

Getting it Right – Session 5

Humility: Philippians 2:5-8; 1Peter 5-7

With surging momentum as the final milestone receded in the wake of unflappable determination, the push toward the homestretch had commenced. The salty residue of droplets rapidly evaporated by the sweltering Georgia heat nestled in the corner of my eyes emanating a familiar smoldering burn. The siren call of dryness beckoning an oasis of refreshment encapsulated by a contoured plastic bottle affixed to the lower frame of my bicycle was totally ignored as if it were a deceptive mirage. Despite the routine ignition of the afterburners from within my fatigued legs which normally engaged a burst of speed toward my destination I became immediately aware of a disquieting phenomenon. No matter how much effort I employed... No matter how hard I pedaled... I could not make progress at my normal rate. The more I continued to exert every ounce of energy I had in my reserve tank, the more I seemed to flail against incessant opposition. What was going wrong? This was no unfamiliar path! I was well knowledgeable about the usual ups and downs, the curves, and straights of this path. As I quickly glanced at the moving parts of my bicycle to find a mechanical impediment, I could almost hear its audible response, "Don't look at me! I'm not the problem!" While fighting the normally friendly terrain, I scanned the environment in desperation and had an epiphany... Why was something that was so routine now so difficult? As I watched the traffic lights swinging in rhythm to the musical score of nature... I suddenly realized that I was riding against the wind. The routine had become difficult... The enjoyable had become a chore... The smooth was made rough... The familiar was now a challenge. A challenge would not be vanquished by my athletic prowess (perhaps too strong of a word to use).

And perhaps you may have had occasional experiences of the normal entanglements of life being a bit more difficult than they usually are. Or maybe you have noticed the constant struggle to bridge the gap between knowing right and living right is requiring more energy or more prompting these days. Perhaps the issue may be that you are riding against the wind. In the previous discussion it was elucidated that the culprit, the usual suspect of difficult living is pride. So how do we tackle this self-induced opponent... what is the antidote to this persistent

poison which has marred the human experience since the garden catastrophe? There is only one adequate counterbalance that can safely transport you from the top floor of self-significance, namely humility. We cannot get it right with pride. And subsequently we cannot defeat pride without humility.

Let's briefly consider two classic passages in tandem to gain insight regarding the employ and integration of humility to buffer the oscillation between Kingdom and non-Kingdom living. Philippians Chapter two lays out the concepts of living in humility with the greatest of all examples to follow, that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*5 **Have this mind** among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

There is literally a plethora of things we could possibly delve into based upon this powerful illustrative climax (especially the refusal of Christ to broadcast His power and authority in the service to mankind culminating in the humiliating crucifixion which indicates that at the core of humility is the service of others interests); but it will suffice for us to peruse the entry point of living in godly humility," Have this Mind... "Humility, as with all of the kingdom realities we must adopt to swing our pendulum toward daily righteousness is an inside job, as previously stated by Paul in Chapter 1 verse 6 (the one that has begun a great work **in** you shall complete it...) Since we have previously seen that kingdom course correction can be avoided with the eviction of pride from our approach to living, we must invite a new resident within our hearts. The transition must be an ontological one, that is, humility must be more than what we do; it must become who we are.

Interestingly the word for mind in verse 5 derives etymologically from the word for diaphragm intimating that Homeric and Classical Greek culture perhaps viewed the muscle responsible for filling the lungs with air was the "seat of consciousness" not so much the brain (they may have been on to something). Thus, having the "diaphragm" of humility may be slightly more nuanced as a breathing/living experience as opposed to a thinking one. Our challenge is to make humility part of our autonomic spiritual nervous system rather than the

voluntary one. This is going to take some spiritual muscle memory from the constant repetition of making right choices and providing godly responses (you former athletes or current married folk should pick up on this metaphor). What makes this so important is the fact that pride has become ingrained within our human nature due to the fall of mankind. Pride being at the core of our rebellion from God is literally our default response or approach to living. Consider the ramifications of first man and woman taking from the forbidden fruit. Prior to that God announced that the unforbidden fruit bearing plants were suitable for ingestion. God had provided everything they needed for life and vitality. However when they saw (Adam was right there... He just didn't speak up) the forbidden tree they saw three things that they wanted to provide for themselves even though God had already provided what they needed and were designed to desire. So the core issue was more than wanting to fulfill a need. They wanted to be the ones doing the fulfilling (Not God). They saw that the fruit was "Good for Food" in other words, they expressed that from now on mankind would self-satisfy. Furthermore they say that it was "pleasing to the eye," in other words although having been made to reflect God's image they now wanted to be the determiners of what appeared valuable and search for their own validation (which is why in the sinful aftermath the initial thing they experienced was shame after a self-assessment). And finally, they saw it was "desirable to make one wise," in other words they decided to be self-determinant of their lives. The one thing in common to the three is self-expression, no longer a dependence upon God.

Having said that a perusal of our second passage will underscore the nature of humble living.

⁵ *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

⁶ *Humble yourselves, **therefore**, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

The therefore in verse six points to four aspects of humility in the previous verse. In verse 5 we find out that humility requires subjection. This is a tough one

because it is not our human default. As a result life is full of microcosmic course adjustments in order to stay on a straight path (a truth I discovered while teaching my daughter to drive as she was firmly holding the steering wheel of an unaligned car). Secondly Humility must be worn like our favorite garment for all to see. What do people initially see when you first enter a room? What role do you immediately assume? Thirdly according to verse 5, humility has to take place with the constant prioritizing of others rather than our own desires. We must be subject to God's mighty hand and depend upon him for satisfaction, validation and direction (hence humility by means of casting our anxiety upon Him and trusting Him to handle what concerns us.)

In conclusion we see in verse 6 that God opposes, literally sets himself in military array against those who tend toward pride. Which is why you constantly live in opposition. You make some achievements, but they are more difficult than required. You literally are riding against the wind. The good news is that there is always an opportunity to make a course correction toward Kingdom living and ride with the wind as we journey toward getting it right.

Pastor Damon Byrd