

"Better to be of a Humble Spirit"

"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov. 16:18-19).

A person does not have to be proud, boastful or arrogant to be great, as is believed by so many today. Moses was truly a great man, and at the same time, "very meek, above all the men which lived upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). King Saul was told by Samuel that "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel?" (1 Sam. 15:23). But with the passing of time, Saul became "big" in his own eyes and, because of his proud, sinful actions, the Lord rejected him as king (1 Sam. 15:23).

David, a man after God's own heart, was humble. His humility is evident by some of his statements found in the Psalms. He said, "My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad" (Psa. 34:2). He also stated that "The sacrifices of God are of a broken spirit, A broken and contrite heart -- These, O God, You will not despise" (Psa. 51:17).

The Apostle Paul, from the world's viewpoint, had every reason to be proud. He was highly educated, having been "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our father's law" (Acts 22:3). He had the honor and privilege of being a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29). Paul told the Philippians, "If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:4-6). Yet, Paul was a man of humility. Concerning the facts just stated, he went on to say, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 4:7). In fact, he later called these things "rubbish" (v. 8). As an apostle, he spoke of himself as "the least of all the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). He also spoke of himself as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

All through the scriptures, we can observe that God used the ones of a "humble spirit" for His service. If we are going to be truly great in the service to the Lord today, then we too must be humble. Jesus said, "but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26). James tells us to "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, And He will lift you up" (Jas. 4:10).

The person of a "humble spirit" realizes that he is nothing without God. He is genuinely happy to obey all of God's commands and to receive His rich blessings. He is like an empty vessel which only God can fill. Paul said, "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). May we always remember that "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6).

- by R.J. Evans

Misunderstandings about Church Discipline

Several attempts had been made to restore an erring Christian, but every effort had failed. Finally, it was clear that disciplinary action could not be avoided. And, what was the response of this wayward member? She wrote (and I am not making this up!): "Go ahead and dis-member me, if you feel you have to."

Many people misunderstand the subject of church discipline. Some of the erroneous ideas are:

'Christians withdraw from people because they lack a proper level of love.' Actually just the opposite is true. This action is taken out of a deep love for the eternal soul of one who has fallen away from faithfully serving the Lord. We know that if they are not alerted to their lost condition, they will suffer an eternity in Hell. We love them too much to let this happen without a strong effort to save them.

'The church does this because they just don't care enough for weak members.' Again, this is simply not true. We care so much that we are willing to sacrifice our friendly social contact with a brother or sister who has sinned and refuses to repent. We are hoping that by doing this

they will be motivated to come back to the Lord. We know that this is ultimately the most important thing.

'It just seems like the elders and others in the church enjoy doing this sort of thing.' Nothing could be further from the truth. This action, when it becomes necessary, is hard and it hurts to have to do it. It would be much easier to just 'look the other way' and let the sinful one continue on the destructive path to eternal ruin. But, because we care, and out of deep love for their soul, we do this even though it is a very difficult thing.

'I just think this is an incredibly mean and hateful thing to do.' In reality it would be mean and hateful if we did not do this in an all-out effort to restore a fallen brother or sister. When nothing else has worked, this is a final push to save their soul. So, no, it's not mean or hateful – it is a sign of real devotion to the well being of the one who has slipped away.

'Those Christians who would do something like that just have a 'holier-than-thou' attitude.' Well, no, that's not right either. This action is taken "in the spirit of meekness" and we are always "considering ourselves lest we also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). We understand that we can also be "overtaken in a fault" and therefore we do this – and would hope that others would care enough for us to do the same if we needed such help.

So, we won't 'dis-member' anyone, but we will take the proper steps to administer church discipline when it is needed. It's what the New Testament teaches us to do, and it's what love demands.

- by Greg Gwin