

The humble soul: the peculiar favourite of heaven pt.1

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[0 : 00] please turn back with me to that portion of scripture that we read in 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter 5 and we'll look at verse 5.

1 Peter 5 and at verse 5. And in particular the second half of verse 5. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.

For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. A number of years ago in my studies I came across a sermon preached in 1721 by a man named Ebenezer Erskine.

He was a twin brother of Ralph Erskine. And he was one of what Scottish church history describe as the Marrowmen along with Thomas Boston.

And there was 12 of them who had a dispute with the Church of Scotland at the time. And a minister and preachers in those days it was frowned upon for a minister and a preacher to offer the free offer of the gospel as we call it today to everybody.

[1 : 21] Everybody. And Erskine and Boston said that is not correct. The word of God tells us to go out to all the nations with the gospel of free grace and preach to every creature under heaven.

Not just to those that the minister or the elders deemed as repentant enough. They won the battle.

Praise God. Therefore ministers and preachers today can offer Jesus to all who would have him. It's the Lord who adds the increase.

Well Ebenezer Erskine. I came across this sermon that he preached in 1721. It was during a communion season in Orwell.

And it was a fast day before the supper. And the title of the sermon was this. The humble soul. The humble soul. The peculiar favorite of heaven.

[2 : 20] And he took us his text. First Peter 5 and verse 5. Clothe yourselves all of you with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

And it was one of these sermons as I read it that hit me right in my heart. It's like a dagger in my heart. So what I have done with this sermon is I have taken Erskine six points.

And we're not going to get through six points today. So don't worry. What I have done is I have taken Erskine six points. And I have adapted it and put in my own illustration and application.

And reworked it a wee bit. And he asked six questions of the scriptures on the topic or the subject of humility. Now for any visiting minister or preacher to go to a church that he doesn't belong to.

And preach a sermon on humility. I think I'm on a hiding to nothing. But it's the word of God. And we must study every topic that the word of God has for us.

[3 : 25] And of course as we read Philippians 2. As we read Philippians 2. We see there in stark detail. The complete opposite of pride and sin.

And we see the Lord Jesus as the prime example. And the one who humbled himself like no other. Humbled himself even to the point of death.

Death on a cross. The story is told. Some of you may remember an accident that happened in the Black Sea.

In 1986 when two ships collided. And hundreds of people lost their lives in the icy water. And when the investigators realized that there was no technical malfunction.

There was no fog. And they tried to determine how on earth did these two ships collide. The answer was that the two ships were heading straight for each other.

[4 : 25] And neither captain was willing to even move two or three degrees to the port. Or two or three degrees to the starboard.

And they collided. And hundreds of people lost their lives because of what? Because of human pride. And human stubbornness. You see since Adam and Eve fell in the garden of Eden.

We are mired in sin. And with sin comes pride. And it is only the gospel of free grace that is offered in and through Jesus Christ.

That can do anything about my sin and pride. And your sin and pride. And the word of God is absolutely crystal clear on that.

Listen to C.S. Lewis on the topic of pride. He says, There is one vice of which no man in the world is free. Which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else.

[5 : 31] And of which hardly any people except Christians ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. It was through pride that the devil became the devil.

Pride, he says, leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind. Sin and pride has devastating effects.

Now when Erskine came to the scriptures, what he did and what they did back in those days, they would ask questions of the scriptures. Same as you will have in the shorter catechism.

They ask questions and then the answers are given. Well, he asked six questions. The first question, what is a humble soul? What is a humble soul?

Number two, why is the humble person a peculiar favorite of heaven? And can I prove this from the Bible? Number three, why does God appreciate the humble?

[6 : 34] Number four, what are the marks of a humble soul? Number five, why should we seek a humble spirit?

Number six, how do we attain a humble spirit? Now God willing, for a few moments, I want to look at a couple of these points and then this evening when we're left over, we'll have a look at maybe points three to six, God willing.

So Erskine asked, what is a humble soul? What is a humble spirit? Well, it's a sensible and a low view of ourselves because that is what sin has done to us.

We are to have a low view of our pedigree and our station in life. Listen to the words of Jacob after he had been blessed by the Lord in Genesis 32.10.

And Jacob had to be molded by God. He had to be wrestled by God in order for him to have his heart changed and have his heart transformed.

[7 : 44] He says, I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and the faithfulness that you have shown me. I am not worthy of the least of all that you have done for me.

We must never think there is no one like us. But that is what sin and pride does in our hearts. We must never think there is no one like us, that we come from such and such a family or because we do such and such occupation or we have so much money or whatever the case may be, possessions.

We must never think there is nobody like us. The story is told of Charles Spurgeon and he had been preaching in the tabernacle one Lord's Day evening.

And as he was at the door shaking hands with everyone as they left the evening service, a young man came up to him whom he had never seen before. And the young man came up to the great preacher.

And the young man couldn't wait to tell the preacher who he was. He was finely dressed. He was affluent. And he couldn't wait to tell him what family he came from and what he did.

[8 : 56] And the great preacher just stood and he listened and he watched and he listened. And when the young man stopped speaking, Spurgeon said, Young man, I care not where you came from.

I am only interested in where you are going. I am only interested in where you are going. Listen to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7.

After he had been taken from the hill, after he had been taken from the croft, he was the least in his family. He was the youngest in his family. He was out tending the sheep and the Lord raised him up and he made him king.

He didn't raise himself up. The Lord raised him up and he says, Who am I, O Lord? Who am I, O Lord? And what is my house that you have brought me thus far?

And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. Who am I, O Lord? Who am I, O Lord?

[10 : 05] The humble soul has low views on his or her abilities for any work or service. Listen to the great apostle Paul. He says, It's not that we are sufficient in ourselves, the apostle says, or claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.

Our sufficiency comes from God and from God alone. And again, Paul elsewhere says, Not that I have already obtained this or I am already perfect, but he says, I press on.

I press on to make it my own because Jesus Christ has made me his own. The Lord Jesus Christ was everything to Paul.

The second greatest preacher that ever lived was Paul after Jesus himself. And he says, Not that we are sufficient in ourselves. I am not already perfect, but I press on because one day God will make me perfect.

Because Jesus is perfect. A humble spirit will work without looking for glory or for show.

[11 : 23] A humble spirit will work diligently and work hard when no one is watching. A humble spirit will be willing to work for the good of the church.

Go back to Paul. So concerning ourselves, Lord, we are not worthy of the least of the steadfast love that you have shown us.

And you know something? It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life and in your life that our lives can be changed and transformed.

The theological word is sanctification. But first we must believe. And then the Lord will take your life and my life.

And he will mold us. And he will recreate us. Until one day there will be no more sin in us. And we will be perfect like Jesus is perfect.

[12 : 30] That is the gospel of free grace that we were talking about with the children. We are to have a sensible and a low view of ourselves. But do you know something?

We can do this with a smile on our faces. Because if we belong to the Lord, we have that heart that is full of joy.

That heart that is full of rejoicing. That if the Lord takes us today on the way home, we are going to glory. Because our trust is in Jesus.

Is your trust in this Jesus? Are you ready? Are you ready? So that's concerning ourselves. How about concerning others?

What is a humble spirit concerning others? Well, a humble spirit, and it's saturated throughout the scriptures. A humble spirit will put others before themselves.

[13 : 28] And this is where I fall down every day. A humble spirit will put others before themselves. Do you remember the words we read in the Philippians there?

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. But in humility count others as more significant than yourselves. It's a command.

It's a gospel command from the Lord. You see, a humble spirit will not envy the graces or the gifts of their neighbor. A humble spirit has a gracious and a courteous attitude toward all.

A humble spirit is long-suffering and patient with those within their families who are yet not Christians. Gently guiding them and perhaps rebuking them when necessary.

You know, we are not commanded to be morose or sullen. We are to be gentle, showing meekness to all.

[14 : 33] We are to have teachable spirits. We are to have that teachable spirit that whenever we come to the word of God, that we would pray that the Lord would use that word to change us because we realize our condition.

I think I've told you the story before, but I'll say it again. The story about Abraham Lincoln. I love Lincoln stories. Abraham Lincoln, he got caught up in a situation during the Civil War where he wanted to please a certain politician.

And in order to please this certain politician, the politician asked him to move certain regiments from one end of the country to the other end of the country. And Lincoln said, yes, I'll do that.

But Lincoln did not confer or consult his Secretary of War who was a man named Edwin Stanton. And when Stanton got the order from a messenger, Stanton's response was, the president is a fool and I will not carry it out.

And the messenger was sent back to Lincoln. And the messenger said to the great president, he says, Stanton says you're a fool and he doesn't want to do what you are commanded.

[15 : 49] And Lincoln said, if Stanton says I'm a fool, then I must be a fool because he's always nearly right. And he was. They would have lost the Civil War.

He had a teachable spirit. He was open to correction. And that is something that we lack in this day and this generation.

I don't know about you, but when I'm corrected, I dig my heels in because of pride and because of sin. It's only the Lord that can deal with us.

So concerning ourselves, concerning others, how about concerning God? Well, we are to have a holy fear of God.

Not a slavish fear, but a holy fear of God. Knowing that the Lord knows best for your life and my life.

[16 : 49] And there are times in the Christian journey where our hearts will be sore through bereavement, through illness, through suffering, through whatever myriad things we may be going through.

But we must always allow God to be God. And know and understand and have that faith that he knows best.

He always knows best. And he has our best interests at heart. Although it may be painful at the time and we are perplexed and we may become confused.

And it could be any myriad things. It could be loved ones who are yet strangers to grace and they just don't seem to be softening. They just don't seem to be softening to the gospel.

And we must leave them with the Lord. We must leave them with the Lord. I remember hearing a story by an old elder down in Tarbird a number of years ago.

[17 : 50] The three of us were going to a wee mission house in Avonsua to do a wee mission. And there was only a congregation of three or four. There was two elders and myself.

I was not long a Christian. We were going along in the car to Avonsua and he told us a story. The elder's name was Willie and he was a great man who mentored me for a year or two before he died.

And he told us a story of a husband and wife, Mary and Callum. And Mary and Callum and Mary was going to church. She would love the Lord for years and years and years.

She would go to church faithfully. But Callum had given up going to church a long, long, long time ago. And then one day she was getting ready to go to church and he started to put a suit on and she didn't say anything.

And she rejoiced within her heart as he started doing up his tie. I'm coming with you. Okay. And as they were driving along, as they were heading along toward the church, she was praying in her heart that the visiting minister would have this wonderful sermon, that it would be the best sermon that they've ever heard, that it would be thunder and lightning and the fear of God and the Holy Spirit would come into the church.

[19 : 07] And he would be converted instantly. They sat in church and an old elder from another congregation who could barely see his sight had gone.

And his voice was going and he preached the gospel to the best of his ability. And he preached on a genealogy from the book of Genesis. And Abraham lived so many years, then he died.

Such and such lived so many years and he died. Such and such lived so many years and he died. And she was heartbroken.

This is never going to convert my husband. Eventually the husband became a Christian months later. And she asked him at the dinner table one day, what was it?

What psalm was it? What prayer was it? What sermon was it? What was it that converted you? And the man looked at his wife and he said, and he died.

[20 : 14] And he died. And he died. The very first sermon.

Gotta let God be God with those whom we love. A humble spirit surrenders to God.

A humble spirit will surrender to the will of God. The story is told of King David in 2 Samuel chapter 15.

And King David's beloved son, Absalom, rose up against him. It was the son that he spoiled. He overindulged his children, did David. To the point they became so spoiled they wanted all to be king.

And Absalom rose up against him in a civil war. And the kingdom was split in two. And he sent Joab out and he says, make sure Absalom is not killed when we go to battle with him.

[21 : 22] Make sure he's not killed. And of course Absalom is killed. And David is absolutely heartbroken. He's absolutely heartbroken.

And do you remember his words? Let the Lord, let him do to me what seems good to him. Let him do to me what seems good to him.

He had lost the son whom he loved so much. And yet he says, let him do to me what seems good to him. A humble spirit says that the Lord God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our inequities.

A humble spirit sees the cup that is put into his or her hand and sees it as nothing compared to the cup that was put into the hand of Jesus. Listen to Erskine on this point.

He says, the humble and lowly believer is content to be nothing. That Christ may be all in all unto him. He is content to be a fool.

[22 : 33] That Christ may be his only wisdom. Content to be, as he really is in himself, a guilty, condemned criminal. That Christ may be his only righteousness.

Content to be stripped of all his filthy rags. that he may be clothed in a borrowed robe. Are you content to be a fool for Christ?

Are we willing to be fools for Christ and say, I belong to Jesus. I belong to Jesus.

We're only on point number one. So that's what is a humble spirit. Well, a humble spirit, we looked at it concerning ourselves.

We looked at it concerning others. And we looked at it more importantly toward the God who is so gracious to us. You remember these words in Micah.

[23 : 42] He has told you, O man, 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.

That is all we're called to do. To walk humbly with our God. It's simple but yet it is so difficult for us to do because of this battle that rages within our heart.

The old man and the old woman waging war against the spirit of God that dwells within us. But take heart. The spirit of God will win in the end.

But we must do our part. We must kill sin as Thomas Owen said or it will kill us. Will we do a little bit of point number two?

A little bit, will we? Erskine's second question was why is the humble person a peculiar favorite of heaven and can I prove this from the Bible?

[24 : 56] Well, you could look at any part of scripture and say that is absolutely true, Mr. Erskine. The humble person is a peculiar favorite of heaven because the humble person is a Christian.

And can I prove this from the Bible? Do you remember the story of Jesus and the centurion who had the sixth servant? You'll find it in Matthew chapter 8 and at verse 5 onwards. And do you remember he had the sixth servant and he went out and he sought Jesus.

And when he found Jesus he leaned down and he said, Lord Jesus, I am not worthy for you to even come into my house. You only have to say the word and my servant will be healed.

Now this man was a man of renown. He was a big man in the community. He was a centurion. He was a Roman. He wasn't even a Jew. He wasn't even one of the people of God. But yet he humbled himself in front of all the Jews.

He humbled himself and he said, Lord Jesus, only you can help me here. And do you remember the response of the Lord Jesus? Truly I tell you with no one in Israel he says, have I found such faith?

[26 : 05] Go, let it be done as you have believed. The servant ran off, the centurion ran off and the servant was healed. And Jesus says, see that?

That is faith. That is faith. And then rather ironically, do you remember James and John and their request to Jesus?

Lord Jesus, see when you enter into your kingdom. I think there might be a throne or two around that throne room. Can he sit on the right and can I sit on the left?

And these were the very men who walked every day with Jesus. Jesus, I want to sit at your right hand and my mate here wants to sit at your left hand.

And now do you remember Jesus' response with this one? Do you remember Jesus' response? He says, listen to me, you have no idea what you are asking.

[27 : 08] for even the Son of Man came to serve and not to be served. And I have come to give my life as a ransom for many.

You see, James and John, they didn't quite get it. But you see, James and John one day would get it because they would see Jesus hanging on a cross serving in order so that they can reign with him.

You have no idea what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink because I am going to die for you and I am going to rise again for you and because of this, see that proud, stubborn heart that you have within you.

I am going to change that. You are going to go on a pilgrimage and when you go on this pilgrimage you are going to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven and you are going to change the world and then, and then you can come into glory with me and reign with me for eternity.

Why is the humble person a peculiar favorite of heaven? Can this be proved from the Bible? Absolutely it can and it is only the gospel that can humble your heart and my heart and that is why we are here today.

[29 : 01] We are worshipping the God who has promised in all his covenant promises to change us, to change us and to recreate us and he has given us a work to do.

Outside of these four walls we have a work to do but we must clothe ourselves all of us with humility. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Two and a bit not bad will do a few more tonight. Let us pray. Hud Poor