

THRIVING IN BABYLON

Part 3: HAVING HUMILITY

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

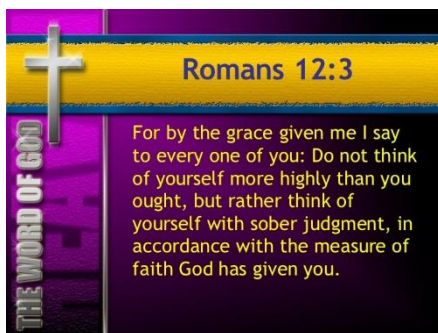
Source: “Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a godless Culture”
by Larry Osborne



Daniel's counterintuitive “responses to wicked leaders, evil coworkers, and a godless culture” of hope, humility and wisdom; were the keys to his living a holy life for 70 years in Babylon. Today's sermon will focus on the second key, Daniel's humility. Daniel's hope gave him courage to live for God in a godless culture but it was his humility that truly gave him favor in the eyes of his captors. Courage without hope leads to martyrdom while humility without courage leads to spinelessness (Kindle, Loc 1427).

Humility is not just a forgotten character trait but one that is avoided by most people. Have you ever heard a dad say that he wanted his son or daughter to grow up and be humble? Rarely! For most people “humility” carries mostly negative connotations. Modern-day definitions equate humility with a person who has low-self esteem, a soft disposition, lack of ambition, or one who consciously minimizes or downplays all of one's accomplishments” (Loc 1435). Humility often means to have self-deprecating thoughts such as “I can't do it” or “I'm not good enough” or “nobody loves me!” The only time society feels a person should be humble is when one is trying to fill the enemy with a false sense of security right before one clobbers them into oblivion! This of course was far from Daniel's definition of humility. Let's look at Biblical humility and see why it was one of the keys to Daniel's success for living a holy life in the godless culture, Babylon.

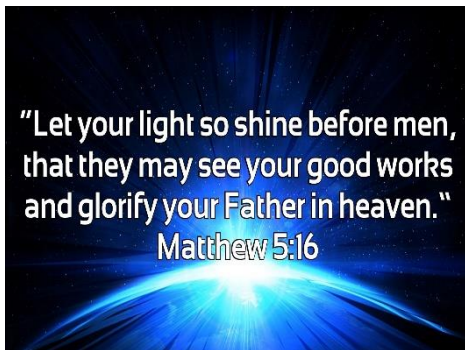
Biblical Humility has Nothing to do with low Self-esteem



Humility in the Bible has nothing to do with low self-esteem or excessive pride but everything to do with accurately assessing and acknowledging your strengths and weaknesses. While Jesus was humble enough to empty Himself and become a servant to all (Philippians 2:7), He also walked into Solomon's Colonnade and claimed to be God (John 10:22-30)! Daniel was humble enough to accept having his name changed, being castrated and forced to learn the occult ways of the Chaldeans, and yet he described

himself and his friends as “young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace” (Daniel 1:4, NIV). Christians show Biblical humility by remembering that since it was by grace that we were given our spiritual gifts, none of us should boast or put ourselves down but instead should use sober judgement to clearly assess the abilities we have received from God!

Biblical Humility Does Not Negate Ambition



Daniel and his friends were very ambitious. They studied hard and soon not only graduated at the top of their class but were placed in charge of all of Babylon’s wise men as well (Daniel 2:48). While ambition for self-gratification is wrong, wanting to fulfill your role in God’s kingdom is certainly not! When the sons of Zebedee asked to be promoted to the right and left side of Jesus they were not chastised for having ambition but for not seeing servanthood as the path to greatness in God’s kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28)! Biblical humility does not

seek public honor for accomplishments but instead attributes honor to God the Father in heaven who is the source of all life (Matthew 5:16).

Biblical Humility Serves all People



Living amongst the “ME” generation it is incredibly tough to truly love anyone but ourselves. To read that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper seems very odd to this modern age (John 13:1-17). Most people can partially understand this servant act if Jesus wanted something from His disciples like money, fame, friendship or to solidify his leadership role. But to wash the feet of others in order to merely express one’s unconditional love for them is a concept

foreign to an individualistic society, especially when the feet of one of those persons washed is about to betray and send you to be crucified! Likewise, this world would find the humility Daniel displayed in Babylon as equally ludicrous. Even though Daniel was treated cruelly by his captors, he served king Nebuchadnezzar with his utmost of his abilities! To the world this kind of unconditional love is not viewed as a strength but a weakness but to God this kind of servanthood is the key to effectively serving in His kingdom!



While we know that servanthood is at the heart of effectively serving in God's kingdom, would Jesus or Daniel's humility to serve his enemies be applauded by our modern day church? Maybe, but not likely. Quoting Psalms 1:1-2 "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on His law, day and night;" many Christians feel that associating with the ungodly

equates to aiding and abetting the enemy and becoming a spiritual compromiser of sorts (Loc 1495)! How wrong it is that when a missionary befriends a local witch doctor they are praised for making relational inroads but when a Christian befriends a prostitute, homosexual or drug dealer they are viewed as having been comprised in their faith! While we are not to take spiritual advice from the world, hating sin does not mean we hate those created in the image of God (James 3:9)! Daniel served and influenced his captors so much that both king Nebuchadnezzar and Darius ended up admitting that God was the one and true God (Daniel 4:34-37; 6:25-28)! Daniel may have not washed these king's feet but he certainly had a hand at washing their hearts! Trying to let one's light shine and influence this world by hiding under a bushel of avoidance is not what Jesus meant when He said "Go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19)!

Biblical Humility means Respecting those in Authority

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves (1 Peter 2:13-16, NIV).

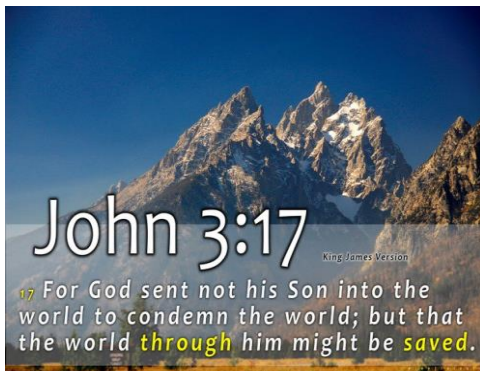
Daniel respected king Nebuchadnezzar not because he deserved respect but because Jeremiah, a prophet of God, told Israel to obey those placed in authority over them! Even though the false prophets and diviners stated that Israel would never obey a godless king, Jeremiah believed otherwise (Jeremiah 27:9-11). The king of Babylon was summoned by God (Jeremiah 43:10) to discipline Israel for her many sins! To go against Babylon's desire to conquer their nation would be the equivalent of going against God Himself! In the same way we are to submit to every human authority (2 Peter 2:13-16) because there is not one single authority that exists that God has not established (Romans 13:1). While it is true that we do not obey leaders when they ask us to break God's laws, we cannot use our freedom as a cover-up to do evil to those leaders that God has established! Also, if we do not treat godless leaders with

respect then how can we expect to influence their decisions and actions? One simply will not listen to those who look upon one's leadership with contempt and disdain!

Biblical Humility means Persuasion Not Condemnation



Remember Jonah? In verse one God commands Jonah to go “to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before God.” In verse three Jonah runs away from the Lord and heads for Tarshish, which was in the opposite direction. While on the ship God sends a great storm and Jonah asks to be thrown overboard so that the rest of the people might live (1:12). Jonah was so distraught with God's decision to show the people of Nineveh mercy, not judgment, that his first response to God's command was to run away and his second response was to wish for his own death so that he could not preach to those wicked people! Jonah would rather die than see the people of Nineveh repent and receive mercy! After spending three days and nights in the belly of a whale Jonah agrees to obey God and preach against Nineveh. After they had repented and were forgiven, Jonah grew so angry with God (4:1) that he again wished for himself to die (4:9).



Sometimes I think we feel an awful lot like Jonah, we wish great harm on our enemies long before we wish them to repent and be forgiven! Seeing everyone through the lens of some kind of spiritual warfare that requires condemnation leaves no room for grace or love! When non Christians are pressured into living like Christians without first experiencing the grace of the cross, their response is predictably one of anger and frustration. Being ridiculed and chastised their defensive response is to fight and resist the Gospel message. Jesus was not sent to condemn the world but to save the world through their belief in him (John 3:17). Jesus was not sent to defeat Rome and her leaders any more than He was sent to defeat the Jewish leaders of the temple. Jesus was sent “to proclaim the Good News to the poor, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness the prisoners” (Isaiah 61:1). Likewise, the early church focused not on ridiculing governments or culture but on changing the hearts of each individual. The enemy truly is not the person who does evil but the devil who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26)! When we see the injustices and sins of this world should we demand God to pour out his wrath of judgment upon them like Jonah, or would we rather see God pour out His grace and mercy, granting repentance and knowledge of the truth (Loc 1647)? Daniel and his friends did not try and conquer their captors but instead let their light shine in Babylon

knowing full well that their witness to the truth could overpower even the darkest valleys of this evil nation!

Conclusion

While Biblical humility is not just a forgotten but avoided characteristic trait by today's society, Daniel found that it was the key to influencing his captors. Daniel learned that courage without humility leads to martyrdom while humility without courage leads to spinelessness! Biblical humility means to accurately assess and acknowledge one's strengths and weaknesses. Daniel could have seen his captors through the lens of condemnation but instead chose to see them through the lens of God's mercy and grace! Daniel's humility did not negate his ambition to do his very best to unconditionally love his captors so that he might point them to God the Father in heaven who is the source of all life. Like Jesus the message to our own godless culture must be one that invites the poor, blind, broken-hearted captives of sin into the glorious light of forgiveness and redemption!