

“Faith and Humility”

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“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3). This text indicates that the greater a man’s faith is, the less will he think of himself. As the apostle expresses it, he will “think soberly.” Pride is intoxication. Just as alcohol stimulates a man without building him up, and finally deprives him of reason, so a man, to use a common expression, “loses his head” when he gets to hunting for the good traits in his character. And withal pride, like alcohol, furnishes no nourishment with which to build the man up. If a man is to grow strong, he must receive nourishment from a source outside of himself; but the vain person lives upon himself, and so becomes poorer by what he feeds upon. And as alcohol causes a man to stumble in his walk, and finally brings him to ruin, so “*pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*” (Prov. 16:18).

So the apostle well describes humility as thinking soberly. But why will a man live soberly, according to the measure of faith, which he possesses? The answer is not difficult. Faith is that which justifies the sinner. (Rom. 5:1). If men were not sinful, they would have no need of faith. *The only reason for having faith in Christ is to secure pardon for past sins, and freedom from the love of sin.* No man will exercise faith in Christ unless he feels himself to be a sinner. It is the sense of sin, which comes by the law that drives a man to Christ that he may be justified by faith. Therefore for a man to confess Christ is to acknowledge himself a sinner. Great diseases call for great remedies; the weaker a man is, the more aid will have to be given him. So the more the man feels his sinful condition, the more faith in Christ will he exercise. Therefore it is true that great faith on the part of any person is evidence that that person feels that he is by nature very weak and sinful, and that without Christ he is nothing.

But such a feeling is in itself humility, which is nothing else but “a sense of one’s own unworthiness through imperfection and sinfulness.” Such a man estimates himself at his true value, which is nothing. And since faith in Christ cannot be exercised by any except those who “have no confidence in the flesh,” it follows that the man who walks by faith will be a humble man. It is only when Christians lose their sense of unworthiness, and begin to look upon themselves with complacency, that they lose faith. When the individual is nothing in his own eyes, Christ is everything; but when he begins to rise in his own estimation, Christ sinks

out of sight. Nothing can produce true humility but knowledge of one's natural imperfections.

In harmony with these ideas, and the text first quoted, are the words of the prophet Habakkuk: "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). Faith and humility are inseparable. We ask again, Why does a man exercise faith in Christ? Simply because he feels a need of Christ; he has no confidence in his own strength, and feels that without Christ he must perish. It is not natural for the human heart to acknowledge another as superior. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Independence, boastfulness, and self-conceit, are natural to the human heart. But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He became a new creature in consequence of acknowledging his wretched sinfulness, and pleading for mercy through Christ. This in itself was a humiliation of soul. Now, so long as he continues in that state of justification by faith, he must retain a sense of his own unworthiness, for the law of faith excludes boasting.

Says the beloved disciple: "this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4). It is only as we exercise faith that God's strength supplies our lack, and keeps us from falling. And since faith and humility are so closely joined together, Bunyan has beautifully written, —

**“He that is down needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.”**

The man who is lifted up with pride and self-esteem must assuredly fall sooner or later, for the time will come when "the lofty looks of man will be humbled," and the Lord alone exalted; but the man who is down cannot fall, for he is already as low as he can be. But such a one shall not always be abased. The promise is "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10). Not in their own estimation, not in the estimation of the world, will such be lifted up, but they will be raised up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:6).

"Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty *man* glory in his might, nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD" (Jer. 9:23, 24).

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD” (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

Therefore “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).