

The humble soul: the peculiar favourite of heaven pt. 2

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[0 : 00] If you would turn back with me please to that portion of scripture that we read in 1 Peter chapter 5 and at verse 5. 1 Peter chapter 5 and at verse 5 and it's the second half.

And for those that were not out this morning we shall do a little recap because this is part 2 of what we looked at earlier today.

And what I have done, something a little different, something a little bit experimental. I have taken an old sermon by a man called Ebenezer Erskine.

He was a famous Church of Scotland minister in the 1700s. And he wrote and he preached a sermon called The Humble Soul, The Peculiar Favourite of Heaven.

The Humble Soul, The Peculiar Favourite of Heaven. And what Erskine did, he asked six questions of the scriptures to back up that claim that the humble soul is indeed a peculiar favourite of heaven.

[1 : 29] And of course the reason, and you might say, oh you're plagiarising this, but what I've done is I've put my own illustrations, my own application and my own work in it.

I've simply taken Erskine's headings and reworked them a little bit. It was one of these sermons that I read, I remember a year ago, that just penetrated straight into my heart.

And it really affected me. And you should maybe go online and have a look at some of Erskine's old sermons. You'll see them there along with Thomas Boston and his brother Ralph Erskine.

And they really are a treasure trove of theological and spiritual truth and full of meat and full of teaching. And he would probably take two hours to preach the sermon.

I'll have you out of here at the back of seven, I promise you. So that is what we did this morning.

And the six questions that Erskine asked of the scriptures concerning the topic of humility were, number one, and this is what we looked at this morning, we didn't get very far, what is a humble soul?

[2 : 37] Number two, why is the humble person a peculiar favourite of heaven? And can this be proved from the Bible? Number three, why does God appreciate the humble?

Number four, what are the marks of a humble soul? Number five, why should we seek a humble spirit? And finally, number six, how do we attain a humble spirit?

So the topic is on humility and that is why we read Philippians chapter 2, which tells us of the Lord Jesus and what he has done for his people.

The one who humbled himself like no other. The one who went to a cross and the one who died in the place of his people.

And we are to look to Jesus as not only our saviour, but also as our example, whose life is to be an example to all of his people.

[4 : 00] And of course we know as we looked at this morning when Adam and Eve fell in the garden of Eden. We all fell with Adam and Eve.

And the effects of that fall in the garden is that we are mired in sin. And with sin comes pride. And with pride comes stubbornness.

And with stubbornness comes everything that is wrong in this broken and fractured world. And once again we looked at this morning that the only antidote, the only remedy for you and for me, and the only remedy for this broken and fractured world is the gospel of free grace that is offered to all in and through Jesus.

The gospel is the answer to all the world's problems. And one day that truth will be made known to every living being who has ever lived, whether they have believed or whether they have not.

When every knee will bow before this Jesus and will acknowledge that this gospel and this scripture are all true.

[5 : 24] And that God is there and has always been there. And as Francis Schaeffer read and wrote and preached and spoke about in the 1970s, he says, He is there.

And he is not silent. And he is still there. And this great God is not silent even today. And as we look at the topic of humility from the scriptures, there's nothing like the word of God to strip away everything within our heart.

There's nothing like a time of introspection and for us to look inwardly. Perhaps it's good timing even before a communion service. Who knows? But when we look at our own hearts and see where we really do stand and see what is going right in this pilgrimage of sanctification and are there things we can work on in our own lives.

And the Lord is working in his people. As Paul said, I am not yet perfect, but I press on. And I urge you and I urge myself that that is what we are called to do, to press on.

And as John Owen said, we must kill our sin. Our sin will kill us. So what is a humble spirit?

[6 : 51] Well, very briefly, we looked at three things there. We looked at it concerning ourselves and we are to have a sensible and a very low view of ourselves.

This is not to be morose or doer. We can do this with a smile on our faces, with that joy that was within us, if we have the Holy Spirit of God. And then we looked at what is a humble soul concerning others.

Well, we are to put the interests of others before our own interests. And I don't know about you, but that is where I fall down all the time as well.

Thirdly, concerning God, we are to have a high and a holy fear of God. We are to put our lives into the trust of God and realize and acknowledge and say, He knows better for my life.

He knows better for my life. A humble spirit surrenders to God, to the will of God. That was point one.

[7 : 55] We didn't get much further past point one. And the second point, and the second question you will remember was, why is the humble person a peculiar favorite of heaven? And can this be proved from the Bible?

And we said, yes, of course it can. And we looked at the story of the centurion in Matthew's gospel who came to Jesus and said, Lord Jesus, you only have to say the word and my servant will be healed.

And the Lord Jesus says, look at this wonderful faith that this man has. Go and it will be done just as you said. Nothing pleases God more than faith.

And with faith comes humility, surrendering to the will of God. Why is the humble person a peculiar favorite of heaven? And can this be proved from the Bible?

Absolutely, because the humble soul, the humble Christian shows and shows the world that they have been saved by the free grace of God and the free grace of God only.

[8 : 59] You see, when God gives the grace of humility to his people, he intends more grace for the soul.

The verse we just read, clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And elsewhere in the scripture, she talks about giving more grace and more grace and more grace.

You see, the humble Christian is ordinarily the most thriving and growing Christian. You know, somebody once said, we will not be able to change the world until God changes us.

And that is so true. Until God changes us. You see, the scriptures tell us that honor, that exaltation is intended for the humble soul.

You remember the words of Solomon in Proverbs, Before honor is humility. Before honor is humility. The psalmist in Psalm 113 says, He raises the poor from the dust, and he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.

[10 : 14] The Lord will take the most lowly people in the whole of this world, and he will raise them up. And he will raise them up. And on the last day, they truly will be raised up.

And they will rule and reign with Jesus. All our exaltation is intended for the humble soul. He raises the poor from the dust.

You see, the scripture also teaches us that God's eyes are upon the humble. Listen to Isaiah in chapter 66. But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and the one

who trembles at my word.

My eyes are upon him, the Lord God says, or her. I am watching. I am seeing. The scripture also tells us that God's ear is toward the humble person.

But to this man will I look. And God's ear is toward the humble soul. Oh Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted, the psalmist says.

[11 : 24] And you will strengthen their heart. You will incline your ear toward them. You know, we must always remember that we not only worship a God who is revealing himself, but we worship a God who hears us.

The God who hears the very groans of our hearts. He hears. He understands. He knows. God's ear is toward the humble soul.

In fact, the scripture goes further and teaches us that God lives with the humble soul. Oh Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted. And the other psalmist says, and the Isaiah says, For thus says the one who is high and lifted up, the one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and the holy place.

And also with him who is of a contrite and a lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

The one who is eternal, the one who is lifted up, the one whose name is holy, lives with the one who is of a contrite heart.

[12 : 51] And it's only the grace of God that can give us a contrite heart, a heart that will receive that grace that is intended for you and for me.

The high and lifted up God of glory will live with the lowly and with those of a contrite heart.

John Flavel the Puritan says this, They that know God will be humble, and they that know themselves cannot be proud.

They that know God will be humble, and they that know themselves cannot be proud. There is nothing like the word of God to make us look at our own hearts.

There is nothing like the word of God. As we look into our own hearts, and we see where we are at with the Lord.

[14 : 04] Because you know something, if you are anything like me, I am prone to wandering to the right, and I am prone to wandering to the left.

And we need this word of God, like a path, like a light on our path. And we need this word of God to help us to see us who we really are in Christ.

Are we in Christ? Are we outside of Christ? Are we backsliding? Are we strong? Where are we? Where are we? This evening, we must ask ourselves that question.

Where are we? So Erskine answered the question, yes, yes, and yes, the humble person is a peculiar favorite of heaven.

Number three, why does God appreciate the humble? Well, quite simply, it glorifies his free grace.

[15 : 14] It glorifies his free grace. There is not one person who has ever lived in this broken world who deserves anything of the grace of God.

We know that. We know that. We've been taught it since we were children. But even the humble spirit is undeserving of God's grace. You know, the humble spirit knows full well that he or she is saved by the grace of God and by the grace of God only that there is no works involved in it.

And is content to be indebted to that free grace for life. And that alien righteousness that the Lord's people know.

We are clothed in our robe that does not belong to us, it belongs to Jesus. And he freely gives it to us. That pardon, that salvation that the Lord's people enjoy.

You know I like the Heidelberg Catechism. And in question and answer one, they answered this question, what is your only comfort in life and in death?

[16 : 24] What is your only comfort in life and in death? Well, the humble spirit will answer with these men who wrote this catechism. I am not my own, but I belong, body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

Because he has fully paid for all of my sin with his precious blood. And he has set me free from all the power of the devil.

But more so, he also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head.

Indeed, they say, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life.

And he makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him. to live for him.

[17 : 33] He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing from now on to live for him. Are you assured of eternal life here this evening?

Can you answer that question the way it is answered in the catechism? Can you? Well, I offer you Christ if you can say, no, I cannot.

I offer you Christ freely here this evening. And I tell you that the answer is in the gospel. You call upon the name of the Lord and you say to the Lord, Lord, I cannot do this on my own anymore. My sin and my pride is getting the better of me. Everything I touch turns to mud. You must help me, O Lord. You have promised me in your word that you will come and that you will save me and that you will assure me of eternal life so that I can answer that question that I belong with body and soul to my faithful saviour, Jesus Christ.

What a wonderful answer to give. I am not my own. I am content to be a fool for Christ.

[18 : 58] You see, God appreciates the humble soul because it is the fruit of his own spirit that lives in that soul. You see, the Lord God is at work through his people.

That is how the Lord God works in this world. Yes, he can come and do miraculous things and signs and all the rest of it, but that is the way, that is what the church is for, that the Lord would come and use his weak and feeble saints.

grace. And that is the way, the way the Lord works. I remember hearing a story of a man, I remember hearing a story of a man who was walking down Prince's Street and the man had not, he was walking down Prince's Street on the way to a train and something caught his eye in a shop window and it was a picture, it was a picture of the crucifixion of Christ hanging on the cross and he stopped, he just had to stop and he stopped and he looked at the picture and thoughts started to come into his mind and into his heart and old truths from Sunday school started to come back and it had been many, many, many years since this man had thought of such eternal and weighty things and he just looked and he stared and he turned around and he realized that there was a wee boy standing beside him in shorts and he had a dirty face and he had dirty knees and the wee boy looked up to the man and he says, that's Jesus, sir and he's dying on the cross for you and I, sir and see all the people around the cross, they put him there, sir and the man couldn't take it any longer and the tears were streaming down his face and he carried on down Princess Street and as he walked he felt the wee boy running behind him and tugging at his coat tail and the wee boy says, sir, sir, I forgot to tell you he rose again, he rose again and instantly the man was converted and the man became a missionary who went off to Africa.

That is the way the Lord works to use a wee boy with a dirty face and dirty knee and what an evangelist that wee boy was. Used by God.

[21 : 28] If you are a Christian in here this evening, never, never, ever underestimate what the Lord will do in your life. Never underestimate the responsibility that you and I have as the Lord's people to do the work of the Lord in our families, in our workplaces and in our communities.

Never underestimate what the Lord will use you for. We are to be ambassadors. We are to be channels of grace to those round about us.

Just like the wee boy with the dirty knees and the dirty face. God appreciates the humble soul because it is the fruit of his own spirit that lives in that soul.

You know, I remember not long after I was saved I went to see my granny and my granny hadn't seen her for a long, long time. She had been a Christian.

She was a Christian a long, long time and still is. And she says, Jomurdo, see when you were in the world, the world had one eye on you. See now that you belong to Jesus, the world has two eyes on you.

[22 : 40] Watch how you go. Watch your step, Jomurdo. And it was good advice. It was good advice. Number three.

Will we go to number four? So number one was, what is a humble soul? Well, it's a sensible and a low view of ourselves.

Number two was, why is the humble person a peculiar favourite of heaven? And can this be proved from the scriptures? Yes, of course it can. Number three, why does God appreciate the humble?

Well, quite simply, it glorifies his free grace. A humble Christian will glorify the free grace of God and it glorifies his dear son, Jesus.

Number four, Erskine asked, what are the marks of a humble soul? What are the marks of a humble soul? A friend of mine was telling me a number of years ago I'd been watching a programme on TV and the programme was about a man who was working in the Grand Canyon and he was about to retire.

[23 : 49] He had worked at the Grand Canyon for about 50 years. Has anyone ever been to the Grand Canyon? No? Not dared? Put up your hand if you have. Well, this man had been a tour guide around the Grand Canyon for 50 years and he had seen them come and he had seen them go and the reporter, they were doing a programme on him and there was nothing this man didn't know about the Grand Canyon and the reporter asked the old man and said to him, so in the last 50 years what's changed?

What's changed the most? And the man thought for a few moments and he says, well, he says, back in the day they used to come off the buses and they used to come hundreds of them at a time and with their cameras and they used to take pictures off the canyon and there's another picture off the canyon and oh, there's another picture off the canyon but he says, today, no, no, no.

He says, it's a picture of themselves and a little bit of the canyon behind them and he says, I don't understand it. Why do you want to take a picture of yourself when you're going and he couldn't, he couldn't get it because there's nothing wrong with selfies.

Myself and my daughter were taking selfies in a cafe a couple of weeks ago and I was telling you when my wife Dawn was away and we were out having a hot chocolate and we took a selfie so I do take selfies with my kids but that's what the man couldn't understand.

You know, what are the marks of a humble soul? Well, Erskine says, the humble soul is at times ashamed to look up to heaven because of sin and unworthiness.

[25 : 24] You remember this one well, don't we? But the tax collector standing afar off would not even look up to heaven but he beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

And the response of Jesus, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

You know, the humble soul wonders why God has not cast him or her away. Have you ever wondered if you're a Christian why God has kept you for so long?

I often speak to some of the Christians in the care homes when I go in visiting and, you know, some of them don't know much but they know one thing, that the Lord has been good to them for a long, long time.

And they often ask the question, why? Why has the Lord been so good to me for so long? The humble soul wonders at the mercy and the long-suffering and the patience of God with us.

[26 : 46] You know, the humble soul is filled with wonder that God should stoop so far toward the likes of him. Do you remember David's response and we spoke about it this morning when David was taken off, he was taken away from the croft and he was made king of Israel and he said, Lord, who am I?

Who am I that you have taken me thus far and put into the line of Christ into his human ancestry?

Who am I? He says, who am I?

You know, the humble soul loves Christ because Christ has kept the law perfectly for them. You know, oftentimes and of course all our preaching and all our meditations and sermons and reading and the total center of our faith is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It absolutely is and it should be and that's where it is because he has died for his people but sometimes we neglect the fact that the Lord Jesus lived a perfect life for us.

It wasn't just his death but it was his life and it was his ministry. He kept that law perfectly for us because of course we cannot keep it because of our own sin and pride.

[28 : 10] And somebody asked the question, how are you righteous before God? If somebody was to ask you that question tomorrow morning at work, what makes you righteous before God?

How would you answer that question? Well listen to the Heidelberg Catechism again. How are you righteous before God? Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.

Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all of God's commandments and I have never kept any of them and I am still inclined toward all evil.

Yet God without any merit of my own out of mere grace imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, the perfect righteousness and the perfect holiness of Christ.

And He grants all this to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin. as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me.

[29 : 16] If only, if only I accept this gift with a believing heart. Do you see the gift that is on offer in the gospel this evening?

Did you hear that? Yet God without any merit of my own out of mere grace He imputes that is He clothes me He puts to my account the perfect satisfaction the perfect righteousness and the perfect holiness of Christ.

Do you know that the Lord God looks at His people through a lens and do you know that that lens is His own perfect Son Jesus?

Because you and I, if we're in Christ here this evening, we have that robe of righteousness wrapped around us and that robe of righteousness and holiness will never be taken from us.

We have active and we have passive sanctification. Passive sanctification is God's people are holy already, a holy nation, a royal priesthood because Christ has done it all on the cross in one respect.

[30 : 39] But in the other respect, we have active sanctification where the Lord is taking us by our right hand and is leading us through this world and He is cleaning us up just as we were speaking to the children this morning about the washing machine cleaning the clothes.

Active sanctification. salvation. That is the promise of the gospel. That is the promise of the gospel.

You see, the humble soul takes his indwelling sin seriously. It was John Owen who said, and then Murray McShane must have read John Owen and he said it too.

He said, the seed of every known sin is in my heart. the seed of every known sin is in my heart.

Have you ever been like the psalmist in Psalm 38 where he says, for my iniquities have gone over my head.

They are like a heavy burden. They are too heavy for me. Why carry that burden? If you are not a Christian in here tonight, why are you carrying that burden?

[31 : 57] the humble soul cries out with Paul, O wretched man that I am, who can deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're nearly through number four. Will we do a wee bit of number five? We might have to do five and six another time. You know the humble soul Erskine says is one who is thankful for little.

You remember Paul's words, I have learned the secret of being content whether I have much or whether I have little. So number five, why should we seek a humble spirit?

Well, to put it simply, it joins our soul to Christ. It joins our soul to Christ, but it is only by the grace of God that we can be saved.

In Philippians 2, the portion of scripture that we read earlier, it tells us to have and it commands us to have the mind of Christ.

[33 : 24] It commands us to have the mind of Christ. You know that Paul elsewhere wrote in 1 Corinthians 2, 16, not only does he command us to have the mind of Christ, he tells us that we already possess the mind of Christ, but we have the mind of Christ.

Look it up for yourselves. 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 16, where Paul is rallying against all the pagan philosophy of the day, and he says, see, Christian brother and sister, you have the mind of Christ.

You know, sin and pride are serious things, and we know that it is only through the gospel that our sin and pride can be dealt with.

And I urge any, once again, who are yet strangers to grace, to look to Christ.

You're not promised tomorrow tomorrow, tomorrow, or the next day. I urge you, and I plead with you, this mind of Christ is there for you.

[35 : 02] You're commanded to come forward, and you're commanded to sit at the Lord's table. Perhaps you've been sitting in this church for many years.

I don't know. And I ask you, what's holding you back? What's holding you back? You know, the Lord Jesus is gentle, and lowly, and remember there is no condemnation for you if your faith and trust is in him.

And as Calvin once preached and once wrote, every time the gospel is preached, it's as if the Lord Jesus Christ is there with his arms out open, pleading the lost to come to him.

Why would you die? why would you die? Let us pray. Let us pray.