

Ambassador III - Character

The Fruit of the Spirit--Humility

White Board Exercise:

When the culture talks about pride, what is it?

When Scripture talks about pride, what is it?

Review

In our first several weeks we discussed how an Ambassador knows the fear of the LORD (Cor. 5).

Knowing the Fear of the LORD, an ambassador:

- would not dare to tamper with His message – the Gospel
- would not dare to misrepresent His Character or otherwise bring reproach upon Christ or His Bride by living immorally or foolishly. (ref. Piper Handout)
- is growing in boldness and courage, putting to death the fear of man.
 - *Tapping into the Spirit's power* ← Key point/transition of the course

Then last week we began our discussion of the fruit of the Spirit. “These qualities” in 2 Peter 1:3-8:

- God is the source of power (v 3)
- Requires effort (v 5)
- When present and increasing--promises effectiveness/fruitfulness and assurance of salvation

Then we focused on love. We contrasted culture's and God's definitions of love.

1. Pop Culture Believes God's Love Is Sentimental (*Trivializes Love*)
2. Pop Culture Believes God's Love Is Universal and Unconditional (*Trivializes Sin*)
3. Pop Culture Believes God's Love Is Me-Centered (*Trivializes Sacrifice*)

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, fruitfulness, and even assurance)*

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.**

Note the twin warning and promises. Today we'll talk about the perils of pride and the promise of humility. Then next week we will look at the promised exaltation by studying true greatness and the pursuit of it. Also note how this is clearly in the realm of spiritual warfare (ref. to resisting the devil). We will be emphasizing and re-emphasizing our utter dependence upon the Spirit of God to provide the power to do what we cannot do on our own.

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

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...**

^{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 they 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 where he calls pride "a groundless thing... a brainless thing... the maddest thing that can exist"⁶

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 or the convention, take warning: **There is no pride so dangerous, so subtle and insidious, as the pride of holiness.** It is not that a man ever says, or even thinks, "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

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.

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

Even in our language we terribly jumble and confuse its meaning--How insane is it to confuse this core sin, this mother of all sins, with the sense of satisfaction in a job well done or being pleased with our children's performance or behavior?!

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

This is bad news... and it gets worse (remember the Fall!). Many of us are learning to recognize pride in our own lives and even confess it, but we (like Mahaney p. 31) "aren't sufficiently convicted of it."

Discussion 1: Where is the contrition?

[Why are we so much more contrite (broken/Godly sorrow) over sins *we* rate as biggies... are our perceptions of sin being developed Biblically or culturally?]

Pride's Imminence

Andrew Murray delivers another sobering warning:

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?

[Very related to the first question. We may not popularize it, but do we see it as the abomination that God does? Again, ... are our perceptions of sin being developed Biblically or culturally?]

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

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

⁹ Murray, pp 93-94. emphasis added.

¹⁰ Mahaney, p 17.

The Promise of Humility

Even the worldly have stumbled upon the truth that humility not only works, but is attractive (ref. Mahaney’s Ch 1 introduction material on *Good to Great*). We as Christians have much greater cause to value and pursue humility--the associated promises.

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

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

... and then goes on to describe the critical importance of understanding these two realities.

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

..., 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?

¹¹ Mahaney, p 22.

¹² Murray, p. 55.

¹³ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 84.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 97.

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?**

Suggested Reading:

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

²⁰ Mahaney, p 20.

²¹ Murray, p 17.