

Ambassador III - Character

The Fruit of the Spirit--Humility

Introduction

For these last two weeks we are going to dive into the heart of what it means to be a faithful ambassador for Christ. Last week we briefly covered a key text for this course, 2 Peter 1:3-8 where we were given a list of qualities.

^{ESV} **2 Peter 1:3-8** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice **these qualities** you will never fall.

"These qualities"

- *Closely tied to the fruit of the Spirit*
- *Divinely produced (not by self-will. The fruit is what comes of a healthy tree...) and if present, will be increasing.*
- *Comes with great promises (effectiveness and fruitfulness)*

Now we'll turn our attention to the ambassador's greatest enemy and greatest virtue, pride and humility. Mahaney quotes John Stott:

At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend. ... Pride is more than the first of the seven deadly sins; it is itself the essence of all sin.¹

^{ESV} **James 4:6-10** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "**God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**" ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

The Perils of Pride

Put bluntly--there is nothing God hates more. Yes, God is love, but God does hate.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 6:16-17a** There are six things that **the LORD hates**, seven that are **an abomination to him:** ¹⁷ **haughty eyes...**

¹ Mahaney, C. J. *Humility: True Greatness*, Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, CO. 2005. p 29, 30.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 8:13** The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. **Pride and arrogance** and the way of evil and perverted speech **I hate**.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 16:5** **Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD**; be assured, he will not go unpunished.

Why does God hate pride so much? Mahaney defines it:

Pride is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon Him.²

And quotes John Calvin:

God cannot bear with seeing his glory appropriated by the creature in even the smallest degree, so intolerable to him is the sacrilegious arrogance of those who, by praising themselves, obscure his glory as far as the can.³

Pride's Deceitfulness and Potency--Mahaney quotes Jonathan Edwards:

[Pride is] the worst viper that is in the heart... the greatest disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ...the most hidden, secret and deceitful of all lusts. ... What a foolish, silly miserable, blind, deceived poor worm am I, when pride works.⁴

Murray says "pride--the loss of humility--is the root of every sin and evil."⁵

Pride defies logic--

Even when we are aware of God's hatred and active opposition to it, when we know what we ought to do... we persist in what Mahaney quotes Spurgeon calls "a groundless thing... a brainless thing... the maddest thing that can exist"⁶ -- This madness called pride.

Self deceit can cause us to do the unthinkable. It can even well up in our view of our own repentance or humility! (Spiritual implosion). Andrew Murray gives this stern warning (emphasis added):

Let all teachers of holiness, whether in the pulpit or on the platform, and all seekers after holiness, whether in the closet of the convention, take warning: **There is no pride so dangers, so subtle and insidious, as the pride of holiness**. It is not that a man ever says, or even things, "Stay away. I am too sacred for you!" The thought would be considered ludicrous. But unconsciously there can develop a private habit of soul that feels complacency in its attainments and cannot help but see how far it is ahead of others. It isn't always seen in self assertion or self praise, but in the absence of self-denial and modesty that reveals a lack of the mark of the soul that has seen the glory of God (Job 42:5-6; Isaiah 6:5). It is a tone, a way of speaking of oneself or others, in which those who have the gift of discernment cannot but recognize the power of self.⁷

² Mahaney, p 31.

³ Mahaney, p 33.

⁴ Mahaney, p 34. This is an aggregation of separate quotes of Edwards.

⁵ Murray, p. 16.

⁶ Mahaney, p 39.

⁷ Murray, Andrew, *Humility--The Journey Toward Holiness*, Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN. 2001. pp 64-65.

Pride's Pervasiveness

The sad fact is that none of us are immune to the logic-defying, blinding effects of pride. Though it shows up in different forms and to differing degrees, it infects us all. **The real issue here is not *if* pride exists in your heart; it's *where* pride exists and *how* pride is being expressed in your life.**⁸

Discussion 1: Where is the contrition?

Pride's Imminence

The danger of pride is greater and nearer than we think, and especially at the time of our greatest experiences. The preacher of spiritual truth with an admiring congregation hanging on his every word, the gifted speaker of a holiness convention expounding the secrets of the heavenly life, the Christian giving testimony to the blessed experience--no man knows the hidden, unconscious danger to which these are exposed.⁹

Pride's Popularity

We live in a culture that "so often rewards the proud--a world quick to admire and applaud the prideful, a world eager to bestow the label "great" on these same individuals...."¹⁰"

Discussion 2: To what extent has it infiltrated the church culture?

The Promise of Humility

What is humility? -- Mahaney defines it this way:

Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness.¹¹

Andrew Murray defines/describes humility throughout his work this way:

True humility comes when before God we see ourselves as nothing, have put aside self, and let God be all. The soul that has done this, and can say, "I have lost myself in finding you," no longer compares itself with others.¹²

The true nature of humility ... our place is to yield to Him in perfect resignation and dependence, in full consent to be and to do nothing of ourselves.¹³

..., the place of entire dependence upon God.¹⁴

..., the sense of entire nothingness that comes when we see how truly God is everything.¹⁵

..., the only soil in which virtue takes root.¹⁶

⁸ Mahaney, p 29. Bold emphasis added (italics in original)

⁹ Murray, pp 93-94. emphasis added.

¹⁰ Mahaney, p 17.

¹¹ Mahaney, p 22.

¹² Murray, p. 55.

¹³ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 17.

..., the root of all [virtues], because it alone takes the right attitude before God.¹⁷

..., the mark that shows the true follower of Jesus.¹⁸

..., the mother virtue; your very first duty before God, the one perpetual safeguard of the soul...¹⁹

Breakout--Teach One Another ...

^{ESV} **Isaiah 66:2** All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But *this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.*

1. What is the relationship between humility, contrition, and fear of the Lord?

God is decisively drawn to humility. The person who is humble is the one who draws God’s attention, and in this sense, drawing His attention means also attracting His grace--His unmerited kindness. Think about that: There’s something you can do to attract more of God’s gracious, undeserved, supernatural strength and assistance!²⁰

^{ESV} **James 4:6** "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

^{ESV} **1 Peter 5:5** "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

2. God helps those who h_____ themselves.

3. Share your thoughts on Mahaney’s closing statement. What can you do?

The call to humility has been too little regarded in the church because its true nature and importance have been too little apprehended.²¹

4. Do you think this is true? Why?

Schedule for Upcoming Sundays:

May 29 - Off -- Memorial Day weekend

June 5 - Wk 8 -- Fruit of the Spirit--True Greatness

Suggested Reading:

Humility--Forward, Intro, Chapters 1-2.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 84.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 97.

²⁰ Mahaney, p 20.

²¹ Murray, p 17.