

"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

No Reason To Believe The Atheists . . .

If the solar system was brought about by an accidental collision, then the appearance of organic life on this planet was also an accident, and the whole evolution of man was an accident, too.

If so, then all our present thoughts are mere accidents – the accidental by-product of the movement of atoms. And this holds for the thoughts of the materialists and astronomers as well as for anyone else's.

But if their thoughts – i.e., of Materialism and Astronomy – are merely accidental by-products, why should we believe them to be true? I see no reason for believing that one accident should be able to give me a correct account of all the other accidents.

It's like expecting that the accidental shape taken by the splash when you upset a milk-jug should give you a correct account of how the jug was made and why it was upset.

- by C.S. Lewis

Forgiveness (2nd in a series)

Last week we learned that unilateral forgiveness can and should be offered when situations arise that do not involve sin. For instance, if someone 'hurts my feelings' or does something that leaves me feeling slighted - these may reflect bad judgment or carelessness, but there is no sin, and I can just let those things pass. I can forgive independent of the actions of the other person – and I should.

However, if sin has occurred, this changes things completely. In cases where sin is involved we are instructed to forgive just like God forgives: *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). It's hard to imagine how a statement could be any clearer. We are to forgive “just as” God does. Therefore, it is important to observe how He extends forgiveness.

First, He is willing to forgive, and we should be, too. Unfortunately we sometimes act like we want to keep an issue alive. We carry ill will and have a 'chip on our shoulder'. These things ought not to be. God *“desires all men to be saved”* (1 Timothy 2:3,4) and is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). He is clearly willing to forgive, and we must be, too.

In fact, we could say that God is 'aggressive' about forgiving us. He *“commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). God didn't have to do that, but He did. Our Lord taught us that we should have that same urgent desire to forgive those who wrong us. *“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother”* (Matthew 18:15). Don't wait. Take the initiative. Be like God. Be 'aggressive' in making forgiveness available to the one who has sinned against you.

(continued next week)

- by Greg Gwin