

## Humility (XV): God Opposes the Proud But Gives Grace to the Humble

### I. What Humility Brings

#### 1. Passive aspects

- ♦ In 2 Chronicles 12:5-8, humility will bring about God's forgiveness and healing. God will relent from bringing disaster and turn away His anger because of humility.

#### 2. Active aspects

- ♦ Humility will bring about honor, life, wealth, and elevation.

### II. What Pride Brings

#### 1. Proverbs 11:2

- ♦ When pride comes, disgrace comes, but wisdom comes from the humble.

#### 2. Proverbs 13:10

- ♦ Proverbs 13:10: *"By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom."* This means that pride leads to conflicts, but humility involves listening to advice, and that is wisdom.

#### 3. Proverbs 14:3

- ♦ *"In the mouth of the fool is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will preserve them."* The arrogant words spoken by the foolish person's mouth are like a rod that beats oneself, while the words of the wise person's mouth serve to protect himself.

#### 4. Proverbs 16:18

- ♦ *"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."* This implies that when pride exists within a person, it precedes their downfall; a person's complete downfall is a result of a haughty spirit within them.
- ♦ The pride and arrogance of humans are often imperceptible. When everything goes smoothly, it's easy to unknowingly elevate oneself, inadvertently diminishing God's importance and pushing Him aside. Therefore, we need to be extremely cautious. **Throughout the historical books in the Bible, every king, whether good or bad, fell due to pride. Some wicked kings remained steeped in pride throughout their lives, while some good kings, who initially sought**

**God diligently, succumbed to pride during times of prosperity.** Brothers and sisters, we are all susceptible to this danger, and we greatly need spiritual companions—genuine brethren who love us and are ready to offer counsel, speaking honest words in love at any time.

### III. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, Paul's Humility

- ♦ Paul said, *"I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord."* Paul was not boasting for self-glorification; he was sharing this information with the Corinthian church to instruct and guide them. He mentioned, *"I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord."* The Lord had appeared to Paul in such a manner, even lifting him to the third heaven. However, Paul clarified, *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows."* What he meant is that this experience did not define him; it was an experience given by God.
- ♦ We often share our extraordinary experiences, saying, "Wow! The Lord was like a fire burning throughout my entire body," or "I felt lifted up!" Many miraculous experiences, but these are merely experiences given by the Lord; they don't define who we are. Today, we often think that having such experiences makes us very spiritual, and we may even consider the Lord's manifestations or revelations as possessions. However, these are just experiences; the crucial question is whether these experiences make us more humble, more reverent toward God, and more hungry for Him. If not, what benefit do these experiences bring us?
- ♦ Lawrence only noticed a leaf falling to the ground, and soon the tree withered. However, by the next year, it sprouted again as a new tree. He marveled at the greatness of the Creator! From that day on, Lawrence deeply fell in love with this great God. He mentioned that even after forty years, his love did not increase beyond that moment when he saw a leaf fall, which brought such profound enlightenment to his soul.
- ♦ Today, we might see many leaves falling to the ground without much feeling. Lawrence could witness a single leaf falling and, for forty years, his love for the Lord remained unchanged. Some people may have experiences of being filled with the Holy Spirit, healing from illness, or experiencing great power, but when faced with challenges, they still dare to complain to God. You might wonder, what's the use of these experiences? **All manifestations and revelations of the Lord are nothing to boast about; Paul recognized this truth.**
- ♦ Today, many Christians are quite superficial. For instance, if someone undergoes surgery and claims to have seen angels in the hospital room, they may testify about this experience. Many churches then invite them to share their testimony. However, in their everyday life, they may not even have a spiritual routine. They simply share this

one experience, and yet Christians eagerly gather to listen to such experiences and testimonies. How deceptive the Christian community has become today!

Have these experiences, when you hear them, **increased your reverence for God, intensified your longing for Him, and deepened your understanding of the spiritual realm, so that you live a more faithful life?** If not, you are merely enjoying hearing marvelous stories, and what good does that do?

- ♦ Paul said, *“I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.”* Look at how Paul distinguished himself from the person who was caught up to the third heaven and into paradise. *“I have nothing to boast about except my weaknesses,”* he declared. Paul remained a genuinely humble person. Brothers and sisters, let's not turn our experiences or gifts into possessions.
- ♦ Paul deeply understood that everything he had was received, and there was nothing to boast about. Therefore, he said, *“I will not boast, except of my weaknesses.”* He also expressed, *“so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.”* Brothers and sisters, we need to have the right perspective. Sometimes, when we hear about someone having extraordinary experiences, we should not elevate them too high. Paul was afraid of being seen as high and emphasized that he was just a sinner saved by grace, imperfect in every way. He always positioned himself as a speck of dust. It is God leaving His glorious throne to stoop down to us, dust particles; otherwise, we would have perished long ago.
- ♦ In 2 Corinthians 12:7, he mentioned, *“So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.”* Minister Pearl Young explains that in the original text, the term “thorn” can also mean “living.” In its cross-reference, this thorn is connected to Numbers 33:55: *“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.”* Here, the thorn refers to people who, if not completely eliminated, will become a source of trouble. So, when Paul talks about this thorn, he might be referring to a person who constantly followed and harassed him, becoming a painful cross for Paul. Perhaps this person consistently slandered him, causing trouble at every turn. Yet, Paul understood God's work in this, having prayed three times for its removal, and since the Lord didn't remove it, he knew it was a thorn given by God's will to prevent him from becoming conceited.
- ♦ God often uses your spouse to be a thorn in your side. If there's someone close to you who frequently acts as a thorn, pointing out your shortcomings and areas that need improvement, you should truly thank the Lord for preserving you, and allowing humility to genuinely manifest in you. If you refuse to accept this thorn and yet pray for humility, the Lord may raise up others, and then even greater humiliation may come your way to bring you to humility. So, accepting the thorns the Lord places around

you, those daily pricks greatly help us in becoming humble.

If you can humble yourself and accept this thorn, just as Paul did, you will have a share in the throne of heaven in the future.

- ♦ In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul said, *“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* Many people boast about their weaknesses, using them as an excuse not to serve. However, Paul was not saying that here. **He was saying, “You boast about your weaknesses to reveal the glory of Christ.”** Some people, when their spouse or coworker points out their shortcomings, say, “This is my weakness! Just pray for me! You don’t need to correct me anymore. I can’t change.” This is not correct. Paul said, *“For when I am weak, then I am strong. God’s power is displayed in my weakness, so I boast about my weaknesses to show Christ’s power.”* **Speaking about my weaknesses is to allow everyone to see Christ’s power in my weakness; this is the right way.**
- ♦ Paul was truly a person who had no self-pride. He said, *“For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* **Brothers and sisters, when you boast about your weaknesses, you should say, “Yes, I acknowledge that I am indeed weak, and I accept my imperfections. However, God’s power is made perfect in me, so only God is worthy of boasting. I prefer to boast about Him.”**
- ♦ On the other hand, some people, even if they don’t explicitly say, “I am excellent,” inwardly feel that way. If they are not invited to participate in a certain ministry, they become very displeased. This is pride.

**Our danger today is claiming ownership of what God has given us, thinking, “I have this skill, I am excellent in this area. Why wasn’t I asked to do this or that?” We need to constantly ask the Lord to convict us and to crucify these areas of pride.**

#### IV. Isaiah 38-39, The Pride of Hezekiah

- ♦ King Hezekiah was seriously ill and near death, but God listened to his prayer, granting him an additional fifteen years of life. As a sign, God made the shadow on the sundial move backward by ten degrees. What a marvelous experience! What a great miracle! Initially, the prophet had declared that Hezekiah would die, but the Lord, in response to his prayer, showed the incredible power of that prayer!
- ♦ In Isaiah 39:1, it mentions that the son of Babylonian king Merodach-baladan heard about Hezekiah’s recovery. He sent envoys with gifts and letters, and Hezekiah, delighted by their visit, proudly showed them everything in his treasuries—gold, silver, spices, precious oils, and all his armory. He displayed everything, sparing nothing, both from his household and from the entire kingdom. Isaiah then delivered a message from the Lord to Hezekiah, saying, *“Hear the word of the Lord of hosts:*

*'Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord.'*"

- ♦ **This story shows us that if we boast about what God gave us as our own possessions, all of these can become spoils of the enemy.**

If you boast about the experiences and gifts that God gives you, saying, "I am good at preaching, healing, casting out demons, playing the piano, serving well, leading many people to Christ, and when I pray, others fall down," **and if you use God's gifts and experiences to show off, you leave room for the enemy, leave the protection of the Lord's anointing, and expose a vulnerable spot for the enemy's attacks. Whenever we become proud and arrogant, which align with Satan's nature, the enemy gains authority over us.** If you think these gifts and experiences are your possessions, you will become spoils for the enemy. This is something we need to be cautious about, including the blessings God gives us, like having a good job, making a lot of money due to God's favor, and all the other blessings. If we don't understand how to remain humble and grateful, recognizing that these are temporary things entrusted to us by the Lord and are not truly ours, and that we need to use them according to how the Lord wants us to use them, we can easily become the spoils of the enemy.

- ♦ Micah 6:8 says, *"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?"* When God blesses us—when our career flourishes, family and marital life are good, ministry is blessed, and everything goes smoothly—we need to thank the Lord with even greater humility. We should thank God for His grace! There is nothing we have that are not received, and there is nothing to boast about; it is all by God's grace.

#### V. Matthew 3:13-17, The heavens were opened for Jesus' humility

- ♦ He is the Son of God, and He came to find John to be baptized by him. John initially refused, saying, *"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"* Jesus replied, *"Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* **"Fulfill all righteousness" can also mean "fulfill all rituals" or "fulfill all proper conduct."** In other words, Jesus acknowledged the necessity of showing respect where it was due, giving honor where it was due, instead of asserting, **"I am of such a high status, why should I show respect to you?"** Although He is the Son of God, when taking on human flesh and coming to earth, Jesus fulfilled all the proper rituals and conduct that were expected. Through Jesus' self-emptying, the heavens were opened for Him.
- ♦ **Brothers and sisters, if we feel like the heavens above us are made of bronze or iron, and every time we pray, we encounter walls, copper doors, or iron bolts, and the heavens seem to be closed to us, it may very well be because of our**

**pride.** If we hope our prayers to be heard and the heavens to open, just like when God said, *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,”* we need to humble ourselves in every circumstance. If we approach situations with humility, the heavens will surely open for us. Humility means acknowledging that, although I might have a certain position or right, I act as if I don’t have it at all. If we humble ourselves, we will find that the heavens open for us. **Therefore, a humble person often experiences open heavens, and his prayers are heard and accepted by God.**

#### VI. 2 Chronicles 7:14-16, A prayer for humbling ourselves

- ◆ This passage is often used as a prayer for revival. What we often lack is the first step: humility. We frequently say we want revival, attend various retreats and rallies, but we are unwilling to humble ourselves and submit. Of course, each of these four steps is crucial: humility, prayer, seeking God’s face, and turning from our wicked ways. When we are willing to do this, God says, *“I will open my eyes and ears to the prayers offered in this place,”* and the heavens open.
- ◆ Some people may fast and pray, engage in all-night prayer sessions, but when faced with challenges, they are unwilling to humble themselves. If we pray with humility, it brings about forgiveness and healing. The land in the Old Testament often symbolizes an individual’s heart in the New Testament. If we are determined to humble ourselves, the Lord will come and heal the lukewarmness, thorns, weeds, selfishness, and pride in our hearts.
- ◆ **Revival is not about becoming a successful or spiritual person. If we begin with a heart of sorrow and repentance, with a humble spirit, then revival has already begun.**

#### VII. Conclusion

In Proverbs 6, it mentions seven things that the Lord hates, and the first is haughty eyes. Therefore, we must truly detest pride! If we don’t attain humility, we are in pride, which is detested by God. So, let’s earnestly and fervently ask the Lord to put a strong and intense hatred for pride within us.

## Humility (XV) Assignment

1. What does Humility bring about? What does pride bring about? The Bible mentions the consequences of pride (and humility). Have you experienced any of these in your life?
2. In the historical books of the Bible, every king fell due to pride. The Scriptures say that when they prospered, they became proud. When everything is going smoothly for you, do you tend to forget about God?
3. Do you have any special spiritual experiences or revelations in your spirit? If so, have these experiences helped your relationship with God?
4. When you hear about someone having a unique experience, do you tend to perceive them as very spiritual?
5. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul talked about a *"thorn in the flesh."* What does this metaphorical thorn represent according to Minister Pearl Young?
6. Do you have someone close to you who often becomes a thorn in your side? Have you thanked God for this?
7. Why did Paul like to boast about his weaknesses? When you mention your own weaknesses, what do you feel?
8. Does Hezekiah's story serve as a warning for you? When God blesses you with a good job, wealth, a good marriage, and children, do you approach it with humility and gratitude, or do you boast?
9. A humble person often sees open heavens. When you pray, do you feel like the heavens are open, or do you often encounter barriers?
10. Pray for yourself using 2 Chronicles 7:14-16.
11. Scripture memorization: 2 Chronicles 7:14-16, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Proverbs 13:10, Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 14:3, Proverbs 16:18.