

# SERMON #3 HUMILITY

## Reflecting the Heart of Christ

BE TRANSFORMED

JOHN R. MURPHY

**Subject: Resembling Christ's Character Through Humility**

**Scripture references:**

**Romans 8:29 AMP**

"For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness],..."

**John 1:1-4 AMP**

"In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. He was present originally with God. All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men."

**Philippians 2:6-8 AMP**

"Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!"

**Philippians 2:5AMP**

Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility]"

**Peter 5:6 AMP**

"Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you,"

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Today we continue to examine the theme of Romans 8:29 in this series to better understand and apply the truth of God's plan for His people to progressively reflect inwardly the heart of Christ.

We live in a world that generally associates humility with meekness or weakness; which are commonly viewed as negative traits. That is the wisdom of the world. But Christ has a very different message about humility. Christ's message to us is that humility is actually empowering. It was His humility that allowed Him to be willing to take on the challenge of defeating death and be victorious over Satan on behalf of all mankind. Through His humility, He obeyed the commands of God and was able to defeat death. A challenge which no other person who walked this earth could have had any chance of conquering.

With the bias of our culture, even using the word 'humility' in the context of Christ seems to somehow lessen His

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Glory. It is foreign to the way the world thinks to associate humility with power. But as we examine the humility of Christ you will see that humility actually is power, because through it, we serve the will of God. The most powerful life we can have is to be in complete obedience to God's will. Not, incidentally, the will of man disguised as God's will.

To begin to appreciate the humility of Christ, let's first look at the true awesomeness of Christ and then hear a description of His humility. This will help give us a perspective of the magnitude of the humility He displayed. The comparison of these two aspects of His character truly sets the bar beyond the reach of humanity.

We will begin with John 1:1-4 AMP.

In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. He was present originally with God. All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men."

John describes four glorious aspects of Christ. Let this sink in:

- He was there from the beginning of all things.
- He was there at the origins of God.
- He made everything that was made.
- He is life.

Now Philippians 2:5 AMP.

"Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained,

Despite all He is and the fact that He fully embodies the attributes of God, He does not compare Himself as a means of declaring His status or claiming His rights in the Kingdom. He has never thought to consider which of God's next commands He may decide to ignore based on His status. He never used His place in heaven to draw a line in the sand with God and declare His emancipation from the will of the Father. In fact He demonstrated that there was no known limit to how far He was willing to lower Himself. With complete disregard for His Glory and His rightful place in the kingdom, His desire to accomplish the will of His Father was what He valued the most. Philippians vividly expresses how far His humility would take Him in pleasing His Father.

Here is how Paul described the humility of Christ to the Philippians in 2:7 & 8 AMP.

But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!"

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Just amazing! Christ stripped Himself of all privilege and rightful dignity and allowed Himself to be crucified. He did not consider Himself above enduring the disgrace and pain of being sacrificed.

His humility was an expression of His power as well as the basis of His access to accomplish the powerful works of God. From this, one can only conclude that the most humble man on the planet is also the most powerful man. And it follows that the more humility we have, the more that God is able to use us to accomplish His plan. And to make this personal: the more humility I have, the more God is able to use me to accomplish His purposes. As God's people and by the example of Christ, we simply do not have a position that justifies any unwillingness to please God.

Christ's humility is absolute. Any perspective of "better than" is not in Him. In His view, He was not better than that which He was called to and not better than He who dispatched Him to earth.

The sentiment of "better than" comes from the prideful sin nature and is a struggle for us all. If we feel we are better than the task before us or that we are better than some other person, we are saying that there is something about us that makes us special. Believing we are "better than" is the opposite of humility and can be the root cause of suffering.

There is even the "better than" that says that we should not have to experience the hardships of life because we are somehow above that or deserving of something better than the life we find ourselves struggling to live. This can lead us to resenting God for our suffering, as we blame Him for not intervening in our lives and exempting us from suffering.

"Better than" can cause a powerful temptation to justify a double standard. It is the basis for our unwillingness to respond to the call of serving God and our fellow man. "Better than" can be the justification for judging. And when we arrive there we are in dangerous territory, because we are clearly instructed by the Word to refrain from judging. Not only do we want to refrain from judging in order to obey God, but we are motivated to avoid the promised suffering that comes when we judge others.

Judging others is the root cause of self-condemnation. As we hold other people to a higher standard than God holds us, we will eventually do something that we have judged others for. When we do, our self-righteousness compels us to condemn ourselves. Have you ever experienced a condition of being unable to forgive yourself? This may have come from a belief that you were "better than" that. Or if you think about it, you may have previously judged someone else for the very thing you just did.

There is one simple reality that, if we are willing to accept it as true, will set us free from the suffering of "better than". That reality is that no person has any inherent righteousness within them. No one person is in any way better than or more deserving of the love of God. God does not hold any person in greater esteem than another. Paul made this point in his letter to the Roman church. He said: For God shows no partiality [undue favor or unfairness; with Him one man is not different from another]. Romans 2:11 AMP

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Can you accept that? There is freedom in that truth. Freedom from being concerned with the judgment of others. There is freedom from worrying that somehow someone else is better than you. And there is power in this truth that impacts how you can serve others, because they sense that you do not approach them with superiority or condemnation.

Can you accept the truth that no one person is more deserving of God's love than another? What about the people in our world who have brought about great evil? What about someone you know who has been cruel to either you or people you care about? Can you accept the truth that no matter how horrible the acts a person has committed, that if circumstances had been different, or if you had lived their life, that it is possible you could have done the same things they have done?

To believe this means that we must fully release our righteousness to Christ. We must come to the place where we no longer seek to develop or prove that we are righteous in ourselves. When we accept the truth that we are completely dependent on the works of Christ, then there is no risk in believing that all people are imperfect, struggle with sin and no better than anyone else. You can then live in the life-giving reality that the great common denominator is that you make mistakes and sin just like every other living person now, in the past and in the future. When you make a mistake, you are allowed to then rest in the truth that you have made a mistake and that your salvation is not at risk, your self-worth is not at risk, the love of the Father is not at risk, and you are not inferior to anyone else. You just made a mistake. That is all. You just made a mistake.

Yes there will be consequences for mistakes, you will have to work through those consequences, and you may have to make it right. But the foundational source of your worth is not at risk. When you can believe that, you have landed in a wonderful place, a truly blessed assurance.

As I said earlier, all this "better than" pride comes from the sin nature. It is the result of our fallen condition. Satan loves it when we judge others and feel superior and think we are "better than". It is this very pride that is in such blatant contrast to the humility of Christ. Satan thinks completely in terms of comparison. So much so that he felt, and I assume still thinks, that he is worthy of the top job in heaven. Satan sees himself as worthy of the throne of God. While Satan aspires to the role of God, Christ in no way considers Himself worthy of the position.

So it is our sin nature that tempts us to constantly compare ourselves to others and judge them. It is the sin nature that "feeds" the conclusion we are somehow better. But its presence in us does not mean we are helpless to defeat it. We can be victorious if we are willing to war against it in God's strength. We are going to wage that war here today, and I invite you to the battle. We are going to take on this un-Christ-like influence in our lives. But before we do, I want to help you recognize the pull of the sin nature so you will be able to respond. We need to see the enemy's strategy in order to war against it.

Our process in this exercise will expose the urge of the flesh to compare ourselves with others and to constantly ask the question: "Am I better than?" So I want you to be aware of conscious urges you may experience as I lead you through a hypothetical situation. Remember that even though Christ has defeated sin and death, we do all have to

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resist the sin nature just as Jesus did while on the earth. To inwardly reflect more of Christ's character, we must be aware of Satan's strategies to defeat our best intentions. We will never achieve perfection, but remember, God does not require our perfection. He only asks that we bring our imperfection to Him. Let's allow ourselves to see our imperfection for what it is without self-condemnation, so we can effectively resist the temptation to judge and fall into self-righteousness.

So here we go. Pay close attention to how you feel toward, and what you think about, the person I'm going to describe.

What if I were to tell you that there is a man waiting outside. At this point do you have particular feelings about him? You probably don't. You just don't have any information. Actually I would have liked to introduce him earlier but he was late to church.

Before I bring him in here there are some others things you might want to know about him.

- Not too many years ago he was arrested for domestic violence.

(Pause)

- Last year he lost his home and had to file bankruptcy because he was put on a sex offenders list

(Pause)

- He works near here as a busboy in a local restaurant. He works there to hold him over since he was busted for selling drugs to students in a local high school.

(Pause)

- So how are you feeling about him? What are you feeling toward him?

(Pause)

- I will ask him to come in a minute, but he has just come from the job so he really isn't dressed up and will probably smell a bit of the restaurant.

(Pause)

- When he was growing up, he really didn't learn a lot of manners about things like how to be courteous to others when he chews tobacco, so when he comes in just keep your eyes on him in case he spits on the floor. Know that if you ask him not to, he may get angry at you.

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(Pause)

Before I ask him to join us, let me ask you how you are feeling about him. Do you feel within you the flesh's desire to compare or decide who is "better than"? Do you feel yourself already drawing away and not wanting to be around him? Can you feel that urge to judge him as you hear more about him? Did you feel yourself rising above him as I described him to you? Even though you know that Christ died for him and wants to live with him for eternity just as He did for you, did you feel the urge to size him up?

I doubt anyone could get through that list without at least feeling some urge to devalue our fictitious visitor. Well that feeling is the urge of the flesh that we want to wage war against.

Knowing everything about you and the stranger, let me ask you some questions about your thoughts on how Jesus would compare you to the visitor.

Who does Jesus think is the more righteous?

Who does He think has more value?

Who does He love more?

Who would He rather die for?

Does anyone have more or less inherent righteousness than anyone else?

Now let's reject that urge of the flesh and ask God for the vision to see others as He does- established as highly valued by His love for all people. And then ask for the strength to resist being drawn by the flesh into judgment. Join me in this prayer however you feel led to do so.

Heavenly Father, forgive me for ever believing that I have any goodness or righteousness in me that is not from You. Forgive me for not giving You credit for my gifts and position in life. I proclaim that You are responsible for all the goodness in my life, and for that I thank You and praise You.

Father, forgive me for trying to build myself up by judging others. Lord I know that the urge to judge others is the pride of my flesh and I ask that You give me the strength to resist that urge and reflect the love You have for all people. Father I desire to reflect the character of Your Son and I ask for the grace to do so. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.