

HUMILITY'S "VIEW" OF SIN

INTRODUCTION: So what are “Attitudes We Should Have in the New Year—and All Year Long?”

Attitude #1 is that we should have a **hunger to hear God**. We saw that in Psalm 85:8 where the Psalmist declared: “I will hear what **God the Lord will** speak...” If the Psalmist—pre-newspaper...and pre-radio...and pre-internet—made a **conscious decision** to listen to what God says, **how much more** should we be making that **same** decision. Why? Because God “will **speak peace** unto His people...”

God is the only one who can **speak** peace because He is the only one who can **give** peace! My prayer is that this is an attitude we will all have; that we will **choose to listen** to more of what **God** says and less of what **men** say!

Attitude #2 is that we should “**hope thou in God.**” Our hope **cannot be in man**; it must be **in God!** **Jeremiah 17:5, 7** “Thus saith the Lord; **Cursed be the man that trusteth in man**, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. ⁷ **Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord**, and **whose hope the Lord is.**”

We noted in Romans 15:13 what I believe is the **formula** for hope. God fills us with joy and peace so that we can abound in hope. We have a **part** in the process, though, and that requires we **take into our hearts and minds what God says**. When we do that, the Holy Spirit **assures** us of the truths of God and how God’s Word **applies** to our life and our situation. Sadness...and confusion...and hopelessness are replaced with joy, peace, and hope because God **assures** our hearts that our life is **in His hands**—and that **He is in control!**

And last week we noted from Romans 5:3-5 that **tribulations**—trials, troubles, and persecutions—are **not** something we are just supposed to **endure**. In fact, we are to **rejoice** in them the same way we are to rejoice in what **awaits** us in heaven! But how? And why? Because trials are the “factory” that produces hope in God!

--tribulations bring about **patience**—meaning endurance...perseverance...a refusal to quit

--perseverance brings about **experience**. Not only do we experience God’s faithfulness in the trial, but our own character and resolve have been tested and tried.

--and that experience gives us hope—a confident expectation that God will bring us through the next trial—or take us on to glory like He did Stephen!

This morning I want us to look at a **third** attitude we should bring into the new year and strive to have all year long. You already know from your outline and the title of my message that Attitude #3 is **humility**.

Ever hear the **story of the church member** who received recognition for being the **humblest** man in the church? They gave him a pin to wear. The following Sunday he wore it, but they took it away from him for being proud! (Online article by Alfred Ells, “Walking Humbly Before the Lord: What the Bible Says About Humility”).

Humility is one of those virtues that we appreciate and like to see in **other** people—sometimes—but aren’t overly concerned about developing it in **ourselves**. But it seems that that might be changing. It seems that more and more of God’s people are listening with a renewed interest to the words of **II Chronicles 7:14**: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall **humble** themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

The Bible has much to say about humility—and its polar opposite, pride. This morning we will begin to look at the **character** of humility. If we are to have humility—and we are—we need to understand **what** it is.

So, what is the **nature** of humility? What are its **characteristics**? What does it look like? My guess is that when most of us hear the word “humble” or “humility,” we think of someone who has **sorrow over their sin**. E.M. Bounds wrote: “**Humility is just feeling little because we are little. Humility is realizing our unworthiness because we are unworthy, the feeling and declaring ourselves sinners because we are sinners.**”

Although that is not a **complete** definition of humility, it certainly does address an important aspect of humility, that being our **view of sin**. This morning I want us to look at 4 ways humility “views” sin.

First—and was already mentioned... **1. Humility is Seen in Sorrow for Sin**

There are a number of passages that bear this out, but I’m only going to have us look at one. Please turn to James 4.

--In v 6, we see humility as the opposite of pride. God resists the proud—He is against them—but gives grace—help—to the humble.

--In v 8, we see the promise that if we **draw nigh**—near—to God, He will draw near to us. But if we are to draw near to God, we are to do **what**? Cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. Why? Because sin separates us from God!

Psalm 66:18 “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:” In other words, ‘If I have cherished sin in my life and am refusing to confess it, God will not listen to me.’

Isaiah 59:1-2 “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But **your iniquities** have separated between you and your God, and **your sins** have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”

Let’s not skip past the fact that sins against God don’t just involve **actions**—they also include attitudes! “Cleanse your hands” refers to your **actions**; “purify your hearts” refers to your **attitudes**...and affections...and thoughts. Outwardly we can look “good,” can’t we—but God knows what is going on **inside** of us.

James goes on to explain what our attitude should be regarding our sin in verse 9. We are to be **afflicted...and mourn...and weep**. Our laughter should be turned into mourning, and our joy to heaviness. Why? Because God is a kill-joy and doesn’t want us to enjoy life or laugh?

No; that’s not what is meant! But if our hands are **dirty**—if we are doing wrong—and our heart is **double minded**—meaning we go back and forth between **servicing** God and serving ourselves—then we should be **mourning over sin**, not rejoicing about it! And we see in v 10 that mourning and weeping over our sin seems to be synonymous with humbling ourselves: “Humble yourselves in the sight of God...”

Sorrow for sin is not the only view humility has of sin, though. Please take your Bibles and turn to II Chronicles 7, verse 14 (read). We see here what many refer to as God’s formula for revival. God’s people are to humble themselves...and pray...and seek His face...and turn from their wicked ways. God did not just **randomly** say this, though. Look at v 12 “And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard **thy prayer**....” God gave Solomon the promise of v 14 in answer to Solomon’s prayer!

What prayer of Solomon is God referring to? Turn back to II Chronicles 6, verses 12 and 13. The occasion is the **dedication of the temple** that Solomon had built for God. It had taken 7 years and was the first “permanent” structure that had been built for the worship of God. The dedication prayer starts in v 14 and goes all the way through v 42. We certainly don’t have time to dissect the whole passage, but I do want to point out a couple of things.

First, we will see in this prayer that... **2. Humility acknowledges that sin hinders the blessing of God**
Humility knows the character of God and recognizes the fact that God does not **bless** sin!

A. Battles can be lost because of sin

V 24 “And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, **because they have sinned against thee**...” “Put to worse before the enemy” means to lose the battle. Solomon recognizes that God is sovereign and **determines the outcome of battles**.

I can’t help but think that Solomon knew well the story of how his father David had taken on—and killed—the **giant Goliath**. God saw fit to record the words David spoke just before that took place.

I Samuel 17:47 “And all this assembly shall know that the **Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's**, and He will give you into our hands.”

Both David and Solomon understood that the **outcome of battles** is up to God—and that God may allow them to **lose battles** if they were sinning against Him!

B. Rain can be withheld because of sin

V 26 “When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, **because they have sinned against thee...**”

Solomon here recognizes that God is **sovereign over the weather**. God is the one who **gives** rain—and God is the one who **withholds** rain.

Psalms 147:8 “Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.”

Mt 5:45 “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and **sendeth rain** on the just and on the unjust.”

Acts 14:17 “Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and **gave us rain from heaven**, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Solomon understood that **God controlled the weather**—and that if they were not getting the rain they needed at the time they needed it, God may be withholding it because of their sin!

C. God's people can be taken captive because of sin

V 36 “If they **sin against thee**, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and **thou be angry** with them, and **deliver them** over before their enemies, and **they carry them away** captives unto a land far off or near;”

Here we see them not only losing a battle—but being **taken captive** and **removed out** of their land into the land of their enemies. Why might this happen? Because of their sin against God...and His anger with them...and God delivering His people over to their enemies! God will use sinful people—**even His enemies**—to chasten His people. Why? Because God wants them to **search their hearts** and ask Him if there is sin in their life that is hindering the blessing of God!

I need to give a disclaimer, though: **just** because things are going “bad” doesn't mean that God is trying to point out sin in your life! It is **often** the reason—but is not **always** the reason. Sometimes God uses trials to grow us like we saw last week! But humility realizes that sin will hinder the blessing of God in our life.

Pride says, ‘Sin doesn't matter; God doesn't see sin; God doesn't care about sin; God doesn't bring consequences for sin.’

Humility disagrees. ‘Sin **does** matter; God does **see sin**; God does **care about sin**; God does **bring consequences for sin!**’

Too often times we are content to say “Oh well” when trials come into our life instead of humbly searching our heart and asking God if He is indeed trying to **point out sin** in our lives!

Feeling sorrow over sin and acknowledging that our sin hinders the blessing of God are not the only ways the humble person views sin, though. There is yet a third way...

3. Humility agrees that sin must be turned from

Just **admitting** that sin may be the reason God is withholding blessing doesn't **fix** the problem—we need to **forsake** the sin! Kind of like the picture we are given in the book of James.

James 1:23-24 “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”

In my mind, here's the picture being painted here. You look in the mirror to make sure you don't have **toothpaste** in your moustache! But if you **see** toothpaste in your mustache—or some other problem with your appearance—you should **fix it**—not walk away from the mirror and forget what you just saw! The same way with sin! When God points it out, we don't just **admit** it is there—we “fix” it by **forsaking it!**

V 24 “And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall **return and confess thy name**, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house;”

To “return and confess thy name” means to return from their sinful ways and do right! We will see that stated more plainly as we go on.

V 26 “When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray toward this place, and **confess thy name, and turn from their sin**, when thou dost afflict them;”

Vs 36-38a “If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; ³⁷ Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and **turn and pray** unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, **We have sinned, we have done amiss**, and have dealt wickedly;

³⁸ **If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul** in the land of their captivity,

And turning from our sin is mentioned in the verse we started with, II Chron 7:14 “If my people, which are called by my name, shall **humble** themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

So what is your attitude toward sin? How do you view sin? Do you understand that just as we do not **reward our children or grandchildren** for **doing wrong**, God does not **bless us the way** He would like to because of our sin? **Proud** people want to **cover their sin** and hang onto; **humble** people want to **forsake their sin** and give it up. **Proverbs 28:13** “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso **confesseth and forsaketh them** shall have mercy.”

There is yet a fourth characteristic regarding humility as it relates to sin and it is this...

4. Humility asks that sin be pointed out

We should of course want **God** to point out our sin.

Psalm 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Humility does not just desire that God point out sin, though—humility opens itself up to the **criticism of others!** The story is told that **D.L. Moody** was with a number of men at a Bible Conference. The topic of discussion was **humility** and Moody asked, “How **many of you are willing** to open yourself up to the criticism of the rest of us?” Several men raised their hands and Moody proceeded to tell one of these men several **areas of his life that he needed to work on**. The man got quite **defensive**, then listed a number of things that **Moody himself needed to change** in his life! Moody’s response? “Thank you, Brother So-and-So, for your willingness to point out my shortcomings. I will have you know, though, that I did not raise my hand!” 😊!

We’re okay with **God** pointing out our sin, but not so much when **people** do! Although the humble person may not necessarily **crave** criticism, it does not cause them to be **overly defensive**. They understand that the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:6 “Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.”

So how are you doing? If you were to take these 4 views that humility has of sin, how would they compare to your life?

Do you have a sorrow for sin?

Do you acknowledge that sin may be hindering the blessing of God in your life?

Do you want to forsake your sin?

Do you want sin pointed out so you can forsake it?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First, are you saved...are you born again...have you humbly come to Jesus in faith and asked Him to forgive you and save you? The greatest form of pride is to think within your heart, "I don't need to be forgiven!" and "I don't need to hear what God has to say about getting into **His** heaven!"
2. Christian, what is your attitude toward sin? Do you take it lightly? Do you make excuses for it? God wants to bless us—but we often times hinder His blessing because we choose to be proud instead of humble.