

God Gives Grace To The Humble

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- [0 : 00] If you turn back with me please to that portion of scripture that we read in 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter 5 and we're going to read again at verse 5.
- 1 Peter chapter 5 and at verse 5. Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders. Hold yourselves all of you with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the black sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters. A news of the disaster was further darkened when the investigation revealed the cause of this tragic accident.
- [1 : 10] It wasn't a technology problem like radar malfunction or even thick fog. The cause was human stubbornness.
- You see, each of the captains, they were aware of the other ship's presence nearby. Both ships could have steered clear by going even five degrees one way or the other.
- But according to news reports, neither captain was willing to yield. Each was too proud to move to the port or to move to the starboard.
- By the time they came to their senses, it was too late. Human pride.
- C.S. Lewis says this about pride. He says, there is one vice of which no man in the world is free, which everyone in the world loaves when he sees it in someone else, and of which hardly any people except Christians, Lewis says, ever imagine that they are guilty of themselves.
- [2 : 32] It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice, Lewis says, to every other vice it is the complete anti-God state of mind.
- The scriptures command us, clothe yourselves, all of you with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- Since Adam and Eve fell in the garden, pride entered into the human race. There is not one of us that is not touched by pride and by sin.
- In my study of this text I came across a sermon preached by a man called Ebenezer Erskine. He was a brother of a man called Ralph Erskine.
- They were Church of Scotland ministers in the early 1700s. The two Erskine brothers, along with a man called Thomas Boston, you might have heard of Boston, along with Thomas Boston.
- [3 : 57] They were 12 men and they were called the Marrow Men. The Marrow Men went to war with the Church of Scotland over a theological dispute over what is known as the free offer of the Gospel.
- There is a wee bit of historical background to Ebenezer Erskine. Back in the early 1700s it was frowned upon by presbyteries for ministers.

If any minister was to enter into a pulpit or preach any preacher, come and preach the free offer of the Gospel. That is to say that Christ is dead for all, if only you believe.

Back then ministers were instructed only to preach to those who were deemed repentant enough and of course the Church fell into legalism.

You see Boston and Erskine and them wanted to preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven as the way Jesus instructed them to do, to go out and to preach the good news to everyone who would listen.

[5 : 13] The Marrow Men won the controversy. That is why every minister and preacher that comes here week in week out can offer Christ to everyone. Erskine, I came across an old sermon by Ebenezer Erskine entitled The Humble Soul, the peculiar favourite of heaven and he took this as his text.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. In Erskine's sermon he asked six questions of this text and six questions of the whole of Scripture.

This is how they did it back then, they would ask questions same as the Catechism. When I came across this service it blew me away. It was a number of years ago now and he asked six questions of the Scriptures.

The first question he asked, what is a humble soul? The second question he asked is why is the humble person a peculiar favourite of heaven and can I prove this from the Bible?

Question number three was why does God appreciate the humble? Number four, what are the marks of a humble soul?

[6 : 39] Number five, he asked the question why should we seek a humble spirit and finally number six, how do we attain a humble spirit?

Now what I've done here is I've taken Erskine's points and in my studies I have added my own illustrations and applications and my own Bible study to it and I've just used his points and I've preached this elsewhere and be warned I've only reached point number two.

So don't worry we're not going to do six, okay maybe God willing the next time we can do maybe three and four. So what is a humble spirit?

Erskine asked the Lord and he asked the Scriptures. Love yourselves all of you with humility toward one another for God opposes the proud but this is the bit but he gives grace to the humble.

Now the greatest example of humility that you and I will ever witness is God's Son Jesus hanging on a cross naked and being crucified for you and for me if our faith is in him.

[8 : 10] The greatest example of humility is seen in Jesus. So what is a humble spirit?

Well Erskine starts with let's look at ourselves, let's look inward he says. Well a humble spirit is a sensible and a low view of ourselves in relation to God and in relation to Jesus.

A sensible and a low view of ourselves. A low view of our station in life.

A sensible and a wise look at ourselves. Jacob says this I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have showed your servant.

You will see that in Genesis 32 10 where the Lord dealt with Jacob and the Lord entered into the life of Jacob and he had to change him and he would mould him and he would recreate him and Jacob would see what the Lord was doing in his life and he would say I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love that you have shown me.

[9 : 41] We must never think there is no one like us. That we come from such and such a family, that we come from such and such an area, that we come from such and such a church, that we do such and such in work.

The humble soul makes little account of all these things and for a preacher to go into a church and start preaching about humility I know I am on a hiding to nothing.

But it is one of these subjects in the Scriptures that we must look at and we must look at ourselves and we see Jesus more clearly when we do so.

Listen to King David who am I O Lord God and what is my house that you have brought me thus far and yet this was a small thing in your eyes O Lord.

The Lord God would choose a king for Israel and the Lord God would choose the youngest and the least in the family of Jesse to be the king of Israel.

[11 : 00] Who am I O Lord God? King David says who am I? The story is told of Charles Spurgeon. I love Spurgeon stories.

The story is told of Charles Spurgeon and he has just preached the Gospel at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and he sat the door and he is shaking hands with as many people as he possibly can as they are leaving the church.

This young man, he has never seen before, this young man comes up and starts speaking to Spurgeon and this young man just couldn't but help tell Spurgeon who he was and this young man just couldn't but help tell Spurgeon what family he came from and his station in life and his pedigree and Spurgeon couldn't get a word in edgeways with this young man and when he finally stopped talking Spurgeon looked at him and he says young man I care not, I care not where you came from, I only care where you are going, I only care where you are going.

You see the humble soul has low thoughts on her or his abilities for any work or for service especially in the church listen to Paul, the great apostle Paul.

The great apostle Paul says what does he say in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 5 he says no, not that we are sufficient in ourselves, there is nothing in us the great apostle says not that we are sufficient in ourselves or claim anything as coming from us but our sufficiency is from God.

[12 : 54] Everything I possess comes from the Lord God and in the context of 2 Corinthians you will see that he is defending his ministry against false teachers.

Our sufficiency comes from the Lord God. He also says elsewhere not that I have already obtained this or I am already perfect but he says I press on, I press on and I make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

I belong to King Jesus he is saying and every gift and everything that I possess comes from King Jesus because he has made me his own.

He has entered into my life and into my heart and into my experience and he has changed me. He has taken away this heart of stone when I was a Pharisee and he has taken it away and he is molding me and he is recreating me and he is making me see that I have nothing apart from him.

It's the testimony of the Christian. We have nothing apart from him.

[14 : 36] So that's concerning ourselves as we look inward. How about concerning others? We live in congregations, we live in communities, we have to go to work each day and be amongst our workmates.

How do we live our lives as the children of God in these situations concerning ourselves? Well quite bluntly the humble spirit Erskine says will put others before themselves.

It's what Jesus did. He put others before himself. It's the great biblical principle but of course that will not save us.

Being a good neighbour and being a good person in the church will not save us. We need that grace and we need that faith in this Jesus to save us and then when the Lord saves us and comes into our lives, our lives change.

There should be a marked difference in your life and in my life there was a marked difference in Jacob's life. There was a marked difference in Paul's life.

- [15 : 53] There was a marked difference in Spurgeon's life and hopefully there was a marked difference in the young man who met Spurgeon at the door. I would like to think so.
- A humble spirit will put others before themselves. Listen to Paul again in Philippians 2 and chapter 2 verse 3 says do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility.
- Count others as more significant than yourselves. How counter cultural is that?
- How against the grain of the world in which we live do these words go? What does he say do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility.
- Count others as more important, as more significant than yourselves. The world teaches us the complete opposite.
- [16 : 54] You'll know that as you train to fill out application forms for jobs. We're trained to do that. When you're writing CVs we're trained to do that but we must do that in that context.
- It goes against the grain. Our lives should go against the grain. We should be different. There should be something different in our lives.
- A humble spirit will not envy the graces and the gifts of others. We are not to envy. We are not to become jealous of the graces and gifts that other people may possess.
- We are all different. We have all graces and we have all gifts of varied kinds.
- A humble spirit has a gracious and courteous attitude toward all. But we know, at least I know, that when I look at my own life and I look at my own dark heart, there are times I only see darkness as we struggle to live in this world.
- [18 : 19] Sometimes it is easier to conform to the ways of the world. But the Lord will enter into our hearts and He will say, thus far you shall go and no further.
- We are prone to go to the left and we are prone to go to the right but the Lord Jesus will pull us back. We will fail every day of our lives as Christians.
- But we worship a God who is forgiving and gracious. A God who will show us and teach us wisdom as the people of God.
- A God who will show us how we learn from our own mistakes on a daily basis.
- That is what the Lord is doing in your life and in my life. Helping us to see who we are in relation to Him and helping us to see who Jesus is and what He has done for us.
- [19 : 38] Helping us to see the bigger picture. Helping us to see that our lives are a mere vapor. We are here for a moment and then we are gone.
- A humble spirit concerning others. Not only do I love the spurge in stories, I love Abraham Lincoln stories.
- Now if you've heard this one already, will you forgive me? The story is told of Abraham Lincoln. Now Lincoln got caught up in a situation in the Congress where he wanted to please a certain politician.
- And to please this certain politician, he issued a command during the Civil War to move regiments from one end of the country to the other side of the country because the politician wanted him to do so.
- And Lincoln in doing this, he did not consult with his secretary of war. Does anyone remember who his secretary of war was?
- [20 : 48] He was a man called Edwin Stanton. Now Stanton received the order to move the regiments from one end of the country to another end of the country.
- And do you know what Stanton said? He said the president was a fool and he refused to carry out the order.

And when the messenger went back to Lincoln and said, Stanton says you're a fool and he's not going to do it, do you know what Lincoln's response was? If Stanton says I'm a fool, then I must be a fool because he's nearly always right.

I'll go and see to it myself. And he consulted Stanton and what he was about to do was a massive mistake. Stanton was right. They would have lost the Civil War.

He was president of the United States and yet he was not that big on himself to be corrected. That is what he was.

[21 : 52] He was corrected by somebody lower than him and he took it. Do you know why? Because he had a teachable spirit.

He had a teachable spirit. So that's concerning others. How about concerning God?

We've looked inward. We've looked outward. Let's look upward. And God, well a humble spirit has a very high, has a very high and admiring thoughts about the majesty and about the glory and about the perfection of God.

The humble spirit will fear God. The humble spirit will love God. The humble spirit will say with a psalmist, who shall ascend the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place?

Psalms 24 of course. The humble spirit is grateful toward God for all that God has done for him or for her.

[23 : 06] The humble spirit will surrender to God and know that the Lord God knows better.

The humble spirit will say with David, let him do to me what seems good to him. Let the Lord God do to me what seems good to him.

David spoke these words when his son Absalom rose up against him in the civil war you will see. In 2 Samuel chapter 15 his own son rose up against him and David's response he was a broken man.

He knew the kingdom was going to be broken because of his sin and he says let him do to me what seems good to him.

The humble spirit says he does not deal with us according to our sins nor we pay us according to our iniquity. Psalm 103 and verse 10.

[24 : 16] The humble spirit will see that the cup that is put into our hand, the cup that is put into your hand and into my hand is nothing in pales and comparison to the cup that was put into Jesus' hand.

That is what the Lord does in the life of the Christian. The Lord will come and open our eyes and change us and mold us and he will recreate us.

So what is a humble spirit concerning? Well we've looked at concerning ourselves, we've looked at concerning others and we've seen what a humble spirit is toward God.

The Lord says to Micah in chapter 6 verse 8 Micah gives these words to the people. He has told you O man what is good the prophet says he that is the Lord God has told you what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

So let's do point number 2 very quickly. Why is the humble person a peculiar favourite of heaven? And Erskine asked the question can I prove this from the Bible?

[25 : 55] And very very quickly. Do you remember the story of Jesus and the Centurion? The Centurion had a sick servant Matthew chapter 8 and the Centurion came to the Lord Jesus and said Lord I am not worthy to have you come under my roof but only say the word and my servant will be healed.

And do you remember the response of Jesus? Jesus says these words truly I tell you, truly I tell you with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

Go let it be done as you have believed. The Lord God loves simple faith.

He took an outsider all the way from Rome to come into the people of God and to show the people of God what humility and faith was.

I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. You only have to say the word and my servant will be healed. And Jesus says go.

[27 : 03] He loved the Centurion because of a simple child like faith. And yet we see the complete opposite among the disciples of Jesus.

Grant us to sit one at your right hand and one at your left hand. Do you remember that? And Jesus replies to them you do not know what you are asking for even the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom to many.

Passionate people are a work of grace to do in the lives of his disciples. They had to see that they were to serve as he was to serve.

He is saying look at the Centurion look at his faith. The humble, passionate are peculiar favorite of heaven. Can I prove this from the Bible Erskine asked and he says yes I can.

Look at the Centurion. Solomon said before on earth is humility. The Samist says he raises the pure from the dust and he lifts the needy from the ash sheep to make them sit with the princess office people.

[28 : 22] That is the work that Jesus does. The story is told of George Washington Carver who was a scientist who developed hundreds of useful products from the peanut.

And he says this in his testimony he says when I was young I said to God I said Lord will you tell me the mystery of the universe? And the Lord answered that knowledge is reserved for me and me alone.

So I said to the Lord Lord will you tell me the mystery of the peanut? And the Lord said well George that's more nearly your size and he told me. George Washington Carver.

God appreciates the humble and God appreciates child like faith. We can look at the scripture so we can see that.

But in order for you and I to enter into that work the Lord must be at work in our hearts and the Lord must have his way in your life and in my life.

[29 : 51] And there are times in our lives and in our experiences where the Lord will put us through situations and experiences that we do not like.

Perhaps painful situations and experiences. But we must let God be God and we must yield and surrender to his will because he is God and he knows better.

He knows better. And our close to the story I heard many years ago about a man who was walking down Princess Street in Edinburgh and as he walked down Princess Street he was stalked in his tracks by a picture he saw in a shop window.

It was a portrait of the crucifixion. The saviour was hanging on the cross and around the cross the multitude were watching and hurling insults at him.

And the portrait brought back for the man many many memories of all that he had learned in Sunday school and had been a long long time since he ever thought about Jesus and the crucifixion or about eternal things.

[31 : 29] And as he stared at the portrait he turned round and there was a wee boy standing beside him. A wee boy with a dirty face and dirty knees.

A scruffy wee boy. And the wee boy looked up at him and the wee boy says that's Jesus sir.

He's hanging on the cross for you and me sir. They nailed him there to that cross sir and see that crown of thorns on his head they made that too sir and they put it on his head.

He was a good man sir. He died for our sins sir.

The man felt a lump in his throat and the tear started in his eyes.

[32 : 38] And the boy continued and they buried him over there sir. Now it all became too much for the gentleman and he scurried away down Princess Street.

And as he did so he felt somebody tugging at his coat and he turned round and it was the wee boy with the dirty knees and the dirty face and the wee boy said sir I forgot to tell you he rose again for you and me sir.

The man was converted in an instant. In an instant the man was converted and the Lord began a work of grace in his heart.

Because of the wee evangelist with the dirty face and the dirty knees. God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble.

You see the message of salvation and the message of that Jesus hanging on that cross. That is the only thing that can humble our hearts.

[33 : 56] And the Lord does and will humble our hearts. Because he loves us with an everlasting love.

Let us pray. Eternal God we bless you and we thank you for the simplicity of the Gospel.

Lord help us to see Jesus more clearly this day. Lord we thank you for that work of grace that you do in the lives of your people.

Lord would you continue to work in our lives. Through good days and through bad days. And Lord if there are any here who are yet to bow the knee to King Jesus.

Lord may they see Jesus more clearly this day. For you are our God who is there and you are not silent. Go before us Lord put that joy and that humility within our hearts.

[35 : 03] That we would serve you and look to you and live for you. Help us to get rid of self.

But we ask it in his name always and forever. Amen.