pride to turn from it to humble love.

1) Commit your greatness to God.

If I really want to be someone great, I must pursue the excellent pathway of love (the greatest among you is the servant, Lk 22.24-27). Here is the opposite of pride: I must leave it to God to give what greatness He chooses, how it will be made evident, and when it will become a reality in my experience of recognition, value, and justification (in the now or in the not yet).

2) Let your "yieldedness" be evident to all.

Pride shows up in seeking the greatest regard. For the arrogant person his ideas are the best and are to be followed by everyone else. The exhortation here is to yield to the wants, wishes, needs, goals, desires, and perspectives of others in little things and in larger things. This is especially true in the life of the church and in the Christian home. It is a great quality of humble love to have husband and wife trying to out do each other in yieldedness (cf. no *you*, no *you*). In the context of mutual up building in the church, of encouraging and exhorting one another in the knowledge of Christ for holy living, we need a humble spirit of love.

3) Replace scorn with kindness.

To scorn is to belittle by words, gestures, or actions, to make people feel small or unworthy. It comes out in sneering ridicule (directly or indirectly given). Sometimes we learn how to improve when we are scorned, but it still hurts (I recall becoming aware of how I spoke by being ridiculed for using words like "chimly" for chimney and "tager" for "tiger" as in the Detroit Tagers; and lie-bear-ee instead of lie-brair-ee). Thus, by kind words and deeds, seek to protect the feelings of others. This exalts others while curbing self-exaltation.

4) Be teachable and show it

Stubborn pride is a negative spirit that has its own way of polarizing conversation by always correcting the statements of others rather than receiving correction and holding the tongue. "You will not change my mind, so why bother" sounds wise, but it dismisses the critical need of mutual exhortation because of the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3.13).

When you disagree with pastoral exhortations or correction from others and you say to yourself (and perhaps to others), "*I disagree*" be careful, it may be that you think you stand but are in danger of falling. If you say, "I don't need this (instruction, correction, interaction)," then mark it down, you probably need it in a big way. You will never find the good if you are unwilling to take a hard and possibly painful look at yourself by the help of mutual exhortation.

"I disagree" may be a subtle sin. Much depends on context. When you are in a discussion, it is wise *not* to use the expression. It polarizes. Sometimes it may be necessary for clarity, then, it will be "Yes, I respectfully disagree" followed by "let me give my rationale and hear your response to it." If I am unwilling to engage hearty interchange and godly argument then the "I disagree" phrase is a smoke screen for closed mindedness.

For example, if you disagree with your pastor-teacher and never discuss it with him (of course with many excuses) then you are on the edge of pride, if not fully in the muck already. This is a case where seeking out different views (seeking discussion with those who disagree with you) is most relevant for one anothering love and mutual exhortation due to the trickery of sin. Iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17; cf. how a sparring partner advances a boxer). A good discipline: whenever you say or think, "I don't agree," ask yourself: "Do I have a pride problem,

am I thinking of myself more highly than I ought?" A humble person will oppose taking the hard line quickly and inflexibly.

The problem is often two-tiered. a) Particularly, there is some issue of correction.
b) Generally, there is the constant tendency of pride. Which is worse? Most likely, the worse thing is the general disposition of pride, especially when the particular issue arises directly from pride and is driven by it. Even if the correction is inaccurate and unfair, the proud spirit that is aroused is the most important real problem.

Thus, willingly receive teaching, admonition, and correction; invite it. Recall the fact that pride makes us uneasy when we are exposed. It may make us angry and lead us to being picky and fault finding (judgmental, negative, and censorious). Humility will dispose us to accept and even prize correction. It is seen as the work of a friend in kindness (Ps 141.5; Prov 12.13, 18). Peter directly says, "**Clothe yourselves with humility**" (1 Pet 5.5-7). He weaves humility before God and before man into the same fabric of godly conduct.

Conclusion

Earnestly seek and prayerfully cherish, a humble spirit, and God shall walk with you here below, and when a few more days shall have passed, he will receive you to the honors bestowed on His people at Christ's right hand (Edwards, *Charity*, 155-56).

In a very fundamental and foundational way, love is more important than doctrine. Of course, love for one another in the body of Christ should drive us to seek the truth (love rejoices in the truth, 1 Cor 13.6). Truth is extremely important and love demands that we strive after it. However, *love sets the only proper tone of truth seeking*. The graces of love are the most important aspect of the process of learning (of being disciples in Christ's church for holiness) through open, frank, and charitable discussion.

We now move to a consideration of openness because it seems self-evident that a person is not humble if he is not open. *Closed-mindedness* correlates with pride. So, it is helpful to connect openness with humility as in the notion of OMH.

C. Openness

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