

5. Open-minded Humility versus Quenching the Spirit

July 7, 2013

I. Open-minded Humility

A. Introduction

1. Need

2. Definition

B. Humility

As we consider some ingredients of humility, remember, there is a right kind of humble pie to eat without getting sick.

1. First, there must be acknowledgment

That is, awareness and acknowledgement of the greatness of God and the "hidden man" problem as part of our comparative smallness. The hidden man refers to the mask-wearing problem, hiding from ourselves, hiding from our sinful selves. As Augustine: we put ourselves behind our backs so that we will not see how foul we are. In accord with this principle, I say of myself "I am a mask wearer, and I do not want to face my true self regarding this or that." Particular issues have a way of bringing out our pride. Everything may be fine until someone touches the nerve of something specific. It is a shame that a single offense (by a real or perceived wrong) often ends a relationship between professing Christians. The point here is the personal recognition that sin is *my* problem. We must each face this squarely before the Lord or we are not humble. It is a challenge because we are sinners on the way and our sanctification comes in stages.

Eventually, the graces of humble openness will come under testing, especially if we take the biblical teaching on authority and submission seriously. Perhaps, that is the most important test in the context of major differences between believers over the centuries and across the face of the earth today. Thus, responses are "emphasis on OMH is okay, even better than okay, it is great...as long as it does not mean that I have to reexamine x or y that I have held for a long time or cherish for a host of reasons (propensities since childhood, comfort level, tradition, desires and emotional attachment). Note that saying and thinking, "As long as it does not mean..." is subtle and often suppressed. Yes,...until it applies to my life. Yes,...until it demands change, even hints of possible change on x on which I do not *want* to change. Yes,...until the obligation of submission plugs in and I have to accept some decision or action that goes against what I want.

Application of these things is extremely important because we cannot separate the horizontal from the vertical. Pride toward men within God given authority structures reveals pride toward God. This is not a light sin since "God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble." Pride gets in the way of knowledge, of learning truth and learning how to live it.

2. Another ingredient is risk

We must be willing to take the risk of being wrong. Pride keeps us from candidness lest someone shows others and us where we are wrong. We must be willing to admit it when we are "wrrrr...ong"! The word just does not want to come out. Here we each say, "I am willing to risk being wrong. I can put my view on the table for examination and evaluation by others in the flock and by the pastor. I am willing to face the light of exposure that may come in the process. I do it because it is in my heart, however feebly, to humble myself under the teaching of Christ through the means He has ordained. I know that the best way to arrive at truth is by being part of a larger conversation on all issues with my pastor and other Christians in the communion of the saints." This is community and family under one Father. Of course, such a process of exchange

gives clearer and clearer perspective that runs the risk of showing our thinking to be wrong. Knowing that may happen, we still engage with others “out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5.21).

3. A third ingredient is distrust

It means I can, I do engage issues with an element of distrust *in myself*. This is taking heed lest you fall; it involves avoiding overconfidence. Do not think of yourself or your beliefs more highly than you ought. The right approach with the capital I: I may be wrong, but I trust the Lord; He is my rock and shield. I pray for the Lord’s help to the end that I do not trust in my own understanding but in all my ways, I acknowledge Him. Therefore, I can enter into discussion with my brothers and sisters and with my pastor on any area without hesitation or fear. I can say to myself, “Perhaps there is something I have missed, perhaps there is more here for me than I originally thought.” If it turns out that I receive correction, then I must say, “Thank you Lord, this can only be a good thing.” When practiced regularly, it will *not* be emotionally demolishing. It is like an athlete receiving coaching...correction, direction...a challenge to pride but a major good.

This is not to be an ostrich; that is too extreme. We might use language like this: "Maybe, I don't have it all together. I need more perspective. I must suspend judgment on this or that until I get a better handle on things." Or, “Although I have been through all the important arguments for x, I can always do so again (within reason, given priorities, depending on who is asking) because there may be something more, and besides fellowship in the word is always good.” Circumstances and consideration of the needs of others may call us to revisit arguments that we covered long ago, but we honor the call in honor to Christ, to the gospel, and to our neighbors in need.

Conclusion

There is a submission component of yieldedness and reasonableness that applies in all authority structures (wife to husband, flock to pastor, and so forth) as well as in all relationships: **Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand** (Phil 4.5). There is an emotional component; emotions and desires are involved and therefore the reactions to this summons can be volatile. Submission, yieldedness, reasonableness, and self-control (of emotions and desires) can only come to expression genuinely and productively when there is a humble spirit, the opposite of pride (a great, huge sin! God resists the proud).

Humility involves the right use of the *mind*. This is an aspect of loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind. The ultimate expression of humble-mindedness or humility in our use of reason is the submission of ourselves, of our reasoning selves to Christ speaking by the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection... Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.¹⁶ **Only let us hold true to what we have attained.** (Philippians 3:8-16 ESV)

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. (Philippians 4:2 ESV)

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;⁶ **do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**⁷ **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**⁸ **Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.**⁹ **What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.** (Philippians 4:5-9 ESV)