



Fatherly Talks

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Johann Melchizedek Peter

Fatherly Talks 6

Devotional Series 6.01 to 6.24

Johann Melchizedek Peter

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PREFACE

This sixth series of Fatherly Talks touch on humility. The path to greatness is through humility. The greatest among us must be the servant of all. The greatness of Jesus attributes is not just in His power and authority which is to be expected of a mighty God, but it is the surprising attribute of supreme humility despite the greatness of His awesome power.

There were gaps in these sixth series of Fatherly Talks and I have added some short talks to make them up to a twenty-four Talk series, although some of the additions are just a few paragraphs long.

May we all learn the important lesson in this life of humility and be enabled to reach the heights of God's grace as we lower ourselves to serve others, as our Lord Jesus did.

Johann Melchizedek Peter

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Fatherly Talk 6.01

Belief versus Believing

Dearly Beloved

We live in an era in which what people believe and what they are may not be the same. People have their convictions but if their convictions are not back up by their life than such convictions are nothing but mental gymnastics. No doubt what we believe is part of the process of becoming what we are. Sadly, in this modern world where knowledge is abundant, but wisdom is lacking, many people are in pursuit of acquiring knowledge rather than in pursuing a lifestyle of holiness and love. As Paul declares knowledge puffs up but love edifies (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Many Christians have watered down the full understanding of what it means to believe which James correctly points out. Even demons believe and tremble (James 2:19). The key is to believe with a change in character and nature – faith with works (James 2:26). The works that James speaks about is not an outward form of works for that would be contradictory to not earning our place in God through our own works (Ephesians 2:8-10). There are two types of works, one which is done before there is a change of nature and character and one that is done from the change of nature and character. One is the works of the flesh seeking to earn merit which is wrong whilst the other is a fruit of a life and nature. For example, a good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit (Matthew 7:17-20). It is the natural result of the nature of a tree. Thus, the Pharisees, who were by nature serpents and dead spiritually, can never produce good fruit for their natures were evil and covetous (Matthew 23:33; Luke 16:14). Yet the Pharisees had a set of belief system which they teach and adhere to.

We are warned of the leaven of the Pharisees by Jesus (Matthew 16:6). Entrance into heaven is not based on just what we believe but rather by who we are! People go to heaven not because of their good works or their beliefs, they go to heaven because their natures and character are in line with the nature of heaven and they belong there. For this reason, a person needs to be born again. And the various stages of God's heavens and glory are the dwelling places for those whose natures belong to those realms. Progress in heaven and in spirituality is not based on what one knows but what one is. It is based on love and character and not mere knowledge. Thus, on earth we should not just seek for knowledge, although correct knowledge is part of that transformation process. The best and most accurate knowledge is that which has been proven in a life and not just mere concepts and theories. Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). It was not just Jesus' words that moved us, it is His life!

Jesus did not have a problem with the belief system of the Pharisees for they originate in the law of Moses, but Jesus had a problem with them being leaders and guides to others (Matthew 5:20). They might have some concept of the truth, but truth is not just a concept. Truth involves concepts, methods, lifestyles, implementations, etc. A concept that has not been tested and proven is full of raw sharp edges which will hurt and injure as many people as it helps. It takes a lifestyle to deliver a truth and methods are born out of experience and not mere theories. And usually, when one implements a concept, one finds many areas of adjustments to be made to the original theory. For example, before my wife and I had children, we read every child training book we could and digested concepts and theories from many diverse authors. When we had our own children, we found that much of the theories were not workable because of the differences in context plus some of them had a lack of Scriptural basis for their theories. In the Baptist seminary, I found it unhelpful to hear lecturers

teach about church planting who had never planted churches, teach evangelism who had never evangelized, etc. In the end, through studying the Scriptures and testing them out in our thirty years of ministry experience, we have come out with more practical concepts and understanding of some of these areas. When they are taught, they are not taught from a position of a Scriptural theory that has been untested but from experience.

Just because one reads a book or heard someone else preach about it and one comprehends it intellectually does not mean that one has got it. The last person who should teach on a subject is one who has heard it from someone and not tested it themselves! Would you allow yourself to be operated by a surgeon who has not had actual experience? Would you allow yourself to be treated by a doctor who has never had practical experience and training? Would you allow an architect or an engineer who has no experience to build your building project? Would you trust a lawyer who has no experience to defend you on an important life and death matter? If we don't allow that in the temporal natural, why should we lower the standard when it comes to eternal things?

Many people who are inexperienced in ministry, no matter how young or old they are, have a habit of telling others what they think they know better. No doubt some of them could have far reaching ideas and callings but the first place to start is humility and not pride. They have no humility and that is where grace begins. On the other hand, you have those who are very experienced in life and have success in various areas of life but not in ministry that they seek to be in. In these areas, again humility is required. It is sometimes even harder for the older with fixed habits and lifestyles to change than those who are young. Sometimes you have one who is experienced in those areas, but their past methods and lifestyles no longer can

serve the present generation and they will no longer succeed until they humble themselves and learn the new Spirit-way to reach the present generation.

What is the fastest way to progress in fivefold ministry? The first and foremost quality is humility. For without humility nothing else matters. The entire ministry is by ministry grace which comes as one is humble before God and before man (1 Peter 5:5-6). Without the grace of God there is no ministry. And grace comes only by humility before man and at the throne of God. If one need to choose between a very capable man or woman without humility and the grace of God and a half capable man or woman who is humble, choose the humble one. For in humility, they will grow and learn better than the one with pride. Money cannot buy ministry, intellect cannot buy ministry and all humans and organizations cannot make one a minister. Ministry comes from God and God alone but even if one is called into ministry, one will never be recognized until one is humble and serving.

It is important not only to teach what one should not be but also what one should be. Progression in ministry can be accelerated in the following ways:

1. All ministry is based on love. Unless one is established in love and the motivation is love, the foundation is wrong. We are not just concerned about ministry performance (although that is important as a measuring yardstick for organizational evaluation) but about the eternal reward and the quality of a ministry. The quality of a ministry is always measured by the level of the love of Christ that is flowing through the individual and the standard of Scriptural dependence used.
2. Humility is a key requirement. Without humility nothing else can be received. A person has reached their plateau and going

downhill when pride fills their heart and mind. Part of the ministry training is mentoring; pride prevents a person from being mentored and trained by others.

3. Character comes through experience. There is no other way to gain character except through tribulation, perseverance, then character (Romans 5:3). You can feel the power of the cross in the words and life of a person who has been through tribulation from one who has not. Every one of us has our cross to bear but many people run from their own cross and still seek to be a disciple and minister of Christ. There is always the cross before the resurrection power is demonstrated. Also, it needs to be the right type of experience. Some experiences make people more bitter, hurt, resentful and this hinders future ministry. Once in Malaysia, Ps Teoh and I tried to help a senior minister by giving him an opportunity to minister and pastor in a church with all the support that we could give both material and spiritual. Every time the minister stood up at the pulpit to speak, hurt and bitterness would come out no matter what topic is covered. Sadly, we had to let this minister go as he could no longer be anointed by God unless he overcame his own internal hurts from his bad experiences. Another good minister I know whom we tried to help in Malaysia also was given the opportunity to preach. Every time he preached he always judged others and criticized from the pulpit. We had to stand him down after several chances were given because he had too much anger and unforgiveness towards others which was coming out through his preaching. In the end, he died prematurely and never saw his ministry took off. No one can help you if you do not want to grow in love. The only thing that should come forth from our lives at all times, whether it be in an informal one to one fellowship or small gathering or at the pulpit, is love, peace and

joy and the pure Word of God. People should feel that they have been deeply loved by God after every word we speak. Yes, even when we do corrective teaching, it is always done in love and humility (1 Timothy 5:1; 2 Timothy 2:24-25). For any correction given that is not done in love and humility is done only out of pride and self-recognition or superiority; and it will destroy rather than build up the person being corrected.

It is important that we differentiate between what we know and what we are; what we think we know and what we truly know; who we are and not just what we think we are. Our character speaks louder than words. People will not receive our words if we do not have the character that backs up our words.

And heaven measures us not by what we know but who we are. Heaven measures us by our heart's love for people and not our mind's knowledge of things. The best place to always be anywhere in the world in any profession is to be humble. Seek to be the humblest person on earth and you will be the greatest person on earth in the sight of God.

Being is better than knowing for being includes knowing but knowing does not always include being. To be complete, the knowing and knowing is only the first of many processes towards being. Our lives are an epistle which others read better than our words.

Be disciples. Be loving. Be humble.

Fatherly Talk 6.02

The Importance of Humility

Dearly Beloved

In this modern age of pomp and display, rights and power, fame and publicity, it is very easy for people to forget that to God and to all that are in the Spiritual World the character of humility and love is highly valued above all other values. It is even valued higher than knowledge and wisdom. For only humility attracts the loving attention of God whereas pride, which is opposite of humility, attracts the severe dealings of God. God will always resist the proud and give grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

Why do humans want to feel proud when every one of us came into the world with nothing? Those born rich or powerful have nothing to boast for everything they had is only circumstantial. Those who achieve what they have and have nothing to boast for along the way, they would have been helped both by men and angels to be where they are. Thus, those born with privilege circumstances and those who earn their privilege circumstances have nothing to boast. Deep within each human heart there is a distaste of those who are proud and haughty. Such distaste does not just come naturally but it is also the same distaste that angels feel towards pride. There are angelic watchers over all of earth's powers, whether it be powers of wealth, authority or fame. The ruler of the empire that the Bible pictured as the golden empire was Nebuchadnezzar and even he was humbled when he became proud (Daniel 4). It was pride when Belshazzar took the holy vessels of the temple to drink his wine (Daniel 5). It was pride when Herod accepted the adulation of the people calling him god (Acts 12:22). It was pride when Miriam and Aaron spoke against

Moses (Numbers 12:1-2). It was to ease his wounded pride that Saul ask Samuel to turn back with him (1 Samuel 15:30-31). It was pride and recognition that Ananias and Sapphira sought when they lied about their offering (Acts 5:1-10). It was pride that led the Pharisees to make known their charity, their long prayers and their fasts (Matthew 6:1-18). They loved long robes, greetings in the market places, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts (Luke 20:46).

We might look at the Pharisees in the Bible and laugh at their foolishness for now all that they have and are have passed away for they missed the best opportunity to know the riches of eternity by coming to Jesus when He was manifest. What about the modern churches and ministers? Have we replaced the long robes with our liturgy and long robes; the greetings in market places with worldly fame; the best seats in the synagogues with membership to exclusive clubs and the best places at feasts by hob knobbing with the rich, the famous and the influential? How do you explain the desire of Christians to have luxury items, drive the best cars, join the best clubs and have the best of all things? Let me make it clear that I don't think everyone who owns a good car, lives in a mansion or owns luxurious things are necessarily proud for there are good and humble people who have all these things and it does not bother them. The test is whether anyone of these feel ashamed if they were to be seen in a beat-up old car, or sleep at a manger at times, or go feed the poor in a soup kitchen.

Most Christians cannot handle wealth and fame and the moment they have either or both, pride starts creeping in and they subconsciously do things that flaunt their success. God help us if success is only measured in dollars, cars, bricks and mortar. These are not measurements of success at all. True success is measured in one's

growth in love and in godliness. At the same time, we also need to educate Christians to be comfortable with wealth and not feel guilty when God blesses them with the stewardship of it. Jesus was both comfortable with wealth as He was with poverty. It made no difference to Jesus whether He was talking to the elite in society at the feasts or the poor on the streets. The key to handling wealth, fame and power is to know that one is only a steward of God for these areas. We take back nothing from the earth except for our character development in handling these things. We must not swing to one extreme such that we are afraid or guilty of being wealthy, famous or powerful; or to the other opposite of being pro-luxury in all things such that we forget the poor, the unknown and the powerless. It is pride when one flaunts one's wealth, fame or power before others

There is also another hidden pride which can be as dangerous as the outwardly show of pride. That is the pride of intellect, the pride of self-sufficiency, the pride of selfishness that can be displayed even in poverty, the pride of self-achievement and the pride of self-independence. There is no end to the many possible human ways of displaying hidden pride but all of them have common denominators and manifestation: the prideful person is selfish, uncaring, unloving, unteachable, rebellious, un-submissive, a lone-ranger. We can judge whether a person has pride or humility by whether the person has all the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23). All the works of the flesh stem from pride: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like (Galatians 5:19-21). Yes, all sin stems from pride. Sometimes, it is this hidden pride that is more dangerous and subtle than those with outward pride which can be seen by all. For the one with hidden pride can even think

of themselves as being humble. When one is conscious that one is humble, one is no longer humble.

We have shown through the above that all of us have pride and it is not a question of whether we are proud or not, we all are and need to learn the art of humbling ourselves before God every day to keep us humble. If up to this sentence you cannot admit your pride but only sees pride in others, then only God can show you in eternity and you might have to face the consequences of God resisting you for the rest of your life. It is time for repentance. We all suffer from pride for to be self-aware gives us a consciousness separate from God. If we have no occasion for natural pride, then we might have spiritual pride or soul pride. Pride can come in through being proud of the body and all things in the natural environment, through being proud of things in our soul and its qualities that we have or have developed, or through being proud of things spiritual or religious. And all pride must be dealt with. The Bible tells us to humble ourselves and before we can do it, we need to first realize that we need to humble ourselves. If we don't think that we need to, we are on dangerous ground. Dying to self is a daily event and not just some old event in our past (1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Luke 9:23).

The lesson of humility is one of the most difficult to learn, yet it is the lesson that rewards its learner with great blessings both natural and spiritual. God loves to exalt those who are humble to positions of wealth, fame and power (Daniel 2:20-22; 4:17). The problem is not God exalting or promoting a humble person; the problem is in the ability to keep the position God gives. Almost every human being fails once they have received God's promotion. Saul forgot totally that it was God who made him a king. He spent his entire life trying to preserve his position of wealth, fame and power by his own hand. He died a failure both in the natural and in God's sight. There are the rare

human beings who receive exaltation and keep themselves humble. Of such, is the prophet Daniel who succeeded because he was a man of prayer who learnt to bow his knees to God three times a day (Daniel 6:10). If you have never bowed your knees before God or have not done so in a long time, do so for it helps to put us in the position of submission to God. The word 'worship' in the Greek (*proskuneo*) contains the meaning of bowing down and prostrating before God (Matthew 8:10; 9:18; 14:33; Revelation 5:14). All will bend their knees and worship Jesus as Lord in eternity. We might as well get used to bowing down on our knees while on earth (Philippians 2:10). Of course, we do know that people can outwardly bow to Him, but their hearts are not humble. Thus, it is more important to be humble in our heart. Humility of heart will produce humility of action.

The whole New Testament period is the dispensation of grace. And the key to all grace is humility (1 Peter 5:5). Even though grace and knowledge are multiplied by the knowledge of Christ and God (2 Peter 1:2), the fact is that we can never know Christ and God without God's help and revelation (Luke 10:21-22). We cannot even do any works except the works of grace that He has prepared beforehand that we could walk in them (Ephesians 2:9-10). And let us never forget that the works that God has given us to do are given because of His loving kindness, His riches mercy and love towards us (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Progressive life in the natural and in God consists of up-curves followed by plateaus. The plateaus are periods of consolidation and learning. Some people plateau-out and never progress any further either naturally or spiritually. Others lived and died without even entering the first phase of their lives destined by God. All up-curves are not humanly achieved, they are done through the grace of God that imparts a new and higher dimension of understanding, revelation, empowerment or gifting that takes us to the next level.

Each up-curve is preceded by a period of pruning in which we are humbled as all the old fruitful branches are trimmed away so that we can produce even more fruit (John 15:1-3). Pruning is the work of God humbling us. Moses did not achieve his status as the meekest man on earth overnight (Numbers 12:3). He had gone through the wilderness for forty years; he had died to his calling and vision such that he spoke of his former oratory in broken terms of his inability; he had died to all ambition that he had formerly when he asked God to send another person; he had constantly been challenged rebellious ones and exercised great patience with the ungrateful Israelites. Like a rough stone washed smooth over years and decades of flowing waters, his pride has been dealt with numerous times until by the time Aaron and Miriam challenged his calling, he remained humbled.

We are who we are because of God. We can be what we want to be because of God. We receive all the help we have because of God. God is the source, the strength and the only one who has helped us from start to finish. He gave us life, created us, gifted us and allowed us to participate in His Will. Let us be grateful to God and always walk a daily life of humility before Him. Pride comes before a fall, but promotion comes before great exaltation.

Let us humble ourselves before God on our knees each day and learn that without Him, we are absolutely nothing (John 15:5).

Fatherly Talk 6.03

The Call to Humility

Dearly Beloved

One of the most often quoted revival passages in the Bible is 2 Chronicles 7:14 which states "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." The whole key to this Scripture is the word "humble." If there is no humility, there can be no revival or restoration. All restoration and revival is based on the willingness to humble oneself. It does not matter what the cause of the lack of revival or fall, it does not matter who or when it happened. It only matters that one takes the road of humility in order to be restored and revived. The reason why many who are fallen, many who have gone astray and many who have either caused hurt or received hurt do not return to the Lord is one reason and one alone - the unwillingness to humble oneself before the Lord.

Humility is powerful. It brings forth complete restoration when one truly repents and surrenders afresh to the Lord. The test of a true man or woman of God is not when they are perfectly doing something right. It is when they have done something wrong and the path they take to bring it back to correctness. This does not mean that it is possible in this life to restore all things back to the way it was before as sometimes in human situations, restoration involves other humans and human organizations which renders it impossible when there is a self-righteous attitude of unforgiveness. However, God is not like man. God does forgive and forget. Thus, the more important thing is restoration with God first and then restoration with humans who also

walk in humility. It is never possible to restore two humans when even one walks in pride and self-righteousness. It takes two parties walking in humility to bring restoration to both. Where God restores those who humble themselves before Him, where it is not possible to bring things back to square one, God improves on the original situation by including even the failings in the restored 'new' situation.

David was a man after God's heart not because he was perfect, but rather because he was a humble man who sought God's plan and purpose all the time. When he failed through his own pride, he was quick to repent completely and not just partially. In the case of Bathsheba, David spent seven days laying himself before the Lord to ask for forgiveness for himself and for the life of his child (2 Samuel 12:16-18). God would have forgiven him in less than one second. In fact, God immediately forgive David upon his acknowledgement of his sin (2 Samuel 12:13), but it was David who wanted to be totally cleansed and healed of the root causes of his transgression and sin (Psalm 51:7-12). That is true humility. It is not just repentance from the acts of sin but truly repentance for the root of sin and wanted it to be taken out from one's life (Psalm 51:10). David was truly humbled and broken in spirit in regard to his sin (Psalm 51:17).

When David realized that it was his pride that had allowed the numbering of Israel, he was quick to repent (2 Samuel 24:10). The key to success is not just the ability to make the right decision, it is also the ability to recover from a wrong decision. No one in the world succeeds without making mistakes along the way and improving themselves. The path of all successes is paved by many failures which do not deter those who press on to fulfil their dream or vision. The difference between a successful person or business and one that is not successful is not that only the successful did not make mistakes or experienced failure. The difference is that although both have

experienced failures and mistakes, it is the one who can learn from and overcome their mistakes that succeed. The true secret of success is the ability to learn from all failures and mistakes and improve oneself each time. And the quickness to recover from wrong turns and failures is based on the fact that one remains humble and teachable.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). No toddler learns to walk without experiencing some falls. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delights in his way; though he fall he shall not be cast down for the Lord upholds him with His hand (Psalm 37:23-24). The Lord does not delight in us because we are perfect. He delights in us when our character and nature are inherently good because we truly love Him and want to do His Will. There is no shame in failure. Only shame when we have never tried to do His Will. Thus, God is not so concerned as to whether we are perfect or have great abilities, He is only concerned whether we are humble. For the humble will always learn to depend on God when they fail; and depend on God when they do not have ability; and depend on God when they are stuck. As long as humility is there, success is assured even though mistakes might occur. However, no matter how much ability or knowledge a person has, success cannot be guaranteed because somewhere down the line, pride will come in and cause the failure.

The great restoration stories of the Bible are those that show forth how God can turn a bad situation good; of how God can turn defeat into victory and ashes into beauty. After all, He did turn the fall of Adam and Eve into the greatest story of redemption for all eternity. He turned the failure of Moses into a redemption story of Moses whose life became a testimony of 40 years of self-glory, 40 years of humility in the wilderness, and 40 years of glory in God. As long as a person remains humble, their story will end with great restoration of the

grace and the glory of God. And since no one in this life or world can claim perfection, it does one well to learn the art of staying and walking in humility all the days of our life if we want our life stories to be a glorious story of restoration to be told for all eternity.

The importance of humility cannot be under-emphasized. Since all of the power of God and the abilities of God are dependent on our ability to receive them; and our ability to receive them is totally dependent on our humility before God; then it is of utmost importance that we learn the secret of humility. Humility is not powerless. It is the most powerful character of all other characters one can acquire. For being truly humble puts one in the position to receive all things from God. Thus, God calls all to humble themselves before Him. Yet not all respond to the call to be humble:

1. Pharaoh rejected the call to be humble and let the Israelites go and he lost everything including his own son (Exodus 10:3).
2. The Israelites in the wilderness neglected the call to be humble and they all died in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2, 16).
3. Nebuchadnezzar rejected the call to be humble and was turned mad into a beast for seven years (Daniel 4:32).
4. The pride of the Pharisees blinded them to the reception of Jesus and Jesus said that they are sons of hell (Matthew 23:15).

God has made it clear in His Word that He will not tolerate pride. He actively resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 5-8). It is pride that will destroy the novice leader (1 Timothy 3:6). All who have the pride of life can never receive the love of the Father (1 John 2:15-16). God seeks those who are humble and makes His presence with them (Isaiah 57:15; 66:1-2). The call of God in our modern world is the call to humility. The true message of Christianity is the gospel

of humility. Jesus humbled Himself and took upon Himself all our sins (Philippians 2:8). We are now called to be like Jesus, to have a servant heart like Jesus did (Matthew 23:11). Jesus has given us an example that we are to do as He did by having a servant heart like Him (John 13:12-17).

We could even contrast all the things that separate us from God the Father and His blessings as follows based on 1 John 2:15-17:

The Proud

Love the World

Zero love of the Father in him

Lust of the Flesh

Lust of the eyes

Pride of Life

Self will

The Humble

Love God

Love of the Father in him

Denial of the Flesh

Eyes only for God

Humility in Life

Will of God

There is also a true humility and a false humility. True humility is born out of love and is non religious. False humility is born out of pride and will lead to false worship, pride, religiosity and idolatry. True humility is born out of the brokenness of a deep love relationship with Jesus and God our Father. How can humility be born out of a love relationship with God? The character of humility comes through tribulations (Romans 5:1-5). All tribulations test our love for God. It strips everything out of our life that does not have the love of God in it. The love of God cannot dwell in a heart that is worldly (1 John 2:15). We either love the world or we love God. When we love God, we no longer become part of the world system and the world hates us and persecutes us as it did Jesus (John 15:18-20). And even worldly Christians will persecute godly Christians. One of the things that is the greatest puzzle to me is why would Christians want to persecute

Christians? Haven't we all have the same Father God and born of the same Spirit of God? The answer is pride. It is pride and self-righteousness that causes Christians to persecute Christians. It is pride and self-righteousness that causes Christians to make life difficult for other Christians. A true Christian helps another Christian. And such help is given not because the object of one's help is perfect in doctrine, character or lifestyle. For if such were perfect, they would not need help. It is religious pride that causes Christians to persecute other Christians. Be warned. All pride will lead to destruction. It is only a matter of time.

Thus, the call is to all Christians that we must all walk in humility and love. Our pride has divided us and such will not be tolerated by God. For God hates pride and will resist it no matter whether one lives in the palace or in the poor house; no matter whether one is well known or unknown; no matter whether one is powerful or powerless. It makes no difference to God. He seeks to exalt the humble and will resist the proud.

Therefore, let us all humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and learn to eat the bread of humility. Let us allow our love for God to be so great that it overflows to all who are around us. Let us beware of the leaven of the Pharisees - the root form is pride.

We humble ourselves before You, O Mighty God and Father.

Fatherly Talk 6.04

The Blessings of Humility

Dearly Beloved

The history of mankind and civilizations is filled with stories of conquerors and world empires. The desire to dominate the world and environment is sometimes also filled with sad stories of the inhumanity of man to his fellow man in the pursuit of world dominion. People and countries like to have power, wealth and authority many times compromising their ethics and selling their souls to achieve such. The two world wars that the modern world has experienced shows us that countries that seek to enslave others for their own needs do not last long as world powers; for there is indeed a God who watches over the earth to ensure that the bad and evil will fall and the good will triumph over the bad. Yet history books are filled with stories of world conquerors ignoring the evil they do and extolling their heroic deeds to conquer their environment and the world to achieve greatness. What is greatness anyway? Our Lord Jesus said that the greatest among you shall be the servant of all (Matthew 23:11; Luke 22:26).

Any preacher or any Christian or church that makes heroes out of anyone who conquers by their own might and army their heroes do not understand or know that true Christianity is the very opposite of the world and its methodology. Our heroes should not be people in the history books or in the business world who achieve things by their own might and strength. This is what the devil wants to present to get more people to follow him. Our heroes should be those who demonstrate great humility and show forth the virtue of love, peace, joy, kindness, longsuffering, etc. Our heroes should be the Mother Teresas and not the Alexander the Greats. Of course, our ultimate

hero is Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour who triumph over the Roman Empire and all world empires that have arisen by the power of His love and humility. The devil offered Jesus the whole world on a platter and Jesus refused him (Matthew 4:8-10). Instead, Jesus advocate inheriting the world through meekness (Matthew 5:5).

There is inherent in every human being the desire for world conquest or to be part of it in some way. This is not bad for we were created in the image of God to have dominion over the world (Genesis 1:26-28). The desire to dominate and rule the world and all around us is in our DNA. We can't help it as we were created to be like God, to exercise authority and power. The problem is not in this desire: the problem is in our methodology and motive. The purpose of world dominion and power should not be for selfish gain or lust. It should be a goal to be better positioned to be a blessing and servant to all those whom we have authority and power over. This is indeed our inheritance and right in the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham received the covenant to be a great nation; he was to be blessed and be a blessing to all the nations of the world (Genesis 12:1-2). We have inherited this blessing through Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:13-14). It is for the reason and motive of helping other fellow humans that the power and dominion is assigned to any individual. We have world dominion in direct proportion to the love we have for others. The more love we have for others, the greater our dominion over the planet earth. When we are completely like God in His love for the world (John 3:16), then will we also have complete authority over the whole planet.

The methodology for world conquest is through humility. Yes, it is the very opposite of all worldly methods. The humble shall be exalted. God will take away empires, crowns, countries and nations from the proud to give it to the humble. Of course, when the humble later becomes proud, they too will lose their empire and it will be given

again to another who is humble. This is also applicable to the business world and the church world. Business people who become proud will eventually lose all their business empire and it will be given to another who is humble and use it correctly to bless others. In the church world, personal ministries and personal little kingdoms rise and fall in whenever the preacher or minister in charge becomes proud and haughty and stops helping others. Fame and fortune only lasts as long as the recipient remains humble all the days of their lives. We are constantly being evaluated by the watcher angels as much as Nebuchadnezzar was being watched by the watchers and judged when he reached the prime of his pride (Daniel 4:17). No one escapes, every human being will have to give account to God for all their deeds and words in this life. All the positions in this life of power, wealth and fame are but a temporary stewardship assignment we have while living on the planet earth. It is all reduced to zero when we leave the physical earth retaining only our personal character development as our greatest treasure and inheritance.

The inheritance of humility is honour, power, wealth and riches (Proverbs 15:33; 18:12; 22:4). It pays to be humble. It is a blessing on the earth and in eternity to be humble. We receive blessings while on earth and in eternity we will receive umpteen rewards for the character development to be humble. Humility is the only methodology to receive fame, power, and wealth on the planet earth. The grace and the favour of God are only upon the humble and no other. Choose to be humble and all these blessings are yours. Choose to be proud and everything you have shall be stripped away.

For this reason, many times before God exalts and promote a person, organization or nation, God allows them to experience humility first. Joseph was stripped of his privilege position with Jacob, sold as a slave, became a prisoner and then eventually became the prime

minister of Egypt by the hand of God (Genesis 37-41). He was the most powerful man in Egypt when God had finished with him (Genesis 41:44). Daniel was among the prisoners taken to slavery to Babylon, he most likely lost his manhood and was castrated as he was among the eunuchs who served the king (Daniel 1:3-11). Daniel was humbled in soul and body; stripped of everything and everyone he loved including the ability to live like a normal human. He was among the innocent who paid the price of slavery and becoming a eunuch because of the rebellion of the nation of Israel against God. Daniel was humble in spirit and he persevered in his love for God and rose to become the most powerful man in all the Babylonian empire (Daniel 2:48). Before Israel could be a great nation and become the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), God took Israel through the wilderness to humble them (Deuteronomy 8:2, 16). The road to greatness, power, wealth, fame and influence is the road of humility. It is the only road. Everyone must be tested in their humility before they are rewarded by God with greatness. Sometimes, those who take this road unknowingly become great but having become great also became proud. God then deals with them the way He deals with all the proud, He resists them and brings them down, too even though once upon a time, they had been humble and God exalted them.

It is paramount to all that we be humble. All the earth is the Lord's and its fullness thereof. Everything and everyone will be humbled. Either we humble ourselves or God will resist us and humble us through circumstances. We must choose humility for the Lord owns the earth and gives it to whomever He chooses. We must not only bow and say grace for our food; we must say grace for everything – our blessings, our abilities and talents, our position in life, our health, our assets, our family, etc. All things come from God and we must constantly live our lives in gratitude for all that God has given. He only allows us to feel that we have achieved through our own efforts

and faithfulness but in essence, it is He who was rewarding us for our dependence upon Him and our humility before Him. This is so we can experience our free will and make choices in our lives with consequences of good or bad as a learning experience. All things are inherited and not the wages we receive for our works. We only see it and think that it looks like the wages of our works like we see the sun moving around the earth. In actual fact, it is the earth that moves around the sun. It is not our effort that has brought us all things in life. It is the Lord shining His sunshine rays of blessing and rewarding us with His unmerited blessings and favour. All our efforts, when done correctly, only bring us to the position to receive the blessings; it is God who gives the blessing. For the wisdom of Ecclesiastes has observed that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill but he perceives it to be time and chance (Ecclesiastes 9:11). In the end, he finds that it is all vanity of vanities as all men's efforts are futile (Ecclesiastes 12:8). His conclusion is only one thing to do in life – to fear God and keep His commandments and let God reward every work accordingly (Ecclesiastes 12:13). To fear the Lord is to humble oneself before Him. Don't wait till you are like Solomon in Ecclesiastes to discover that the secret of success in life is fearing God and humbling oneself before Him. Solomon had done a lot of damage in his pride and pomp. He forgot the God of his youth. Saul did the same thing and forgot the God who gave him the kingdom. Not so David. David paid a heavy price for some displays of pride but he eventually learn to walk in steady humility before the Lord.

Humility is the key to success in this life and in the life to come. No matter at which station in life you are at, young or old, rich or poor, famous or infamous, turn to God and humble yourself before Him. Life is not over until it actually ends for you. As long as there is breath, as long as there is life, as long as you have the power of free will and

free choice, you can still make a difference in your life. For those who have not tasted the blessings and have gone the wrong way, turn to God in humility now and you will see the changes come slowly and steadily. For those who are already experiencing the goodness of God, keep on humbling yourself before the Lord and you will see even greater blessings. There is no limit as to what the Lord can do. The Lord reminded David, when he sinned against Him, that he was nothing before God made him a king; and He even said to David that if all that He had given him was not enough and too little, the Lord would have given even more (2 Samuel 12:8). We all know that David worked hard to rise to the top; he fought, he toiled and he conquered. But it was not his efforts that put him in the position of king; it was God's grace and God's gift. If not for God's gift and anointing, David would still be an unknown shepherd out in the field. David had a lot of blood, sweat and tears in his hands and face to reach the position he had (for him it was literal blood as he had killed many in battle). Yet, it was not the wages of works but the grace of God that placed him where he was. Without grace, he would have no opportunity to work. Working was only the mercy of God allowing us to experience ownership and pleasure in experiencing self-awareness. In the Bible, grace comes first before works and not the other way round. We were chosen before the foundation of the world by God and predestined to be accepted in His love before the works were given to us to do (Ephesians 1:4-6; 2:8-10). The works came AFTER grace and not before.

Works were given more for our enjoyment of self awareness and independence (dependent of the Spirit of God, of course) of experiencing them. Those who put works before grace will only experience disappointment. It would be pride and self. The Lord gives grace to the humble and not the proud (James 4:6). Let us learn this very, very important lesson. The entire organization of this life on

planet earth is based on us learning to walk the road of humility. Humility is the only way to receive the grace of God for living this life. We reject the road of humility at our own loss and peril. If we don't humble ourselves and learn this lesson now, circumstances will do so and then life might be over and we lose the chance to walk in the works given to us by the grace of God.

Let us all pursue humility and seek always to walk in the path of humility. It is a path of great rewards and blessings in God without limits. The greatest among us must be the servant of all. The greatest among us must be the most humble amongst us.

Be humble, be blessed.

Fatherly Talk 6.05

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

Dearly Beloved

Meekness has always been mistaken for weakness in human relationships. What exactly is meekness? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *anav* has been translated both as 'meek' (Psalm 22:26; 25:9; 37:11; 76:9; 147:6; 149:4; Isaiah 11:4; 29:19; 61:1; Numbers 12:3) and also as 'humble' (Psalm 9:12; 10:12, 17; 34:2; 69:32). There are, of course, many other Hebrew words for humble. The Greek words for 'humble' (*tapeinoo*) and 'meek' (*praos*) are clearly differentiated. Humility and meekness are definitely related: the question is how are they related? Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit whereas humility is the effect of meekness upon the soul. Thus, we are told to humble ourselves - that is humble our souls and ego (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Peter 5:6). Humility being the result of meekness would be impossible unless one receive the impartation of meekness from the Spirit of God. There are many definitions of meekness but the most important understanding is that all the fruit of the Spirit are aspects of love (nine aspects – Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 13). Meekness is the ability to respond to all pressure and circumstances by loving restraint and kindness. Restrain being the fact that there is the potential to exercise great destructive power but it is withheld because of the object of one's love towards the antagonist. Thus, when power grows with meekness and humility, the possibility of the abuse of power is removed. Abuse of power only results when one has power without love thus in God's kingdom only the most loving will ascend into the most powerful of positions. He who is the servant of all is the greatest among us.

The fact that Jesus ties inheritance of the earth to meekness shows us that meekness is also a methodology of dominion over the earth. Humans have gathered together in tribes, nations and empires to conquer and rule over one another; to possess the power of control over resources and knowledge. In the natural world, the strong triumphs over the weak and enslave them. Humans lord over one another, killing, stealing and betraying one another for the right to rule and dominate. In the end, despite all the efforts of humans to be kings of their own over their own domain, it is God who gives permission for those whom He chooses to rule and reign (Daniel 2:21).

When our Lord Jesus Christ came to earth, He did not conquer by demands but He conquered by love and service (Matthew 20:28). Ultimately, Jesus gave Himself for us on the cross of Calvary and was lifted to the highest place (Philippians 2). Our Lord Jesus Christ has shown us the way that the key to conquest of the earth is through humility and meekness and not through power and might of the arm of flesh. There is inherent in every human being a desire to master the earth and be in control of all circumstances. That desire is good for it springs from the godliness that God has created into man. This desire must mature into a desire to exercise authority and power through meekness rather than by dependence on natural power. A dependence on God rather than a dependence on self.

The earth was never to be given as a wage; it was to be given as a gift. The promise of being heir to the entire world was given in the Abrahamic promise (Romans 4:13). It was a promise to be activated not by works but by grace through faith. God did not give Adam and Eve the garden of Eden as payment for their work; He gave it to them as His gift of love to them. God did not make Joseph the ruler of all of Egypt as a payment for his works. He made him the ruler of Egypt by His gift of mercy and grace. God did not make David to be king over

all Israel because of the works of David. God gave it to him as a promise because of His love for David's heart. David had not done a single work yet when he was anointed king. In all of the stories of the Bible, God has never given power, riches, authority, lands, properties or fame because of the works of men or as wages. He has given it to men who understood that it was a gift of God's mercy and grace. Why else do you think that God disciplined Nebuchadnezzar when he thought that he had gotten all his kingdom by his own might and power (Daniel 4). It was to teach him that 'the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, GIVES it to whomever He will and sets over it the lowest of men' (Daniel 4:17). Wow, talk about learning a lesson of humility and meekness, Nebu really got it hard.

This rule of God over the nations of the world, over all business empires, over riches and gold, fame and fortune continues even in our modern times. Politicians may think that they got through by their own might or power or by merely the votes of men but actually it is the Lord who gives to whomever He chooses. If God did not so choose, then it will not happen no matter how hard a person may try. When Pontius Pilate thought that he had Jesus in the corner and proudly spoke of his power and authority in response to the silence of Jesus, saying 'Do you not know that I have power to crucify you and power to release you?' Jesus answered him and said, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been GIVEN you from above" (John 19:11). All power and authority of humans, nations and armies are only temporarily given to people and can be as easily taken as it was given. This includes fame and popularity which exercises a type of power and influence over people. Sometimes, for reasons to do with God's predestination for a greater good, like the time of the endtimes, He even allows for a short season the saints to be given into his hand (Daniel 7:27). Many people who think that God is not in

control has completely no idea of the fact that God has everything perfectly in His control and is working out predestined events towards His purposes and Will.

This gift of God to inherit the world includes the call of various ministers in the fivefold office. Each minister must learn the dominion in which God has gifted them to be in. They must not transgress into a calling that is not theirs. Uzziah the king tried to be a priest and died of leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:18-21). We see this sad Old Testament case repeated again and again in modern ministries who have no idea of the limitations of their domain and anointing. Just because one is successful as a king does not mean that one can be successful as a priest. All dominion, even spiritual dominion and influence, comes as a result of the Lord GIVING it to whomever He wills. The day that we think we need to protect our own tuff instead of relying on the God who gave us the tuff in the first place, is the day we have become like King Saul. King Saul received his kingdom as a gift from God for he was a nobody. When he became king, he did everything in the natural to preserve his kingdom even going against God many, many times; the God who gave him the kingdom in the first place. King Saul would even go to the extent of trying to kill the next generation after him (David) to preserve his own lineage. How sad to see him not recognize that we do not really own anything in this life – all things are only loan to us to make use of until we leave this earth naked as we came. We take nothing with us from the earth except for the change (supposedly for good) of our character as we learn to be faithful with whatever our lot in life – whether it be great or small, well known or unknown.

How does God GIVE such dominion and authority over the world? The key is meekness. Meekness involves a fruit of the Spirit in understanding total dependence on God. Meekness is love resting

upon the lover, assured that one is protected and shielded by the God of love and mercy who is being 100% relied on. Meekness does not react to abuse and threats because meekness knows that the source of all authority is in God. Meekness knows that we are nothing in God and that everything we are is God and God alone. Meekness is the cry of Paul who said, “when I am weak, then am I strong’ (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Blessed are the meek for they WILL inherit the earth.

How does one grow in meekness, since meekness is the key to possess all the earth (or rather inherit or have it GIVEN unto us)? You can't. It grows in you and not you grow in it. There is not a single verse in the Bible that speaks about growing in meekness. Why is this so? Try to understand it mathematically. Meekness is like a zero. How can you grow a zero? Meekness is learning to be nothing in God and allowing God to be your everything – the fullness of John 15:5. Meekness is learning to be supple and nothing before the Almighty God. We learn to be nothing once and then learn to maintain it not matter how much God uses us – that is meekness.

In the light of this understanding, we can comprehend why the Pentateuch records Moses as the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). There was nothing that Moses could do when his older sister and older brother challenged his authority as a prophet and man of God. How can he answer when they find fault with him and look for weaknesses in his life to attack? They attacked his wife and criticized him. They were neither interested in Moses nor in his wife. They were only using those things as an excuse to challenge his authority with God. In truth, they actually thought that they were equal with Moses in their walk and authority with God when they used the statement, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses?” They proclaimed themselves to be prophet and prophetess on par with Moses, if not even greater than him (after all they were indeed much older in age

to Moses). Guess what? One of them ended up with leprosy, too like Uzziah. It was the mercy of God and Moses' love and forgiveness to them that brought them restoration. Moses prayed for his sister to be healed. The worst thing is that God was angry at them and not Moses. Who was Moses? He was nothing without God so there was zero and no reaction from him. Oh, the power of knowing that we are nothing without God but everything in Him.

The key passage on understanding meekness is John 15:1-5. Meekness is allowing the fruit of Jesus and God to grow in us. Meekness is the 100% percent yieldedness of the branch to the vine. Meekness is when each time we bear fruit, we allow God to lope us off and prune us until we are nothing but a bare branch again, ready to bear the next lot of fruit. Meekness is 0% of ourselves and 100% of Jesus. Ministry is a fruit and not a work. True Christian business is a fruit and not a work. Christian life is a fruit and not a work. It is being more than doing. The doing only follows the being and not run before it. If you understand this, you will never again be weary in your Christian life, ministry life, business life or at any time in your life. Every day is just a life of Christ in you more and more each day.

We inherit the world in direct proportion to our meekness. Let us learnt the secret of recognizing that when we are weak, then is He strong in us.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. Every day is the seeking of the pleasure of the Lord, the shining of His face is all that matters. We live to please God and Him alone.

There were glimpses of the path that the apostle Paul should take in his life when he was first converted. The Lord spoke to him of his future ministry (Acts 26:16-18). His future calling was also revealed to

Ananias who prayed for him on the third day of his conversion (Acts 9:15). Yet, when he tried to start preaching the only reception he got was an attempt to kill him (Acts 9:20-23). He had to be hidden for another nearly ten years before it was the ripeness of time for his ministry to start (Acts 9:23, 30; 11:25-26). During his time of waiting on the Lord, the apostle Paul visited Arabia and the apostles in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-18).

In Paul's life, we see that he had to be internally and spiritually prepared. He also had to wait for circumstances to be ready with everything in its proper place. The city of his launch of ministry was not to be Tarsus, his home town, nor Jerusalem but Antioch, which became his headquarters for three missionary journeys – in the sense of him returning always there to give a report of his journeys. Sometimes, in many of God's ministers, they could be in the wrong place or city and their ministries can never launch forth. Tarsus was Paul's home town but it was not the right place. Jerusalem was the logical choice, being the headquarters of the move of God in Acts 2, but it was not the right place either. Antioch was the right place but it was not ready for another nearly ten years so Paul had to wait. There is such a thing as a right place, a right environment in which one is given the opportunity to launch forth in the perfect Will of God. Some people live and die without entering into the perfect Will of God in their lives because they are either too comfortable in the security of their home town environment or they are too fearful to leave all behind and take a step of faith in a new place.

For those who are called to the business and professional area, note that both Joseph and Daniel had to be stripped of everything that they knew before they were used by God to progress in their own right. Daniel was a prisoner of war and Joseph was sold as a slave. Their future in God's perfect Will lay in them being taken away from their

homeland and comfort. God created a new environment of favour for both Joseph and Daniel and despite the many challenges they both faced (death and imprisonment), they made it through with God's anointing and gifting. For Joseph, his gift of administration and interpretation of dreams brought him the opportunities to function in his special call. For Daniel, his gift of wisdom and grace brought him the opportunity to stand before the king and promotion to the highest office in Babylon. The right place, the right city, the right country; these are all part of the equation to the path of God's perfect Will.

Being in the right place does not mean that one automatically gets into the perfect Will of God. One can die in obscurity (Paul), or in prison (Joseph) or by execution (Daniel) if one does not take the opportunities that open up in the place or city of one's destiny. Being in the right place or city or country just means that one is in the place where opportunities open up for the function of one's anointing, gifting or talent. There is no such thing as automatic promotion. It requires faithfulness and boldness to enter into the opportunities God provides. Nor does it mean that there are no temptations or trials (definitely no bed of roses here). Paul must have struggled through his Jewish traditions and theology to get deeper into the revelation of Christ. Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife and falsely accused. Daniel was amongst the wise men destined for death when he asked for more time to interpret the king's dream. No one escapes temptation and trials; neither in the poor house nor in the palace. Everyone will be tested and tried and have their personal wilderness before they are given opportunity to walk into God's destiny for them. Even Jesus had to go through the wilderness to be proven and tested before He launched His ministry.

The most important thing to understand is that one must be in the right place, right city and right country in order to take part in the opportunities that God will open up for the function of one's gifting and talent given by God. If you discern that you are already in the right place then be on the lookout for the opportunities that God brings to you. Every opportunity will require that you exercise faith for without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Sometimes an opportunity exists but it is not what you expect. Even when circumstances seem to be going backwards naturally, if you are doing right before God, it is going forward. To Joseph, the temptation by Mrs Potiphar was handled with righteousness and grace; yet he was imprisoned for doing right with no one believing him (Genesis 39:19-21). He was tempted not once but constantly by Mrs Potiphar on a daily basis (Genesis 39:10). Joseph had built a good life for himself by then and could have had a secret affair with Mrs Potiphar but instead, he chose righteousness and paid the price of false accusations and imprisonment. It must have been traumatic to lose all that he had built up over many years and go to prison for something he did not do. It seems to be going backward in his life. Yet he was going forwards spiritually for he was a better man to have passed the test of temptation. Outwardly, he seemed to be going backwards but inwardly he was progressing in the development of his character. Only God could have arranged a rendezvous for him to meet the butler in prison.

In prison, it was important that Joseph did not give in to despair and discouragement when circumstances seem to be against him. If he had, he would have sat in his prison cell and rotted. Instead, Joseph once again made himself useful and his administrative skills were once again called upon. If he had not been faithful in prison to the opportunities God opened up for him there, he would not have had the meeting with the butler and the baker. He had to have the

authority and freedom to walk about in prison and visit the other prisoners. Such authority and freedom came because Joseph continued to take every opportunity given to him to do good and do right. Everything that was done in prison was done by him (Genesis 39:22-23). God can only open the doors for us, we must arise and do it ourselves (by His gifting, talent and anointing that He has placed within us, of course). How many opportunities have God's people missed because of their discouragement, despair, fear or simply lack of faith and boldness to walk through the open doors? Hundreds, thousands, and possibly millions, because if all of God's people lived in God's perfect Will the church today would be greater than it is now.

Even when we need to develop boldness and faith to enter through the doors God opens, we must learn to say 'No' to the wrong doors first before God opens the right door for us to say 'Yes.' No one escapes temptations or trials that lead to the higher spiritual promotion in God. Joseph had to say 'No' to the illegal doors that the devil tries to open for him. If Joseph had yielded to Mrs Potiphar and lived a secret life with her, it would not be long before Mrs Potiphar plotted to kill Mr Potiphar and have Joseph replace him as her husband. Such devilish promotion only leads to sin, unrighteousness and ultimate destruction both in this life and in the next.

Daniel was tempted to be like all the other Jewish boys who were allowed to feast at the king's table (Daniel 1:5-8). For someone brought as a prisoner of war and a slave, having seen only starvation and destruction, such would have been the opportunity of a lifetime to eat, drink and be merry. To live one's life in a strange new country, with strange new customs and strange new foods and forget the sorrows of the past for after all Israel had been destroyed, the temple gone and nothing remained of all of his childhood dreams; these would be the wrong open doors that the devil opened to Daniel and his friends.

Who would not be so discouraged, down and despairing as to indulge in what the devil offered? In fact, they might have experienced the trauma of seeing their own families killed and slaughtered in front of them. Which child or youth goes through war without becoming a victim of trauma and guilt? And the wars of Nebuchadnezzar were by the sword (no bullet or instant kills) which was messy and bloody. The Babylonians were known to torture and make people suffer before they were killed.

Besides that it is highly possible that Daniel and his friends were castrated and made into eunuchs. Isaiah prophesied that Babylon would take the young men of Israel and make them into eunuchs (Isaiah 39:7). And Daniel and his three friends were brought under the charge of Ashpenaz, the chief of the eunuchs (Daniel 1:3, 7-10). It is highly likely that Daniel and his three friends were mutilated and robbed of their manhood. Such traumatic experiences would have totally destroyed most youths and reduced them mentally and spiritually to a slavery mindset. What Daniel and his three friends went through is beyond our emotional and mental comprehension. Yet, they still sought to please the Lord. They had nothing left but the dignity of their faith in Yahweh God. How many people in Daniel's situation would have given up on God? In fact, all of the other young Israelite people except Daniel and his three friends. In spite of it all, Daniel and his three friends were in the perfect Will of God in the right place for them to blossom. They suffered for the sins of their nation but they still had faith in God and sought to please Him. Saying 'No' to the delicacies of Babylon was their way of retaining the dignity of their faith in God when everything else around them had collapsed.

Walking in the perfect Will of God involves entering the right doors that God opens. It involves taking on the opportunities God gives.

However, none of the doors God opens will involve a compromise of God's Word and commandments. Do not ever enter any door or opportunity that involves a compromise of God's written Word and commandments. They are false promotions that will lead to destruction. They might look good outwardly like the fertile valley to Lot but its end is the destruction and robbery of everything you own and achieve. Lot even lost those things he had before Sodom and Gomorrah. Entering the illegal doors will lead to a total loss of even what you had before the door opened. Watch and wait faithfully for the right doors and opportunities.

On the other hand, when God opens the door, don't let your own emotional cowardice, emotional comfort zone, or your fearfulness rob you of the one and only opportunity for spiritual and natural progress in God. Some are fearful to walk into God's promised land because of their emotional bonding to the wrong people or their fear of offending people. They want the same old lifestyle and the leeks and garlic of Egypt. They are fearful of change. They are fearful of rejection. Others are fearful to walk into the promised land because they fear the giants in the land.

It must be made clear to all that in the end, you lose more, if not everything, if you do not continue forward in walking in the perfect Will of God. You cannot keep that which you have gathered if you remain in a plateau. Spiritual growth is the destiny for us all. Choose the wrong paths and you endanger everything you hold dear. Not to choose and allowing circumstances and others to choose for you is also going to endanger everything you hold dear. Not choosing is a choice. It is a choice of not obeying. The only safety in God is His perfect Will and not His permissive Will. It is far better to be in the promised land with giants to conquer than to be either in Egypt with Pharaoh or in the wilderness of familiarity.

Beloved, the message of God rings loud and clear, seek the perfect Will of God always. Walk in love but your love for God must exceed and excel all other loves, including your natural families. You do an injustice to your own loved ones if you do not walk in the perfect Will of God; for when the reckoning comes for being in the permissive Will, your destruction and sufferings will also be theirs. If you truly love them, you have to love God and Christ first. Then your light and blessings will also be theirs. The way of the perfect Will leads to greater spiritual life, light and love for you and all your family. The way of the permissive Will leads to darkness and destruction. Blessings both spiritual and natural await those who walk in the perfect Will, though in the short term it might be costly to the natural. Destruction and total loss awaits those who walk in the permissive Will in the long term, though in the short term they seem to protect what they have. You can never keep what God did not give, and you can never get what is assigned for your destiny if you do not follow Him.

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Obedience is better than sacrifice. Let the Lord be your Shepherd and you will always lie down in green pastures besides still waters. Let the Lord lead you, even through the valley of the shadow of death, and you will find a table prepared for you with goodness and mercy for each day of the rest of your life.

Choose the doors wisely and love all greatly always. My prayers are with you unceasingly.

Fatherly Talk 6.06

The Humility of Jesus

Dearly Beloved

The victory of Jesus Christ at the cross and resurrection was all traced to His humility (Philippians 2:8-9). Humility is the key to permanent and eternal victory in life. At times, it looks like Jesus was losing when He went to the cross – His disciples fled and left Him, the crowds who use to follow Him dispersed, it looks like the end for Him at the Sanhedrin trial and the trial under Pontius Pilate, and He looked so helpless at the cross unable even to quench His thirst. Yet, because He humbled Himself, God the Father was watching every event and released all the resources of heaven to ensure that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was raised and crowned for His meekness and humility. The way of humility was not an easy road, but it is the only road that is sanctioned by God. If anyone wants to see 100% of God's help, they must relinquish 100% of their own defense allowing themselves to be humbled (humiliated). Yes, part of humility is being humiliated by others and not reacting in any way except love.

Humility is the doctrine of turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). It is not easy turning the other cheek because we all naturally want to fight back. In these days of independence and rights, everyone wants what they deserve and no one is willing to suffer wrong. There is a place and a time for such but even when that comes around, the attitude is never out of anger or reaction but rather from meditation and action. Paul in correction of the Corinthians spoke of the shame of Christians going before the unrighteous to pursue after worldly things (1 Corinthians 6:1-5). Paul was not against a negotiated settlement between believers but he was against brother going against brother before unbelievers (1 Corinthians 6:5-6). He clarifies that it

was already a failure for them go after one another and when as far as to advocate that the meeker or stronger or more humble accept wrong unjustly (1 Corinthians 6:7-8). When Jesus was asked to be an arbitrator in an inheritance issue between brothers, He refused and instead warn against covetousness saying one's life does not consist of the abundance of things he possesses (Luke 12:15). This is a verse that many carnal Christians who are only after prosperity should re-read. In the natural, it was only right that the man's brother received his rightful inheritance but apparently to Jesus, suffering loss is no big deal.

In reading the doctrine of turning the other cheek and willingly being defrauded, I am sure many Christians are wondering how far they should go in this. There are two principles that are juxtaposed in balance. One is the principle of knowing our rights and inheritance in Christ, the other is the principle of not pressing for it when it comes to natural (and unimportant to Jesus) things. Are they really opposing? No. It is still important to know our rights and inheritance in Christ and all of our rights as Roman citizens (representative of citizens of any country). Even Paul learned to use his Roman citizenship to advantage (Acts 16:37; 22:25-29). The underlying harmony of when to exercise our rights and when to let it go in meekness and humility is as follows:

1. When it is a matter of no spiritual gain, let it go.
2. When it costs your sanctification and your holiness, let it go.
(In other words, if you have to stoop down to the low level, below the belt, unethical and unedifying methods of getting what is your right, let it go).
3. When you have to stop walking in the love of God, let it go.

(To retain the ability to walk in love to God and to all men is more important for eternity's sake).

4. When you have to destroy another person, let it go.

(We should never destroy another person or life in the pursuit of our rights and gain).

5. When it does not harm to God, our Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit and to God's name, let it go.

6. When letting go endangers you and your family, hold your ground.

7. When letting go compromises the Word, ethics, morality and justice, hold your ground.

8. When letting go destroys the kingdom of God, hold your ground.

9. When letting go allows the devil and demons to reign, hold your ground.

10. When not doing right is sin including the sin of omission, hold your ground.

Having expressed some balance in the tension between the necessity to hold our ground when it is the right thing to do versus the ability to turn the other cheek, we should always make our default mode meekness and humility. It is only once in a while when occasion demands of us that we, the lamb, turn into the lion of God. We are sheep by default and nature not lions. Jesus was the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah but it was Him as the Lamb of God that the fate of the Universe stands (Revelation 5:1-6). The praise and worship to Jesus was 'Worthy to the Lamb' and not "Worthy to the Lion" (Revelation 5:12). It is better to receive than to grab. The Lamb of God

received power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessings. It is RECEIVE and not TAKE. Jesus our Lord won it through His humility (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus could have taken it all unto Himself. He could have called on the Father and twelve legions of angels would come to His aid (Matthew 26:53). Jesus could have come down from the cross when they challenged Him. Jesus could have done many things to take His kingship and authority. But No, He chose to be a humble servant coming not to be served rather to serve (Matthew 20:28). Jesus conquered by His humility and His love, thus He truly won. If He had conquered by His might and His power, many more would have been destroyed. It was even much harder for Jesus to be humble than for us, for He had power, authority and might at all times. Yet, He chose not to use it. The average human being would have quickly tried to conquer all the world if they had an ounce of the power, authority and might Jesus had. Moreover, most humans are forced by circumstances to be humble whereas Jesus was humble by choice. May we learn from His example. Sometimes, we are like James and John who, having learnt of the great power of Jesus and the name of Jesus, almost wanted to call down fire to burn the town that rejected Jesus and them. They were even polite enough to ask Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire to destroy the town (Luke 9:54). As if Jesus doesn't know how to do it Himself if He wanted to. Jesus rebuked them and said that they know not what spirit they are of (Luke 9:55). Give a little power to people without humility and they will destroy themselves and the entire earth. Give all power to a humble man or woman and they will use it only for the benefit of others and the whole world.

The way to be a conqueror in Christ and more than a conqueror in Him is by receiving and not by taking. We inherit the earth – not conquer the earth (Matthew 5:5). We cannot keep what is not given to

us by God no matter how hard we try. We can only keep what is rightfully given to us by God and no man or devil can take that away from us. We cannot keep that which we have compromised our principles and heart to get. We can only keep that which we humbly and prayerfully have received from God through a lifestyle of love and humility. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Why is it more blessed? No doubt receiving the inheritance of God is a blessing. We must not just be blessed with the blessing, we must also receive it in a blessed way. The way we receive the blessings is as important as the blessing. If indeed, the blessing is of a spiritual and significant nature that has powerful blessings in the natural. Many people of God want the blessings of God but they would bend every rule and compromise every principle in order to have it. The end never justifies the means. Both the means and end must be right for it to carry the approval of Christ. Jesus was offered a short cut to the world of riches and power by the devil (Matthew 4:8-9). He did after all come to conquer the world back for God but it must be on God's terms and God's method. He chose the power of the cross to do it. The power of the cross symbolizes the triumph of humility over all the world. How much lower in humility can one go beyond the cross? Nil. The cross is the lowest point of humility personified. And God chose to glorify the cross so that we will always remember that it is by the cross of Christ that we conquer. Amen and Amen.

The cross has been the symbol of Christian armies throughout but it has been used wrongly. The true symbol of the cross is that of giving one's life to another as the conquest of another life; and then the world. By giving ourselves to others in humility, we conquer. We conquer by giving and not taking – that is the message of the cross. People who use the symbol of the cross to conquer by killing, taking and grabbing are no better than the devil incarnate. The true message of the cross is that we conquer by laying our lives one for another.

May each of us never see the cross in the same way again. May each of us see that the cross was humility personified conquering through self-sacrifice. Jesus conquered us and the world when He gave Himself on the cross. Today, we who are disciples of Jesus conquer by giving our lives at the cross for others. And as God raised Jesus and exalted Him above all name and power and might in heaven, earth and under the earth, so will God do so to us and cause us to reign over all the world in humility and truth. We shall be the head and not the tail through the power of humility. We shall conquer nation after nation in Christ and for Christ through the power of humility. The cross is a method and not just a message. It is the ultimate method of conquest of the world. It is the very symbol of the power of humility. Humility is a method and not just an end. The end is Christ and the road and methodology is the humility of love.

May God open the eyes of your understanding, beloved ones, and show you the power of humility. May you never ever feel ashamed to suffer wrong unjustly, to take the pain and sin of others unto Christ. The Spirit of glory is upon you when you partake of the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:12-14). May we know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

The blessings of humility and the methodology of humility be mightily demonstrated upon each of you.

Fatherly Talk 6.07

The Humility of Paul

Dearly Beloved

There is no doubt that Paul the apostle was a man who learnt the humility of Jesus. He spoke of the tears of humility in his farewell to the Ephesians (Acts 20:19). This was something he learnt as a follower of Christ for Paul, then known as Saul, was a proud man who persecuted the Christians. He was well taught at the feet of the best teacher in town, Gamaliel, and was always ahead of all his contemporaries (Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14). Possibly a member of the Sanhedrin, he was well known to the council and obtained letters of authorization from the council to eliminate the Christians. Eloquent and highly skilled, he had so many reasons to be proud. And indeed, before Christ, he was proud. In his pride and zeal, he even thought that he was serving God (Acts 22:3). When pride and religion get together, the mixer is potent and destroys many lives. We do not know how many Christians were killed and imprisoned by Paul, but it suffices to know that even after his conversion, he was greatly feared (less the conversion be false) by many Christians. Even today, Christians who are proud and highly religious would be the guilty ones who persecute other Christians. What a ridiculous notion - Christians persecuting Christians but that is so true of church history. Why do Christians do this? The only answer I can find is pride - purely pride and high religious status. Take away such and these persecutors will be begging for mercy. Who makes us a judge over one another? Who makes anyone a guardian and defender of the faith? I am not speaking of the reasonable place in Christianity where one can debate doctrine and principles for the sake of biblical accuracy like they did in the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Such debates can be

done without pride; it can be done in humility and respect so that every one's views are voiced out with the possibility of disagreement without being disagreeable. There are those who totally do not respect other people's viewpoints and need to either silence them or persecute them. Such do not have respect for others and would have taken the lives of others if they were not restrained by Christian morality.

Paul was a great defender of the faith and good at debating doctrine, yet he always showed respect for other's differences. The main demonstration of humility in a debate is respect for others. To respect another person is to hold them in esteem despite the differences in doctrinal understanding or practices. In the Spiritual World, respect goes hand in hand with the demonstration of love. It is out of love that the various angels and higher developed saints do not push their greater and better understanding of God on to others less enlightened. Paul speaks about even acknowledging the weaker brother amongst us (Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 8:7-11) who does not have the revelation of dietary laws or of freedom from food offered to idols. He advocated the allowance of each person to walk and progress at their own level of understanding; even suggesting that to push the higher revelation would have gone against the personal faith of such and condemn their conscience. This is not to say that Paul had no temper for we see him quickly apologizing when he was corrected for being out of line in attitude to the high priest (Acts 23:2-5). He did also publicly rebuke Barnabas and Peter over the withdrawal of eating of food with the Gentiles and had a dispute with Barnabas over Mark (Galatians 2:14). I wonder what Jesus would have done in such situations? The choice is either silent disapproval without withdrawal of love and perhaps a tolerance of a second chance to Mark - who knows? Only eternity will reveal who is right in such disagreements. The fact remains that despite the various disagreements that Paul had in his lifetime (the recorded ones to our knowledge), Paul continued

to walk in humility with those he disagreed with. In his relationship with Peter, it continued even after he had rebuked Peter and Peter put in a good word for Paul in his epistle although recognizing that some of Pauls' teaching are not easy to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). And with Barnabas and Mark, the apocrypha records how they fell on each other's shoulders and wept and prayed as they parted (The gospel of Barnabas). It takes humility to be able to continue a relationship AFTER a disagreement. Pride huffs and puffs and walks away. Humility continues to respect and make room for one another especially if it is in an area which does not deny our Lord Jesus' lordship or the Bible. No one person in the world has total knowledge in everything. There are so many possible viewpoints in Scriptural knowledge of everything. Moreover, everyone sees Scripture from their own experiential context and background. Sometimes all variable differences are looking at the same truth from different perspectives and they both have a place in the economy of Christian doctrine. Paul with such a great intellect demonstrated humility. Many people of lesser intellect and capability get stuck in the pride of their own opinions that they considered vital doctrine - like a child holding on to the last drop of ice cream not knowing that the fridge has a container left to replenish their ice cream cone.

Pride is the hindrance to all intellectual understanding. To acquire revelation and knowledge, one must be prepared to be like a little child when one comes to the presence of God or the Spirit of Truth. Pride forms a wall of stupidity that prevents a person from further changes in his knowledge. The person of pride behaves like a stupid person who goes around the same belief systems that are sometimes extreme or lack better application and understanding. What can be done to such? Such people unfortunately in the Spiritual Word and in this natural world, need to be left to themselves until they knock themselves so often in the school of reality and experience that they

realized that something is fundamentally wrong with themselves and they need to change both their attitude and then their understanding. Attitudes must be changed first before there can be a change in understanding. The word 'repentance' for the Greek word *metanoia* conveys not just a 180 degree turn around of the mind, but also a willingness of the mind to see and accept what it could not comprehend - *meta* in this case meaning beyond. How many times have we believed before we understand? Truth is determined by its spiritual nature before its intellectual qualities.

The spiritual nature of truth is love, peace, joy, kindness and all the other fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). It is after we accept love that we begin to understand love. We can receive love beyond the comprehension before comprehension begins. Thus, by this means we know truth before we understand truth. All truth will be in line with the fruit of the Spirit and the nature of Christ. Anyone who has any area of new revelation of truth will always be transformed proportionally by that portion of truth into Christlikeness before the person could even express that truth intellectually. In the end, as we full receive Truth and have the Truth (the Living Word) living in us, we would become fully Christlike. You can tell who is right or wrong by the attitudes and nature of the debater. You can tell right or wrong of a new revelation or principle or method by the nature that it produces in its receiver. All truth will lead to more Christlikeness and anything opposite from truth will lead to less Christlikeness. The purpose of truth is to experience God with understanding - intellectual processes to understand truth is not just for the sake of giving all of us a big head full of pride. The goal of all true intellectual understanding of truth is to make us better people and more Christlike in God. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life to lead us to God our Father. Intellectualism is not an end. What good is a great intellect without a great heart in Christ Jesus? Note how Paul's great

intellect did not lead him away from Christ but rather towards Christ. The next time you struggle to discern truth, don't do it just with your head but do it with the heart.

The apostle Paul regarded himself as a proud insolent man, a blasphemer and persecutor against Christ before his conversion to God (1 Timothy 1:13). He even regarded himself as the worst of the lot, the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). It takes humility to admit one's personal failure and the worst part of one's character. Every one of us has a bright side and a dark side. It is important to know what we are potentially capable of without Christ as much as to know what we can be and do in Him. To know one's weaknesses is half way towards overcoming it. Although in their positive faith mode Christians like to think the best of each other, we also need to know that behind every good character is the potential of the opposite at its worst. A good strong leader might end up a bad domineering dictator. A friendly social person might end up a man pleaser without backbone. A strong determination to work against the odds can become a stupid stubbornness on the wrong road. A detailed worker can become a constant worrier. All strengths are potential weaknesses and all weaknesses can be potential strengths. For this reason, we all need to learn to walk in the love of Christ for without it our worst characteristics come out. Paul learnt that his weaknesses can be opportunities for God's strength to be in him (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). When Paul and Barnabas clashed in Acts 15 over Mark, the strengths of both came to the fore. Barnabas has always and will always be the champion of the discarded, rejected and unknown. He was that way when he first helped Paul the unknown (Acts 9:27). Paul was a man of principle and cannot take unproven people who have failed into his team (Acts 15:38). He was not one who can accept untested teammates especially those who have already been given a chance and failed. In the end the very differences between them that made

them a strong team became the force that separated them. We know that eventually they both looked past this event and Mark became a blessing to Paul in his latter years (2 Timothy 4:11). We note how Dr Luke remained a lifelong friend of Paul right to the end (2 Timothy 4:11).

All life is about relationships. If we are not able to make good strong relationships in this life, the problem is as much us as others around us. Some people who have zero friends around them. Or never could make lifelong friends because their weaknesses kept coming up and splitting them so throughout their entire life, they are always looking for new pastures to make new friends; one day there will be no more new pasture because they have hurt every potential person around them and no one wants to come near them because they are well known for being people who are vicious and hurtful. We have to examine the following areas introspectively before God at all times:

1. How is our relationship to our parents or adopted parents? The first relationships we build are those with our parents. No matter how imperfect they are, we must learn to love them unconditionally. Some of us from not so good backgrounds have more to struggle in this area than others but we are not responsible for the family we are born into. We are only responsible for our character and response to such families. No matter how hard it is and in some cases there might not be any possible close relationships, we must always walk in love and forgiveness and be able to think with unconditional love towards our parents.
2. How is our relationship with our spouses? The closest person to us is our spouse and if we had not learnt to make our spouse our best friend and confidant, then we are completely incapable of having close friends. For those who have experienced

separation and divorces, it is important that you also see your part and failure in the marriage and not just your opposing spouse. If you do not admit your own character flaws, then you will bring the same flaws into the next marriage and completely destroy another life. Humility is being able to admit your own flaws and mistakes. The secret to lasting marriage is unconditional love. Learning and cultivating the ability to love unconditionally is part of all successful marriages.

3. What types of friend do you have? If you have not been able to develop friends who can disagree with you or be brutal with you in their honesty, you do not have real friends – you possible might just have fans and not friends. How many of your friends can you count on that you can show up at midnight and know that they will take you in? If there are none and you are already in your latter years, something is very wrong with you. How can you not in 80 years of life on earth not developed at least some lifelong friends? Where have you been living, on Mars? It is time to admit that you are incapable of being honest about your own weaknesses and flaws (which might be the reason no one is a friend to you) otherwise you would have much to deal with when you meet Jesus face to face. If the only friend you have is Jesus, then your standards are too high and nobody in the world is going to meet that standard. If everyone is your friend including the devil and the world, then your standards are so low and your morality and principles non-existent that you do not truly know the meaning of having a good spiritual friend. The only reason why people have not developed true friendships is that they cannot accept other people's weaknesses nor their own flaws. No one is perfect, and friendships are based on love and not perfection. Look around at those who truly love you and care for you (but who will not put up with your

nonsense or excuse your flaws), those are the people you should make friends with even if they themselves have their own flaws.

Without humility, there is no possibility of forming true friendships and relationships in this life. We learn humility when we relate to others around us. May God teach us to be humble and walk in humility with our loved ones and all our extended family in Christ.

Fatherly Talk 6.08

The Test of Humility

Dear Beloved

God does allow certain tests to distinguish between those whose hearts truly follow the Lord from those who don't. These tests are always designed in area of love and humility. God tested Abraham's love towards him in Genesis 22:1 and spoke of the ten trials (tests) which He brought the Israelites through (Deuteronomy 8:16; Numbers 14:22). Every Christian has a wilderness to go through just like Jesus. The key is not to stay too long in the wilderness beyond God's perfect timing. It was God's perfect Will to take the Israelites through the wilderness (optimum time about one year) but through their disobedience it ended up as forty years with the older generation all except for Caleb and Joshua dying there.

The wilderness is a time of pruning and training. It is when we learn to overcome our weaknesses and demonic influences over our lives. The way out through the wilderness is the road of humility. Those who have not been through the wilderness do not know true humility. We learn to be yielded, broken and contrite in the wilderness. It was his forty years in the wilderness that turned the proud Moses, prince of Egypt, into the humble Moses, servant of God. He was skilled in all the arts of eloquence and wisdom of Egypt (Josephus the Jewish historian spoke of the battles Moses fought and won) and became one speechless before God (Acts 7:22; Exodus 4:10). After forty years in the back parts of the wilderness and experiencing God, Moses became the humblest man in Egypt (Numbers 12:3). The real test of the wilderness is not just the physical place, it is a spiritual place of testing whether we are humble before the Lord or not. Everyone enters the wilderness at some time in their lives. Only those who are humble get

out; those who don't die in the wilderness without seeing the perfect Will of God done in their lives. It is of utmost importance then that we learn the art of humility before our God.

Before honour is given by God, humility must be present.

(Proverbs 15:33)

Destruction will always come to the proud and before honour is humility. (Proverbs 18:12)

The only way to riches, honour and long abundant life is the fear of the Lord and humility. (Proverbs 22:4)

The grace of God is only activated by those who are humble before God. (1 Peter 5:5)

The only true and sure path to success both in this life and in the next life is the path of humility. Those who don't learn it early in life will have to face the consequences of their pride the rest of their lives. Every one of us will be tested in this life and the secret to passing the test is to learn to walk in true humility before God and before man. The Lord's purpose for testing us is not to harm us or to do evil, rather He seeks to bless us and do good to us. However, He needs to test us and prove us to ensure that we can handle all the goodness and blessings that He desires to pour upon our lives. He desires that we always remain humble in Him and use all our resources for the good of all. Thus, He seeks out the humble among us and rewards mightily (Deuteronomy 8:16). The greater the reward and blessings that God wants to bless us with, the greater the test. We must have the humility to handle the power and authority that God wants to manifest through our lives otherwise we will be turning every stone into bread for our own use.

Many Christians wonder why they should go through tests since Jesus has already paid every price for us. Jesus did die on the cross for our atonement, but we still need to learn to apply the redemption and promises of Jesus into our lives. Even Jesus expected us to learn to abide in the vine and obey His word (John 15:1-5). Jesus cannot make us abide in the vine or obey the word, it is an experiential thing to learn how to do it. He gave us the right and authority to be a branch in Him, but we must do the abiding by our own free will. We must learn to allow Him to prune and purify us through His word (John 15:2). The branch cannot bear fruit until it abides in Him; neither can we unless we learn to abide in Him (John 15:4). Jesus might have opened the channel right to God's throne, but we still must learn to pray and enter the throne room (Hebrews 4:11-16). Diligence and faith are still required to separate those who truly love God from those who don't (Hebrews 4:11; 11:6). The reward is given to those who diligently seek Him and not to the lazy (Hebrews 11:6).

We do not learn patience and faith without tribulations and trials. The testing of our faith produces patience and we should count it all joy when we are tested for the reward would be great (James 1:2-4). There is no shortcut to patience and humility, the path to true patience and humility is the path of trials and testing of our faith and love in God (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4). The very passage that speaks about us standing in the grace of God (Romans 5:2) speaks about us entering into trials and tribulations so that we can receive glory and patience and the character it produces (Romans 5:2-5). Indeed, it is only when we are persecuted that the Spirit of glory rests upon us and that our reward in heaven is great (1 Peter 4:14; Luke 6:22-23). The God of all grace, who has called us into eternal glory will perfect, establish, strengthen and settle us after we have suffered (been tested) a while (1 Peter 5:10).

There is also a false humility (outward) and a true humility (inward) (Colossians 2:18; 23). False humility may look religious, but it is hidden pride. The Pharisees loved to make themselves look religious and make known their prayers and false spirituality and humility: they love to be seen by men in their religious prayer, they make vain repetitions to be heard by men and not by God, they disfigure their faces when they fast to look spiritual, etc. (Matthew 6:5-18). Humility does have outward demonstration, but it is primarily the inward humility of the heart that matters. Only God can see the heart and we must not mistake false outward religiosity for humility. It is the hidden person of the heart, the incorruptible beauty of a meek, quiet and gentle spirit – that is true humility (1 Peter 3:4). Humility gives one the ability to submit to authority (1 Peter 5:5). Humility respects the weak and helpless and does not oppress or take advantage of them.

May we learn true humility from our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He is the meekest and most humble of all souls on earth. We as His followers must learn to walk in humility as He has done so. The path to greatness and riches and honour is the path of humility.

Let us all prosper through walking in this path.

Fatherly Talk 6.09

Submission: The Road of Humility

Dearly Beloved

Over the past sessions, we have been looking at the theme of humility. We all know by now how important it is as an attribute both in this life and in the next. The question now comes down to how does one develop or acquire humility? It is obvious that we all will be humbled – either we humble ourselves and receive God’s grace or being proud we will resist God and be humbled by Him (1 Peter 5:5-6; James 4:6). There are keys in the Word that point to how humility can be developed in our lives.

Humility can be acquired through submitting and relating to others. The younger are told to submit to the older (1 Peter 5:5-6). This is not with regards to an abusive relationship where the younger get bullied by the older but speaks of one learning to submit to those who are older (physical or spiritual) in age to us. It implies that the older one is worthy of submission. Also, a point to note is that submission is ‘given’ and not ‘taken.’ This states that no one (whether natural or spiritual) can claim authority and submission from another. Submission is voluntary and not compelled or coerced. Anyone who demands that people submit to them are not worthy of yielding submission. There are so many abusive relationships today that the very thought of submission causes a shudder to go through those who are innocent and new. Yet, despite all these, we cannot deny that there is some truth to the Bible telling the younger to submit to the older and wives submitting to husbands as their husbands are in turn submitted to God (Ephesians 5:22-24).

In a modern world of independence and rights of individuals, the topic of submitting to one another is not a popular topic as everyone tends to walk around with a fat ego and expect recognition of one's gifting and talent per se. Everyone is an independent and people are so mobile nowadays that one can easily pull up roots and move to another town or community when our ego is bruised or wounded. The fact is that many, many Christians do not learn to relate to one another because they just simple do not choose to do so. Superficial relationships thrive when one just sees one another once a week or once a while. It takes living under the same roof to bring out either the best or the worst in us. Whenever we relate to another person in a close manner (through marriage, through family relationships, through friendship, through sharing the same house, etc.) there is the necessity of give and take. Surprisingly, many people who have a vacuum in their ability to relate to their family or loved ones tend to also have the same inability to relate to others within the same church or community. This is because it takes humility to relate to another human being. Relating to another human being requires humility and a submission one to another (Ephesians 5:21).

The next time you are running away from a family, loved one, friend, employer, partner, etc. ask yourself, "Are you running away because you are unable to submit to one another?" If you are, then you are robbing yourself of life's greatest lesson – the lesson of humility. We learn humility by learning to yield submission to one another in various relationships. We do not learn humility directly from God, we learn it first through relating to other humans around us. For how can we say that we are submitted to God when we cannot submit to those around us who are in authority?

The test of submission is also a test of relating to authority. Every one of us need to deal with authority even from our inception into the

world. We are immediately under the laws and authority of the country in which we are born in (or acquire citizenship or permanent resident). We deal with parental authority when we are babies and growing into adulthood. We deal with school authorities when we start going to school. We deal with social strata and underpinnings of authority as the various school mates' egos clash in social life until some become the head and others the tail. Authority is always around us. In this life, we cannot escape dealing with authority for when we work either in ministry or professional, we deal with established authorities. When we partake of any group of humans organized into a club, society, church, sports or any other organization of humans, we deal with authority.

Of course, those who are abused by authoritarian figures remain damaged in their soul and might be crippled and unable to deal in future with other authorities, even good ones. Others have simply no authority over their lives and lived undisciplined lives but always heading nowhere. Some have the extremes of both. Unfortunately, no matter what our experiences or background is, we all need to learn to walk correctly and in balance with authority over our lives and as God wills, exercise proper authority over others in our lives.

The prodigal son and the elder brother in Luke 15, illustrates the two extremes in responding to authority. The younger brother is an undisciplined person who obviously does not understand stewardship nor proper authority or submission to the father. He was outwardly conforming but inwardly had pride. True humility is outward conformity with inward humility. The older one was outwardly submissive and law abiding but he did not enjoy himself at all; he had no grace for the younger brother. There was no joy in the older son and no true love for the father in the younger. The younger son returned not because of the father's love but because he

was hungry and wanted to be fed well like the father's servants (Luke 15:17-18). The older son had no comprehension of the generosity of the father's love and lived a miserable law-cased life. He did not understand nor have the father's love and joy for the younger brother (he refused to enter the celebration) (Luke 15:28). The older son obviously looked down on his younger brother in the statement that he made about him (Luke 15:30). The younger son was self-centred and licentious caring for no one except himself. However, the redeeming feature of the younger son was that he was willing to even renounce sonship and just enjoy servanthood with the father. Though he did not understand his father's love nor returned solely for the sake of the father, he was at least on the road of humility. No matter how our lives were or where we have been, the road home is always the road of humility. Humility brings us into the grace of God. The younger son was willing to walk the humble road of just being a servant and received the fullness of the grace of the father.

Humility must begin somewhere. It always begins in a relationship with another human in the right manner. Start right now to walk the road of humility. It does not matter your past, your sorrows, your pain or your losses. The younger son went through all those things and decided to walk the road of humility to the father. Like many of us, the younger son has no comprehension or appreciation of the love of the father. He was even selfish in thinking of his stomach and own survival, but the road of humility brought him home. Grace is always given to the humble and never to the proud.

Sometimes, the road of humility seems to be forced upon us by circumstances (and God) without us realizing it. It is always for our own good. Hagar was going to run away because of the harsh treatment that she was getting from Sarai (Genesis 16:9). She had given birth to Ishmael and was feeling the wrath of Sarai. The whole

situation was not her fault. It was Sarai's idea to let Abraham sleep with her and have a child and not her own idea. She did have one small fault which she should not have done – she emotionally began to despise Sarah. However, we must remember that she was forced into bearing this child and not through her own generous voluntary choice. Who knows if she loved another person and was forced to sleep with Abram by Sarai? There are thousands of reasons in such circumstances to imagine why she hated and despised Sarah. Her anger or hatred turn to spite when she had the only child of Abram and Sarai had none. The treatment that she was receiving was so harsh (could have included unjust beatings and rough treatments topped with verbal abuse). She did the only thing she knew – run away. Yet the angel of God told her to stay on with Sarai and submit to her. She submitted to Sarah about another 14 years plus the number of years it took to wean Isaac (Genesis 16:16; 21:4-13). Despite all the cruelty of Sarai and her own weaknesses, God blessed her and the child and took care of her. If Hagar had left and disobeyed the Lord in shortening her own suffering under the heavy hand of Sarai, perhaps she and the child might have died. When it was the time for the test period of submission to be completed, God allowed her to leave Abraham and supernaturally took care of her and made Ishmael a great nation (Genesis 21:17-20).

The road of humility is not over just because we say it is over; nor is it completed just because we think we cannot take it anymore. It is over only when God says that the test is complete, and it is over. If we cannot take the road of humility, then like Paul we should ask for more grace. Note that the situation where Paul required grace and was asking God three times for help was a situation given so that he would not be proud through the abundance of revelations given (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). It was the road of humility that Paul was trying to get out from, but God said that His grace is sufficient for him. Paul

learned to walk that road in the grace of God taking pleasure in humiliation and infirmities.

We do not have to wait until we have lost all our goods and bankrupt ourselves before we choose to walk the road of humility like the prodigal son. Nor do we have to wait until the abundance of revelations to come to walk in the road of humility. Nor should we try to shorten the road of humility by our own hand. Only God sees the heart and only God sees the pride in hearts. He knows all things and examines our deepest thoughts to see if there be any wicked way in us. Only God can determine whether we have humility.

Let us learn to walk the road of humility. Learning to wash one another's feet like Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Let us be willing to do the most humble and obscure work in God and not just look for places that the Pharisees look for – places to blow their trumpets and demonstrate their false religiosity publicly. Humility is in our hearts and it will allow us the grace to do the simplest task no matter how insignificant in our eyes or how small. True humility must be inward and demonstrated outwardly in our relationships with one another.

The humble shall be exalted and the proud brought down.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus continue mightily on each of us as we walk the road of humility.

Fatherly Talk 6.10

Humility: The Road to Authority and Power

Dearly Beloved

It is clear to our lives today that humility is the primary key to the increase of grace and the workings of God in our life (James 5:5). The rewards are both on this earth and in heaven above. It would be good to outline the rewards and understand them in greater detail that we may be motivated to seek the road of humility rather than the road of pride and self. Amongst the rewards of humility are the very opposite of what we expect – authority and power. Those who desire power and seek it by their pride will only destroy themselves, but those who do not desire power but only seek to humbly do God's will are rewarded with great authority and power that they might inherit the earth. The meek will always inherit the earth even though the strong and mighty try in vain to stop them or snatch it from them.

1. The humble are promoted to authority and power

Jesus made it clear that those who are destined to be great in our midst must be those who are prepared to be a servant to all (Mark 10:44). Authority and power on this earth is under the control of God (Daniel 2:51; Matthew 28:18). God gives authority and power to whomever He wills. When Nebuchadnezzar thought that power was purely in his grasp and all that he achieved was his own, he was corrected by God and humbled (Daniel 4:31-32). When Pontius Pilate thought that he had authority over Jesus, he was corrected and told that his authority was there because God had given it to him (John 19:10-11). Whether we realize it or not, whether the very people who exercised authority on earth know or not, all authority

indeed comes from the Lord. I know that this seems strange especially to those of us who experience people in authority who do not seem to receive it by their humility. Every one of us has a destiny and those destined to exercise authority (as part of our mission on earth) will be tested on their humility; failing which their authority and work will be given to another.

God is looking for people who are humble to promote them to positions of authority. Sometimes those who are destined for greatness of power and authority have to go through a long road of humiliation before they are allowed to exercise dominion. Such was the life story of Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament. Jeroboam was an unknown until God gave him the ten tribes of Israel in prophecy for which Solomon sought to kill him and he fled to Egypt (1 Kings 11:28-40). God even promised that he would have an enduring kingdom if he obeyed the Lord (1 Kings 11:38). However, Jeroboam was insecure that the Israelites might desert him if they kept going to Jerusalem to worship and when he built a golden calf to the Lord, his kingdom was cut short and judgment fell on him (1 Kings 12:26-33; 14:7-20). If only Jeroboam has realized that it is not by his own might and ability and power that he obtained a kingdom. His counsellors were just mere men who thought that everything happen by natural means alone and neglected to understand the most fundamental truth, that is God is the only power behind every promotion of authority and power (1 Kings 12:28).

Others like Jehu, only obeyed God partially and not whole heartedly. Jehu was given a kingdom by God and at first obeyed the Lord and removed all the false worship of Baal from Israel (2 Kings 9:2-12; 10:30-35). Jehu did not walk in the law of the

Lord with all his heart, so he had partial authority and God began to take portions of Israel's land away from the authority of Jehu.

If only all men and women in authority know that it is the Almighty God who gives all good things and requires that all walk humbly before Him. Pontius Pilate must have been struck at the authority of Jesus sought to release Him to no avail. Solomon in his old age observed that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill but that time and chance happened to them all (Ecclesiastes 9:11). The word 'chance' here is from the Hebrew word *qara* which means to encounter. It is not as undirected or accidentally as we think it is. The word *qara* has been translated as 'befall' (Genesis 49:1), 'met' (Exodus 5:3), 'came' (Job 4:14) and 'happen' (Jeremiah 44:23). It is used in many areas of events happening with human choices involved (not necessarily by accidental chance) in Exodus 1:10; Leviticus 10:19; Joshua 11:20. In the New Testament, the word 'chance' is the word *sugkuria* which literally means a coming together of events or happenings. We know that such 'coming together of events or happenings' do not happen by accident, but they are the total sum of human choices of past and present converging into an event. God knows all things and can control all things. The only requirement of God is that we love Him and humble ourselves before Him (Romans 8:28; James 5:5). The convergence of all events (whether for or against) will be turned into goodness to us and be used for our exaltation if we humble ourselves before God. There is no chance in God; everything has a cause and effect. Promotion does not come by accident nor does it come

from the east, west or south but it comes from the Lord (Psalm 75:6).

2. Spiritual authority, gifting and offices is exercised best by those who are humble

God did not allow Moses to rise to spiritual authority over the Israelites until after he learnt humility in the wilderness. He was a prince and thought that by slaying the Egyptian, the Israelites would know that God had chosen that by his hand He would deliver them (Acts 7:25). He was indeed called to be a gifted spiritual leader, but he was not ready for the gifting nor for the spiritual office yet. God had to teach Moses that it is not his hand but His (God's) hand that delivers the Israelites. Moses authority was great because he had by the time God used him in the wilderness became the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). At that time on the planet earth, Moses was probably the most powerful man of God on the earth. The power that God chooses to display through our lives is directly proportional the measure of humility in our lives.

When Stephen and Philip were willingly to be mere deacons serving the widows and taking care of their daily food distribution, God began to anoint them mightily and gave them demonstrations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:8; 8:6). There was no record that they were selected to do mighty works, they were selected to help feed the widows. Paul himself recognized that the Holy Spirit delights in showing His power through the weakness of men (2 Corinthians 12:9). He observed that the Corinthians who was one of the churches abundant in the gifting of the Holy Spirit did not have many wise men among them, nor many mighty or noble for God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise (1 Corinthians

1:26-29). His primary purpose is that only God might receive all the glory (1 Corinthians 1:29). No flesh shall glory in the presence of God. Paul speaks of his own weaknesses and his dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit rather than on himself (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). We are told to NOT lean on our own understanding but rather to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts and acknowledge Him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Paul was a great apostle because he knew himself to be nothing before God. We are great in the sight of God only as we understand that we can do nothing without Him (John 15:5). The more we think we can do it ourselves, the less He is able to help us. God does delight in us partaking of and exercising His authority on His behalf but only after we have learned the lesson of humility and dependence on God. Joshua learned to be a servant to Moses all of Moses' life. Joshua was known as Moses' servant (Numbers 11:28). He served Moses for forty long years through all the hard times and good times in the wilderness. Not once did he seek to promote himself. He probably would have been happy just being a servant to Moses, if Moses had lived longer than him. After Moses died, Joshua was chosen by God to exercise great authority. God even told him that He would exalt him and make him great in the sight of all Israel (Joshua 3:7). God exalted Joshua and make him a great leader who exercised astonishing power and authority; even allowing him the power to stop the sun and the moon in carrying out His commission (Joshua 10:12-15). Indeed, there has been no day like that nor since then when God listened to the voice of a man and stopped the sun and moon in their tracks. What great authority and power that God had bestowed upon one man. Why? It is because that one man had served in

humility for forty years as a servant asking for nothing. When God exalts, He exalts more than what we can think or imagine.

As we consider the majesty of God and His greatness. Let us also consider that the greatest place in the world to be in is in the place of humility. Of course, the greatest demonstration of humility is by Jesus who humbled Himself unto death for us but who is now exalted through the whole universe and all of God's creation, the name above every other name (Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus had all power and authority given unto Him (Matthew 28:18).

Today our God looks for those who have the same nature of Jesus – the Spirit of humility. There is a revival coming forth in these last days and God will exalt those who are walking in the deep humility in the sight of God and of men. May God touch and use each of you richly, as you seek God in humility; serving Him with tears of humility (Acts 20:19).

In a modern world which espouses pride, strength and selfishness, let us demonstrate the strength and power and wisdom that come only through humility. May we always breathe and live humility every moment of our lives.

Fatherly Talk 6.11

Lessons in Humility from the Life of David

Dearly Beloved

Humility is not an option but an essential if one is to progress in this life and in the next life. Besides learning definitions of humility, we must also learn lessons of humility in this life that will stand us well while on earth and in the next life in heaven. All the principles of spiritual progress in this life and in the next life are derived from the same Scriptural principles. Part of the lessons in humility involved knowing how to relate properly to authority (and authority figures), relating to our own God-given abilities and gifting without using it to lord it over others, and learning to respect both those who are above us and those who are under us (in position, power and fame) equally. True humility learns to relate to people for who they are and not just what they have or where they are. Some of the lessons in humility we can learn from the life of David are:

1. Humility is to keep the right respectful attitude to authorities and authority figures even though we may be more popular, more talented and more gifted than them.

After David became the most popular man in Israel after he defeated Goliath, all the women and songs composed were about his greatness even above King Saul (1 Samuel 18:7). This was not the only song that was composed but a sample of songs being sang for all Israel loved David (1 Samuel 18:16). King Saul was very insecure and reacted wrongly to David attempting to kill him (1 Samuel 18:9-10). David, despite of all the adulation and popularity, remained humble and considered that he was not worthy to be the king's son-in-law (1 Samuel 18:18). It would

have been easy for David to become proud and big headed possibly even plotting Saul's dethronement, but such thoughts never occurred to David. He was satisfied to remain where he was until the Lord's fullness of time. Let us also not forget the fact that David was anointed to be king by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:1, 13). There were so many reasons and opportunities for David to fall into pride, but he did not. Before promotion comes a test of humility.

Many people lesser than David have failed at such opportunities because they became proud and took things into their own hands. The test is an opportunity to become proud through one's ability and achievement. Success has a way of preventing further success if one became proud through the preceding one. Only continued humility can assure one of continued success. Many people begin very humble in their lives but when success comes, immediately become proud and thus they become a hindrance to their own further success. For this reason, many do not rise to be the top rank of number one (head and not the tail) despite their earlier success, which would have been a test for them, for it did not produce an attitude of humility. Many remain with mediocre success for they failed the first test of humility. Everyone will be given an opportunity to be proud and only those who choose to remain humble continue in their meteoric rise to be the head and not the tail. Besides that, those who finally achieve the fulfilment of the Scriptural promise to be the head and not the tail sometimes do not get to keep their position because they became proud the moment they became the head (Deuteronomy 28:13). The power to remain the head also is conditioned upon exercising humility when at the very top and pinnacle of success.

2. Humility is to keep the right respectful attitude to authorities and authority figures even though we might not agree with them.

King Saul, out of his insecurity, began to pursue and destroy David such that David was driven from the palace to the cave (1 Samuel 19:8-18; 22:1). There were many attempts of Saul to kill David both directly and indirectly: spears being thrown at him (1 Samuel 18:10-11; 19:10), creating difficult and dangerous situations hoping that David will be killed (1 Samuel 19:25), sending assassins to kill David (1 Samuel 19:1, 11). Saul made David his enemy even though David had only done Saul good (1 Samuel 18:29). Insecure people made even good people their enemies. Most of the time their enemy is only in their head for the darkness of their own insecurities make them think that people are out to get them or wanting to dethrone them from their position. Feelings of jealousy, insecurity and anger are deeply rooted in insecurity. The darkness in people who have such dark thoughts caused them to see darkness in others when it is not there.

The right way to respond to people who have only done good to you is to love them and be grateful, but those that are deeply insecure cause even those who love them and desire good for them to be their enemies. How sad that such people will end up without any friends for they seek to destroy even the very friends who do good to them. One would have thought that with so much in Saul against David that David would have hated Saul and seek to destroy him in return. This was a different test of humility for David. The first test was a test of sweet success as to whether he will become proud from his

achievements. This second test is a test of whether he will return evil with evil. If he did so, he would have himself become bad and evil. Instead, David returned good for evil. He spared Saul's life twice against the wishes of his own mighty men (1 Samuel 24:5-7; 26:8-11). He also refrained others from destroying Saul (1 Samuel 24:7; 26:9). Some people will not destroy others themselves but get others to do the dirty job for them. This was not David's attitude for he commanded his men not to harm Saul, who had positioned himself to destroy David. By being a bigger man than Saul, David had passed the test of greatness. He passed the second test of humility and set himself on the road to greatness in God.

3. Humility is learning to both do what God says to do and NOT do what God says not to do even when we have the ability to do it.

King David had a good desire to build God a temple after he was firmly established in his throne and kingdom (2 Samuel 7:1-3). David was rich, popular, and powerful and had the natural ability to build God's temple. He even had received the plans by the revelation of God as to the details of the temple (1 Chronicles 28:12). David had very detailed revelations of the dimensions of the temple, the running and divisions of the priests for the temple and even the materials for building the temple (1 Chronicles 28:1-21). The test, now that he was firmly established as king, was whether he will do what God says. For in his position as king over all the land, only God was his restraining factor for no one else had the authority and power over him – he could practically do anything he wanted to do. When God said to David NOT to build the temple, David was humbled and obeyed God. God reminded him that he was

nothing before he became a king and in God's sight would still be nothing without God (2 Samuel 7:5-16). God did bless and reward him for his right desires and love for Him, but God did not allow him to build the temple, a job given to David's son.

There is a God watching every single human being on the earth: both the successful ones who are at the pinnacle of power and those struggling at the bottom of society. All are called to account before Almighty God. Anyone who disobeys God and steps outside the jurisdiction appointed and given to each will be dealt with severely just as Nebuchadnezzar was dealt with (Daniel 4:17). All men must humble themselves before God even the head of tribes, businesses, fields of studies, senior pastors of mega churches, heads of nations, yes, even the head of the whole entire human race and planet. It is a test of humility and perpetual greatness if one submits to God and only seeks to perform and do His Will as a servant even though one might be the mightiest and most popular and powerful man or woman on planet earth. David passed this test and became the standard by which every other king in Israel and Judah was measured.

David was not a perfect man, but he was a humble man. Pride did rear its ugly head and David did fail some tests of humility. He failed the third test of humility given to those who have absolute power without any other human above them when he has sinned with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-11). He did fail the test of pride when he numbered the Israelites (1 Chronicles 21:1-2). On the average, many men and women do pass the first test. Fewer pass the second test of humility and they end up in the deserts and wastelands of bitterness and strife. Their lives have become wasted time as they blame everybody but themselves for their lack of success. Each day and month and year is only

more of the same as they either remain in a plateau or at the bottom of the barrel. They will only arise and experience more success in life when like the prodigal son, they stop blaming others and humble themselves and return to where they left the right path of progress both spiritually and naturally.

Fewer still are those who make it through the second test and are tested at the third level of humility. For only very few men and women reach the top of their community or tribe or nation to have power and authority over others below them. Of those at the very top, very few are like Daniel or Joseph who preserved themselves from the sins of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. More of them are like David who have made mistakes in these areas. Those who have not passed the second or third test should never judge the failures of those who fail for if you have not been in same level to be tested, you would not know whether you yourself would have passed or failed the test. For those who have failed in such areas and experience loss and shame like David, the key to redemption is as clear as it was in David's time. The key is repentance and humility. Since the test is a test of humility, it bears well to start at the throne of God by humbling oneself before Him. For God loves the humble exalting them and resisting the proud.

The good thing about God is that He allows us as many chances as we need to pass the test. It does not matter how many times one fails. It only matters that we keep close to God and keep humbling ourselves before Him. The lessons of humility from David who passed most tests but failed in some is that whenever you fail, humble yourself like David did and seek the mercies of God. In humbling himself in his failure with Bathsheba, God gave David a beloved son who would

build the temple of his vision. In humbling himself in his failure for numbering the Israelites, God showed David the exact place to build the temple. The plans and the purposes of God move forward even through the meanderings of human failures. The river of God's perfect Will still get done as long as humility comes forth easily and quickly.

Be aware that our humility being tested all the time by Almighty God. Walk humble before God and before man and you will always experience exaltation by God into places of His delight and joy.

Fatherly Talk 6.12

Lessons in Humility from the Life of Joseph

Dearly Beloved

There is no doubt that every upward gain in life is preceded by lesson in humility of some sort. This may or may not be visible to people outwardly. All the men and women of God had to learn lessons in humility before God could use them mightily. The greater the call the more severe the training. We are not all born humble; our natural instinct is pride and ego. God has to break us first before He can use us. Only a broken and contrite heart will God hearken unto (Isaiah 66:2).

Joseph was born into a life of privilege and pride. He was the favourite of all his brothers. His father, Jacob, unfairly loved him above all the other children (Genesis 37:3). He had things that the other brothers did not have like the coat of many colours. For seventeen years, his brothers tolerated the wrong favouritism shown to Joseph. Certainly, such a privilege life does not produce humility. Moreover, Joseph made things worse by bringing to the father's ears all the bad things his brothers did (Genesis 37:1). Of course, in such disparity more and more hatred and anger are sown. It was only a matter of time when anger would lead to murder. It was foolish of Jacob to destroy his own family in that manner but neither did he get the right type of family environment. He, himself, grew up in a home where his father loved his brother more and his mother loved him more (Genesis 25:28). No parent should love any child more than the other. The seeds of disproportionate love were sown in Jacob and he again sowed it into his own family.

Out of an imperfect environment of strife, anger, unfairness and favouritism, the Lord chose to reveal the ultimate destiny and call of Joseph through a dream (Genesis 37:5-10). It certainly did not help add any love to the family situation which was already boiling over with disharmony. It took the brothers of Joseph one more rank higher into envy and anger against Joseph (Genesis 37:11). By that time, they had enough and whatever family love they might have for Joseph would have died. They did not conspire to kill him suddenly. It might have already been on their minds. Get rid of Joseph and their problems will go away; at least, that is what they might have thought. One fine day like any other normal day, they conspired to kill Joseph when they saw him approach them in the field (Genesis 37:18). Only Reuben the eldest among them stopped them from murder, asking that Joseph be put into a pit hoping to rescue him later (Genesis 37:22). Joseph was placed in a pit and later sold while Reuben was away (Genesis 37:26-29).

Joseph had his first lesson in humility. Everything that he had and everything that he was, was stripped away in one day. Only his life was preserved but only worth that of a slave for twenty shekels of silver (Genesis 37:28). All the privileges and favour of his father could not put Joseph in the position where God could use him. Joseph had to learn the lessons of humility before he was ready for God to use him. Seventeen years of first class life style did not prepare him for the ministry or the calling God had for him. Like Jesus, Joseph had to start at the bottom of the ladder. He entered Egypt with nothing. It was in Potiphar's house that Joseph began to come into his own. Since Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, it would mean that the period between Potiphar's house and the prison covered thirteen years (Genesis 41:46). His period in the prison covered at least two years after he met the butler and baker (Genesis 41:2). Assuming he was in the prison a couple of years before he met

them, it could mean that Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's house for eight or nine years and in prison for four or five years depending on which greater length of time we want to give to the period in prison. So, although the Bible says that Joseph found favour in Potiphar's house and was successful, we know that the success he had probably took at least eight to nine years to achieve (Genesis 39:2-5). It was indeed not an overnight phenomenon.

As a newly bought slave Joseph would have to start right at the bottom of the ladder and work his way up. And slaves do not immediately have administrative jobs. This would mean that Joseph learned humility by doing menial tasks like washing the toilets (which would be more horrific without a flush system), cleaning the house, tilling the fields, etc.; every manner of manual labour that Egyptian slaves do. There was definitely not much intellectual work available for the slaves when they first started. Joseph's hands had probably never been soiled with hard labour when he was in his father's house for Jacob had many servants. Manual labour was something new to Joseph.

Many upcoming ministers of God avoid manual labour and just seek soft and easy life styles. They forgot that many of the greatest heroes of the Bible grew up in the wilderness and fields (Moses, David, Jesus). Of course, Moses had to leave the palace for the wilderness before he found God. And David was not a stranger to being assigned manual tasks as he was a shepherd boy and one sent to bring lunch to his brothers. Jesus, himself, was a carpenter. The disciples who formed the inner circle of Jesus (Peter, Andrew, John) were fishermen who worked with their hands. Even Paul was a tent-maker although trained in the best schools of the Pharisees. The first lesson of humility that Joseph learned was that manual labour and hard work is nothing to be ashamed of. He took it with zeal and must have been the best

labourer (slave), the best toilet cleaner, the best house cleaner, the best planter in the field. He must have done something with excellence to be noticed for Potiphar had many slaves. When Joseph did the work, there was a spirit of excellence about him no matter how humble the job. Most of all, God blessed his work and made it prosper. I don't think that God would have blessed any work that is done half-heartedly. Joseph must have done his best and put his heart into it.

When I first started off in the Baptist seminary, all the students have dormitory duties. For two years, my duty was to wash the men's toilets in the main building. It was in the third year (because I was hanging out so much in the library during my spare time reading through many of the biographies and history books that I practically knew where all the books were.) that the librarian gave me the duty to help her. In all the churches that we planted, we worked hard in manual labour whenever required – carrying chairs, arranging them, cleaning, vacuuming. I might not do them today because we have a good logistics team but at any time, I would be prepared to roll up my sleeves and lend a hand. We still do that in our outdoor church in Sydney, putting out the chairs and the tent. These are in addition to the preaching, sometimes two long sermons a day for five days in a row, international travel and responsibility of several ministries. It is no shame to do manual work. It is a sign that one has learned the lesson of humility and that it is ingrained into oneself. In manual labour, we learn that we are nothing but a little donkey just carrying things from one place to another and that it is only Jesus in us that makes the difference. As we graduate to administrative tasks and supervisory positions, we never forget that we are but dust and clay; the treasure being Jesus in us. What is more heartening than to have one in the highest position doing the lowest and humblest task? Well, Jesus did it. At the peak of His ministry and life, He stripped himself

of all His fine clothing, dressed like a slave in loin cloth and washed His disciples feet (John 13:3-5).

The first lesson we learn from the life of Joseph in humility is the blessing of manual labour. There is nothing more basic than going back to the work of our hands and feet. It can even be therapeutic for those who need inner healing and recovery from their wounds and hurts. It is life raw and at its most basic. Many times, God would take some of us who need it through such a path that we may learn the path of humility. Stripped of all our titles, fortune, fame and power, we are but clay vessels. It also strips us of all our wants and neediness. I remember one of the happiest times in my life during the decade of blood (1997 to 2006) was when no one knew me or who I was. I only have just enough to get by from week to week, without any responsibility to others except my family and working with my hands to put computer parts together to sell as an integrated system for our weekly needs. End of each day, I would take a walk with my dog and have no care in the world on my mind. Of course, those were not the only times I am happy for I do enjoy helping someone to grow spiritually, teaching the Word and move in the Spirit. But I illustrate that to encourage those who are perhaps moving between phases in your life, profession or ministry or maybe just having enough to get by, that you still can find true happiness in God; living one day at a time. There is no shame in working with your hands and being at the lowest place in life. Unless we find happiness when we have nothing, we will not find happiness when we have everything.

Despite all the good works that Joseph did for Potiphar, he lost it all in an unjust and unfair manner. Tempted by Mrs Potiphar but not yielding to her, Joseph was wrongly accused and thrown into prison (Genesis 39:7-20). Once again, Joseph lost everything and had to start

all over again. This is a humbling experience. It is the second lesson of humility that we can learn from Joseph's life.

The second lesson of humility here is that even though you are seeking to do the right thing, things don't always work out for you at first. In fact, it might seem that everything is going the opposite direction – downwards. For God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts not our thoughts. Lessons in humility sometimes involve a downhill descent before a higher climb uphill. There was no fault in Joseph, no blame that we can assign him in this second test of humility that he went through. Circumstances conspired that if he obeyed his conscience and choose to do right, he would lose everything. By that time his position was secured, seemingly. He was the head of the house under Potiphar and nothing happens in the house without him (Genesis 39:5). Joseph maintained his consciousness of God throughout his service under Potiphar (Genesis 39:9).

It must have been a great discouragement to Joseph when he lost everything the second time. Of course, those of us who have the Bible can read the ending and see that it turned out well, but Joseph had no idea how things would turn out when he was living out his life. He even tried to hasten some justice and get out of prison when he met the butler (Genesis 40:14-15). For Joseph at that time, it seemed that he was destined to live the rest of his life in prison. How much lower can you get? Is this not humbling enough? It is, but Joseph passed the second test of humility with flying colours. He remained faithful to God despite not having his dreams and prayers answered. If he had to serve out his life in a dungeon, so be it. Life is from God and if no one knew him but God, so be it. He was going to be the best prisoner and the most hardworking one there. Indeed, he excelled so much that he became the head of the prison under the captain of the guard (Genesis 39:22-23). Life in prison would be harder than as a slave in

Potiphar's house, yet Joseph prevailed in his faithfulness to God. Humility is learning the lesson that we lived our lives on a one to one basis between us and God – whether we are known or unknown, recognized or despised, rich or poor, free or imprisoned – we choose to love God and honour Him and Him alone.

This second test of humility is not an easy one to pass. But those who pass it will achieve greatness in this life and rise to be the head and not the tail. To persist in right for the sake of pleasing God without reward and honour. To love Him and honour Him when there is no one to account to and no one looking. To slog faithfully day in and day out as unto the Lord and not unto man. To be willing to do so even when you face rejection and dishonour from men when you have chosen to do the right thing. To do so at the loss of face, position, wealth and power. All these were the hard lessons of humility that Joseph faced and passed with flying colours.

In the end, it was neither the favour of his father that established him nor the works of his hands in Potiphar's house that brought him into the fulfilment of his dream, vision and calling. It was the gift of God and God's favour that brought Joseph into success and prominence in life. To all who have tasted humility, to them belong promotions from God. God will exalt us when we humbly allow the hand of God to humble us. All exaltation always flows first through the path of humility. There is no short cut. Those who try to take short cuts in the end die or are destroyed by their own pride. It is ordained of God that the humbled shall be exalted.

Hold fast to the dreams and visions that God has for you, dear ones. But never forget that there is a price of humility to pay for the fulfilment of every dream and vision. When the price is exacted on us, may our lips be filled with thanksgiving flowing from a heart of gratefulness. For when we are nothing and have nothing, we still can

thank God for the joy of living day by day. Live each day humbly and walk in the love of God. Whatever happens in life, let us covenant to always love God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength.

Fatherly Talk 6.13

Lessons in Humility from the Life of Moses

Dearly Beloved

Continuing the theme of humility, we now look at the person whom the Bible declares to be the humblest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). It is a strange little verse especially knowing that it was Moses who was supposedly the author of the Pentateuch (all five books of the Bible from Genesis to Deuteronomy). Moses might have dictated God's words and recount of the incidents to Joshua and others who put the remarks of his humility in parenthesis. For humility doesn't self-advertise itself. (For example, the book of Romans is attributed to Paul, but the scribe was Tertius (Romans 16:22). (O Yes, they have their secretaries - scribes - to take down notes even in those olden days).

Moses lived a life of privilege and luxury being brought up as the son of the daughter of Pharaoh (Hebrews 11:25-26). It is so easy to become proud when one is surrounded by great wealth, power or fame. For this reason, the Bible exhorts those who are rich to be humble (1 Timothy 6:17). Such a verse in the Bible, tells us that the pride of life is an easy thing to fall into especially those who have riches, power and influence. This does not mean that the poor or middle class is exempted from such temptation. Poor people can also fall into pride to their self-effort (self-made people) or intelligence or skills. Pride is a temptation to everyone and is evident when we look down on others in whatever way, shape or form. There is even such a thing as spiritual pride, where one thinks they are spiritually better than others. If all things are equal, the rich and powerful do have more temptation to fall into pride. Thus, the need for Paul and James to exhort them to walk in humility (1 Timothy 6:17; James 4:1-6; 5:1-6).

Those who have not tasted fame, fortune and power at its height do not realize how easy it is to subconsciously fall into a pride of life. You get used to people serving you all the time that you forgot Christianity teaches us a true disciple of Jesus must lower himself or herself to serve others first (John 13:3-17). Saul, the first king of Israel, became proud and wanted to preserve his own kingdom for himself; many time doing things that are profitable only to himself not truly caring for the people whom he was appointed to rule over. Yet, he started with seeming humility regarding himself as low in the eyes of prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 9:21). Many humble people do become proud when they tasted of power, wealth and fame; and this includes those in the ministry, too. Pride and pomp made King Nebuchadnezzar think that he was someone special and God had to deal with him (Daniel 4:28-37). Herod thought that he was someone special; dressing himself in great pomp and allowing people to link his oratory to the voice of God (Acts 12:21-24). He died eaten by the humblest and basic of God's creatures – the worm. No one is special. No one is above another human no matter what our gift or talents or education or adornment or wealth or fame. We are all equal in God's sight and should think of others better than ourselves (Romans 12:3, 10). The greatest among us must be the servant of all (Mark 9:35; 10:44). The sad thing in the ministry is that many fivefold ministers and churches struggle much to be successful and finally after much travail and pain do become successful; they subsequently forget where they came from, begin to behave and adopt proud ways and methods, setting themselves for a major fall and discipline by God. For God does resist the proud (James 4:6). It is sad because many such have never tasted success before and having come unto their own forget their humble roots. Of course, this also applies to the business person also who forgets the God of his earlier humble days when they were nobodies. We all need to learn to

eat the humble pie of serving others continually or our flesh will cause us to be proud.

Moses was brought up in pride and in pomp within Pharaoh's house although he had his own mother as a nurse. He had servants, unlimited supplies of food and clothing and experienced the soft easy life style of the best of Egypt. His behaviour and mannerism were such that when he was first in the wilderness, the daughters of Jethro mistook him for an Egyptian (Exodus 2:19). While the rest of his fellow Hebrews work themselves to death as slaves, Moses ate the best and finest in the land of Egypt. In the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian, he records the wars of Moses which Moses accomplished in leading the armies of Egypt against their foes. Moses lived the privileged life of a prince and accomplished many mighty deeds. The Bible recorded that as an Egyptian, Moses was mighty in deeds and in words (Acts 7:22). He was aware of his Hebrew roots which is why at a later stage in his life, he visited his own people and observed them. Indeed, from the account in the book of Acts, it seems that he had perceived himself to be the champion of the Hebrews and their deliverer (Acts 7:25). This was when he was already had forty years of good life for he visited them only after he had turned forty (Acts 7:23). By then many of the poor, hungry and suffering Hebrews had died in their slavery and mistreatment. Fresh from his great achievements as an Egyptian prince, Moses thought that he would achieve recognition from his own people if he showed himself to be a champion to them. On one occasion when he saw a Hebrew being mistreated by an Egyptian, he looked left and right and seeing no one, secretly attacked and killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand (Exodus 2:12). He did hope for recognition by the Hebrews as their champion (Acts 7:25). The lesson we learn here in the life of Moses is that God does NOT need our wealth, our fame, our power, our

abilities or talent to accomplish His work and His will. He only needs a humble heart obedient to His voice and will.

Learning the lesson that God does not need our fame, power, wealth or influence to do His Will was a major lesson for Moses. Many people like that seat on the boards of many churches and ministries, making decisions without prayer or seeking the mind of God. There is nothing wrong with having wealth, fame or power but it is important that leadership or board members are not selected based on their wealth, fame or power; they should be selected based on their humility, servanthood and Christlike character. Moses' perception was right in that God did choose him to be the instrument to free the Israelites. What he did not understand was that God did not need his proud Egyptian heritage to do His spiritual work; it is not by might nor by power but by the Spirit of God. He needs to have the Egyptian pride eradicated from his life before God could use him. Many ministers and pastors are too easily influenced by powerful, rich, wealth, famous or influential men and quickly kowtow to them. God especially said that in the church one must not give preference to another because of their wealth or influence (James 2:1-8). This does not mean that we do not respect those who are in power, wealth or influence but rather it means that in the church there is impartiality as becoming of what heaven and Christ is like.

It is not an easy lesson to learn that we cannot accomplish God's Will just merely based on wealth, influence and power for sometimes people seem to have these as their goal thinking that it will further the work of the Lord. All the wealth of the world, all the fame in the world and all the power in the world CANNOT forward the will of God one inch if there is no humble heart behind such. Such was offered to Jesus in the wilderness and Jesus said NO to all of them (Matthew 4:1-11). Abraham said NO to the king of Sodom when offered material

blessings for his work accomplished (Genesis 14:23). Elisha said NO to the offer of material blessings for the healing of Naaman's leprosy. Elisha declared that so long as the Lord lives, before whom he stood that he will receive NOTHING (2 Kings 5:16). The apostle Paul chose not to take from the Corinthians when he was there with them despite he had the right to do so, instead he wanted to present the gospel to them without charge (1 Corinthians 9:1-18). The only type of individual who ministers for the sake of money is Balaam. Balaam had a special ability to somehow prophesy and he allowed himself to be used by a rich man named Balak (Numbers 22:17). Even though Balaam knew that he could not control the gift and its prophetic utterance, recognising that a house full of silver and gold could not change the prophecy, he still went along that he could obtain some material blessing from the function of a gift or ministry. If not for the faithful donkey, Balaam would have died (Numbers 22:22-35). When he failed to prophesy doom to the Israelites, out of his greed, Balaam taught Balak how to bring God's judgment on the Israelites by causing them to sin (Numbers 31:16). From the readings of the Scriptures, Balaam was willing to do his best to try to curse Israel just because of the lure of money (Deuteronomy 23:4-5; Joshua 24:9-10; Nehemiah 13:2. We are now warned in the New Testament to beware of the sin of Balaam who desired the wages of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15; Jude vs 11). If we do not learn the lesson that Moses learned in humility, we would end up prostituting the gifts and the callings of God; merchandising the anointing of God for a paltry sum of money.

Moses had to have his forty years of humbling in the wilderness to completely eradicate his false idea that he could do God's work with the power, wealth and fame of this world. At the end of that time, despite his mightiness in words and deed, he was a broken man who did not even have confidence in his own ability (Exodus 4:10). He even suggested that God used someone else instead of him (Exodus

4:13). Moses was completely a broken man not interested in anything else but his simple life as a shepherd. He had learned his second lesson, that he was completely nothing and useless all by himself. Imagine in the first forty years, he learned that he was somebody great and was proud about it. In his second forty years in the wilderness, he had come to learn that he was a useless fellow. Good for nothing more but taking care of his flocks and staring at the desert sand every day. Maybe, he learnt his second lesson too well.

All of us need to learn this second lesson from Moses life, too. We need to learn that we are nothing but dust and clay. It is nothing within us that is of any use; only what God put in us that is useful to Him. Paul learned the lesson that the real treasure is the life of Christ in us, earthen vessels, and that the excellence of power may be of God and not of us (2 Corinthians 4:7). He had to learn that when he is weak then is Christ strong within (2 Corinthians 12:10). He had to learn that it is not really him but the grace of God in him that was doing the work (1 Corinthians 15:10). He had to learn that it is no longer him who lives but Christ who lives within him (Galatians 2:20). Jesus Himself said that without Him, we can do NOTHING (John 15:5). But within Him, we will bear much fruit. He is the vine and it is not us but the life of Christ within us that accomplishes all the wonderful works of God through our lives (2 Corinthians 4:10).

A broken and contrite spirit God will never deny. It is the most precious thing to God such that in the background of the whole planet earth, a broken and contrite spirit would attract all the powers and resources of God's throne in heaven (Isaiah 66:1-2). Some modern preachers would challenge the fact that we need to be broken for God to use us but if we truly learn the first and the second lesson from the life of Moses, we would have learned that unless our pride is broken, we can never be humble much less the meekest man in the world. It

is our pride that needs to be broken (or humbled). The reason Moses achieved such distinction as being the humblest person on earth is because he was thoroughly and completely broken. God does resist the proud and breaks them.

Let us learn to repent for our pride and humble ourselves permanently before the throne of God. In Him we live and move and have our being, nothing more and nothing less.

Fatherly Talk 6.14

Lessons in Humility from Life of the Apostle Paul

Dearly Beloved

The Scriptures are full of the stories of men and women whom God breakdown from the altar of pride and produced in their lives an exemplary life of humility. Moses was such a man in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we have the apostle Paul. Paul (formerly named Saul) grew up in a privilege background. He was brought up at the fee of the foremost scholars of his time, Gamaliel, and rose to be a Pharisee (considered by secular society of that time to be the top rank in society) and possibly even to be part of the Sanhedrin council (Acts 22:3). He was a brilliant man who excelled beyond his contemporaries (Galatians 1:14).

There is no doubt that Saul, Paul's name before his conversion, was a very proud and religious man. He was instrumental in obtaining letters from the high priest to persecute and pursue the Christians (Acts 9:1-2). He was the man behind the death of Stephen and all the persecution of the Christians, for when he was converted, the persecution ceased (Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:31). Paul himself admitted that he was a persecutor, a blasphemer and an insolent man (1 Timothy 1:13). The root word *hubristes* from which the word 'insolence' is translated speaks of one who is violent and who insults others. Paul was like a gangster and a big bully – all symptoms of an over-inflated ego and pride uncontrolled. He wanted to dominate and subjugate others to his thinking and beliefs. God cannot use him until he is broken.

Like a wild horse that is no use to the owner, Paul was no use to God until he was broken. An unbroken wild horse will not do what the

master wants nor willing to go where the master wants it to go; it must be broken first. In analysing the details of the breaking down of a man or horse, it is not the spirit that needs to be broken but rather the stubborn will. Break the will but not the spirit; this principle applies to bringing up a child in the ways of the Lord. The spirit of the horse or man that loves adventure, that is brave, that is courageous, that is persistent, etc.; all these good qualities must be preserved otherwise the horse or man loses the uniqueness that God has gifted the individual.

In the Old Testament, it speaks about the breaking of the spirit – a broken and contrite spirit God will not despise (Psalm 34:8; 51:17). It also speaks of a broken heart. Surely God does not want us to go around with a broken heart, but a heart healed and whole. The Old Testament has two great differences from the new: firstly, the concept of the tripartite man (spirit, soul and body) is neither clearly revealed nor expressed and secondly, the concept of the new spirit (which must not be broken) was reserved for the New Testament era possible only in Christ. It is such that in the Old Testament, when it speaks about anger, which is a product of the soul and not the spirit, it uses the word *ruach* or 'spirit' rather than *nephesh* or 'soul' (Proverbs 16:32; 19:11; 25:28; Ecclesiastes 7:9). Yet at the same time, the Old Testament advocates a wholeness of spirit as being an important part of one's attributes to health and life (Proverbs 15:13; 17:22). Surely, it is not the will of God that one goes around with a sad sorrowful spirit that causes sicknesses or a broken spirit that dries the bones. We need to understand that the Old Testament has a way of using the word *ruach* translated 'spirit' in a general sense like that of the English language. For example, when we use the phrase that the 'spirit of a place is depressing' or that 'the person has a wrong spirit,' we do not necessarily mean that there are demons involved or a person is possessed. Rather it could be used with reference to the attitudes of a

society or community or a person; which strictly speaking and technically, would be more a soul quality rather than a spirit quality. In Aramaic which was literally translated into Greek, Jesus said to His disciples, who wanted to call down fire on a village that rejected Him, that they do not know what spirit they are of (Luke 9:55-56). The problem was not in their spirits, but it was in their judgmental and anger-vengeance type personality of their soul. And remember, that one of them was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. So, we can surmise that the fiery temper of John had been broken and conquered before God used him to be the apostle of love. Thus, we can conclude that the Bible usage of the word 'spirit' especially in the Old Testament sometimes refers to attitudes and perceptions of people's souls and technically not their spirit per se.

Having established the understanding that it is not the spirit that needs to be broken but rather the will, we need to establish the technical fact that humility is the brokenness of the soul and not the new spirit or new creation which Christ gave birth within us when we were born again. In general usage, we may use the phrase 'broken in spirit' but technically and scientifically, knowing that we have a new spirit born in the image of Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) and knowing that that 'spirit' or 'inner man' needs to be strengthened rather than broken (Ephesians 3:16), we should use the phrase 'break the will, but not the spirit.' The spirit within us is from God and has a sense of faith, adventure, intellectual and knowledge curiosity, fun, delight, freedom, buoyancy, lightness, inner pleasure, specific individualized likings and dislikes, etc. Our spirit needs to grow and mature into full Christlikeness. Our soul, on the other hand, needs to be broken before God can use us. Our soul includes our prideful intellect, our emotional self-pleasure and our stubborn will. Humility involves a will that has been broken and captured as a slave of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:19).

The apostle Paul's sense of purpose, great zeal and discipline religiosity that made him excel above all his contemporaries was the good parts within him. All these continue to be great blessings which God used for Paul became a very focus Christian with great zeal and discipline which excel him above many other believers. His pride and stubborn will and all the wrong teachings and wrong theologies of Christ that he had accumulated through a life time of being a Pharisee needed to be broken down and humbled before God could use him. Indeed, Paul was broken. He became a loving and compassionate man, often writing his epistles in great love with many tears (2 Corinthians 2:4; Philippians 3:18). He became a horse whose will had been broken into but whose spirit of adventure, bravery and courage remained. He was so broken that he knew his life does not belong to him anymore but was willing to live or die for Jesus at any time (Acts 21:13; Philippians 1:21). Paul probably shed no tears when Stephen died but when he was humbled by God, he was a man of love and tears for the softness of occasions (Acts 7:58; 20:19; 21:13). Through God humbling him and breaking his insolent pride, Paul became a man of tears and humility.

God resists the proud, but He exalts the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7). God cannot use any person no matter how talented, gifted or charismatic until God has broken the person's will and humbled the person. All of us are like sheep had gone astray before. All of us are like wild horses need our wills to be subjugated to the Will of God. Part of that process requires us to be broken before God can use us. For none of us give up our free wills easily to God. Being born again involves freedom from the bondage of sin. It also is entrance into the enslavement of righteousness (slaves of righteousness). There is no real true freedom without Christ. It is a deceptive freedom that looks like freedom, but it is enslavement by the world, the flesh and the devil. Only in Christ can there be true freedom of the spirit and soul

and body. The wonderful thing about being a bond slave to Christ is that He cares for us and loves us. He has our best interests at heart. For we were made by Him (John 1:1-3). Should it not be logically to all that He who made us (with all our special qualities and uniqueness of likes and dislikes, knows all that we truly love and want in this life and in the life to come? What greater pleasure can we have than to surrender to the hands of our own Creator who made us?

Paul remained a broken and humbled man (or horse to carry Jesus) all his life. It is because of this great depth of brokenness that God could use him. Unfortunately for many ministers and professionals and business people who had once been broken and saw the blessings of God and His promotion, fame and honour that He gave to us, many who have tasted fame, fortune and power become proud and we forgot where we came from. No matter how many adulations that humans in this life pour on us or how much we have acquired of this world's wealth or how many degrees that we have educated ourselves with, we all came naked into this world and we will leave with nothing from this world except the lessons and the training that we received in our relationship to God and man on this planet. Both Nebuchadnezzar and David had to be reminded that all they had was from God and they were nothing before him though they be mighty kings over men (Daniel 4:16-17, 30-33; 2 Samuel 7:8; 12:1-8). If God graced us with honour, wealth, fame, power or high positions let us not squander the blessings and opportunities God gave us in selfish pride, pomp and self-indulgence, but let us use all such blessings as a good steward to responsibly and lovingly help those who are suffering around us. All of life's blessings are but responsibilities and abilities God gave us to be a blessing to others. The end result of Abraham's blessings is not that Abraham will be enriched. Rather, ALL the families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). We have inherited this wonderful Abrahamic blessing in Christ (Galatians

3:13-14), let us understand how to be good stewards of this blessing of being the head and not the tail.

It is important to start well and to maintain our paths correctly in the Lord. However, in the scheme of all things in life, it is how we end that matters. The books of life in our lives are not completed yet (in its fulfilment not in its predestination). No matter how greatly blessed or how 'kingly' God has made each of us, let us remember that it is not how you began nor how you are now (much as we can give credit for those who have paid a price or exercised their gifting and talent to be where they are), the real question is how we end that matters in eternity. Many began well, many now seem outwardly well but the big question is how it ends. One thing we know, if any one wants to end well or to maintain what God has blessed you thus far in your lives, the main key is to choose to remain humble the rest of your life. There will be many more tests of humility that will come to each of us in different shapes and forms. Choose to be humble, choose God's Will rather than our own will. Eternally be like the broken-in horse that lets King Jesus ride on our backs. And for those of us going through great trials and tribulations and tests, the only reason for their existence in our lives is that we learn humility (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). Be the willing horse and pass the tests of humility with flying colours, and God will reward you greatly and promote you in your station in life (Deuteronomy 8:4-18). For it will take the same equivalent humility to maintain and to keep what God blesses you with in this life (Deuteronomy 8:14-20). Learn humility and learn it well. It will establish you for the rest of your life.

May God teach us and sear into our lives the keys to remain humble all the days of our life.

Fatherly Talk 6.15

The Lifestyle of Humility

Dearly Beloved

Having analysed various areas and people of humility in the Bible, we look at the application of humility in our daily lives. There are always differences of methodology between the humble and the proud. Jesus is the full personification of what the way of humility is. He chose the birth in the manger, chose to live humbly in a carpenter family when he could have been born to the elite or to royalty. He was an expert in all the Scriptures even at age twelve but chose not to be identified among the educated Pharisees but rather was identified among the working class; himself working as a carpenter until the age of thirty. When He ministered in His home town, people familiar with His natural life questioned how a carpenter could be the Messiah (Mark 6:2). Throughout His ministry, He had the upper class included among His followers, but He is more known to associate with the common people and despised people (Luke 7:34). At His death on the cross for us, He was hung among thieves and robbers although a rich man gave His tomb for Jesus.

Contrast this with the modern pastor who desires to join the elite clubs, drive the best cars, live in the best mansions, wear the most expensive clothes and associate with the famous, high and mighty of society. Jesus did have many followers who were high up in society ministering to him and opening their homes to Him, but He kept His balance in associating with the lowest of society and being available to them. Contrast this with ministers who have body guards, behave like Hollywood stars and become totally inaccessible to the man or woman on the street. What has our modern Christianity come to? We have ended up becoming the modern Pharisees who loved the best

places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogue, being greeted and adulated and acknowledged by all of society (Matthew 23:6-8). In place of teaching the Bible, we have shallow oratory; in place of miracles, we have expensive programs; in place of prayer, we have social gatherings. What has our modern Christianity come to?

Please note that we are not against people who have worked hard and having done their part for charity and the poor, enjoy their wealth and live in mansions and have the best of this life. There is a difference between wealth that comes through hard work and investment and wealth that comes through donations of people. The first group are those rich in the Bible who are encouraged to remember the poor and do charitable works (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Having done so, they are exhorted not to be proud, but may enjoy their wealth without condemnation. It is the second group that concerns people. Any wealth that comes through donations should never be spent for the pleasure and luxury of those who run the charities. It is hard earned money that people donate to fulfil the purpose and vision of a charity or ministry. The question is then asked, can a minister then enjoy wealth. It is possible, but they must ensure that the wealth they enjoy comes through their own investment and hard work and the source of such income is not from the donations but from the hard work and astute investment of their own personal income. Generally, people are not against wealth, people are only against unethical behaviour. No one should be against or jealous of another person's wealth if he or she has gotten it by honest means of hard work and astute investment. The Bible does promise prosperity to those who work hard and honestly trust God in the handling of their financial life (Joshua 1:8; Proverbs 10:4).

A great part of the humble life-style includes choosing to live humbly even when one can afford a much better lifestyle. The Greek word for

humble *tapeinao* includes the sense of living modestly and being unpretentious. The origin of the Greek word for humble is derived from the word for 'poor.' This is also the same in the original Hebrew word for humble. Paul uses the sense of poverty and living unpretentiously when he spoke of being able to be abased or to abound, being contented with abundance or lack in this life (Philippians 4:11-13). When the apostle Paul speaks about being able to do all things in Christ, the original context was his ability to live modestly and poorly without feeling short-changed or to live in abundance without feeling guilty. The key is to desire spiritual things above the natural thus being completely unaffected by the natural surroundings.

All theory needs a practical application otherwise it is just mind games. Understanding the theology of humility in the Bible necessitates that we apply it to practical day to day living. Good theology must result in good methodology. A life style of humility includes the following:

1. Being approachable like Christ to all people without adopting 'air' or a 'Hollywood style' of segregation from the common person on the street (Philippians 2:1-11).
2. Not spending the wealth God gave out of proportion with the society around us that we are living with (1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 5:1-6). A minister is not to live so poorly that people are stumbled and say that God cannot take care of His own, nor to live so high in society that the ordinary person in the street cannot associate with them.
3. Being down to earth and acknowledging and helping those who are not as blessed as us in society. The purpose of the Abrahamic

covenant is that Abraham becomes a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3).

4. Action speaks louder than words. We need to proclaim the gospel through our lives and not just through our words. We are the living epistles of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:2).
5. We need to help others in society in direct proportion to our ability. If we are very rich, we must help extensively and not just do it as a token. If we are not that wealthy, then we should help in proportion to our income. No one should be burdened beyond their ability (2 Corinthians 8:13-15). There is a great spiritual blessing and progress to use one's wealth to help others around us – rewards in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Giving is based on the percentage of our income and not just the amount we give (Mark 12:41-44).
6. Remember the example of Christ always. Christ was willing to share everything He had with us. In the natural world, it is a great inconvenience to share what we have. We are not advocating that one goes beyond what is reasonable and practical – you can't have 100 homeless living with you without losing time and responsibility to the rest of your family or to have your own time and quietness with God. But sometimes, it is a test of pride to be willing to share the use of things which we treasure in an earthly sense. God will lead you in this area in teaching you to share your life and things with those around you. The ability to share is a fundamental doctrine and practice of every follower of Christ who is a true disciple of Christ. Paul shared what he earned as a tent-maker with those who were with him (Acts 20:33-35). In fulfilling this point, one should not neglect the personal responsibility to one's own loved ones, family and those under one's direct responsibility to care for.

7. Live your life like your true and real home is in heaven and not on earth. Everything we accumulate on this earth cannot be taken to heaven. True wealth is not those that are passing away in this earthly life. True wealth and riches are what we can accumulate in heaven where there Jesus said that neither moth nor rust destroys (Matthew 5:20). This world is not our home, we are just passing through so why do we want to make it that permanent. How long can we live? 70, 90, 120 or 140? It is a short life and there is no time to build monstrous palaces or monuments that are but a vapor which passes away. We should build our character and love which cannot pass away. The amazing thing is that Jesus said that we can convert the wealth of this life into the wealth of the next life by giving it away (Matthew 6:19-21; Mark 10:21).

In a time when the world cries out for more examples of Christ, let us rise up as a new generation of Christians and disciples who truly live the Christ-life. The world can only see Christ through us – our words, our teachings, our lifestyles. We are all not perfect yet, but we can choose to be yielded to all the teachings of Christ as much as we can.

Why do we believe in Jesus and choose to be His disciples? Is it not that we truly love Him and want to be like Him? Let us put our actions with our words and live the lifestyle Jesus wants us to live as true followers of Christ. The problem is not our ability for God gives us the ability; rather it is our unwillingness for we tend to love this world and the things of this world too much to give it up. Remember the exhortation of the Scriptures that says the love of the world and the things of this world will result in us not having the love of the Father in us (1 John 1:15-16). By all means, enjoy all that our God the Father has created and placed on the earth for our pleasure and enjoyment.

But enjoy it the way Christ would enjoy it, proportionally and unselfishly.

As a servant of God looking after your souls, my desire is that each of you receive great rewards in heaven and in eternity by living your lives to please God. May God help us not just to understand humility but to live in humility.

Fatherly Talk 6.16

The Call to be a Disciple of Our Lord Jesus

Dearly Beloved

Majority of Christians today are believers or converts and not disciples. Yet the command of our Lord Jesus Christ was not to make converts but rather to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). A convert or believer looks forward to receive from our Lord Jesus Christ but a disciple looks forward to give and truly follow in the footsteps of Christ. Of course, we all do know that no one can live the Christ-life except as Christ lives within us (Galatians 2:20) but the key is that 'Christ DOES live through us.' Many who called themselves Christians are not interested in Christ living in them or being like Christ rather all they want is the benefits of Christianity.

When people wanted to follow Christ saying that he would follow him wherever He goes, Jesus immediately pointed to the cost of following Him (Luke 9:57-62). To one, Jesus reminded that He the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head upon. To another, Jesus said that he is to let the dead bury the dead and to yet another, Jesus said that no one, having put his hand upon the plow and look back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said that to be a disciple one must neither just look at the benefits of following Him, nor be involved in activities of the spiritually dead, nor be looking back and longing after the things of this life or the world. Indeed, those who love the world or the things of the world do not have the love of the Father in their lives (1 John 2:15-16). Indeed, when Jesus spoke of discipleship, He expects that those who chose to follow Him would have love for Him so great that in comparison of their love for Christ to those of their father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, and their own life, it would be equivalent to hate! (Luke 14:26). For those who can't raise

their love for Jesus to that level, Jesus considers that they cannot be His disciples.

To Jesus, a disciple is one who can bear the cross (Luke 14:27). What is it to bear one's cross? Jesus illustrated it with the cost of discipleship as of a builder who counts the cost and as king who counts the cost. There is a cost of discipleship. The cost of discipleship is the cross - which represents the placing of our whole spirit, soul and body as a sacrifice to God and Jesus. The cross was Jesus giving His life for us; our personal cross is we giving our lives to God and to others. At the heart of discipleship is the love of God. Without the love of God, we cannot be disciples. God so loved the world that He gave His Son (John 3:16). Jesus so loved us that He gave Himself to us (Romans 5:5-8). As disciples we continue in the same flow of God's love and love others the same way Jesus loved (John 13:34-35). A true disciple of Christ is a disciple of God's and Christ's love.

After Jesus was resurrected from the dead, He took time off to minister especially to Peter who had denied Him three times. He took Peter aside and asked him three times whether Peter loved Him. We know that the first two times, He used the word *agapao* and the last time He used the word *phileo* while Peter's answers were all in the affirmative using *phileo*. The real question was not just whether Peter loved the Lord; for Peter himself reacted strongly saying that the Lord knows all things and that he did love the Lord (John 21:17). Peter was grieved that the Lord had asked him three times (John 21:17). To Peter, it seemed as if the Lord doubted his love for Him. Moreover, the Lord did persist in asking Peter of his love for Him three times. Imagine, Jesus asking us three times whether we loved Him; a question like that from Jesus even one time would have been heart-breaking enough. In fact, the first question was phrased differently, it was 'Do you love me more than these?' It is possible that Jesus was either

comparing Peter's love with all the things around him or even that Jesus was asking Peter whether he loved Him more than everybody else. The Greek word *touton* translated 'these things' is a masculine or neuter word and can be translated 'these things' or 'these people.' The Bible is very clear that Jesus expects our love for Him will be more than our love for others (Luke 14:26; Revelation 2:4). It is also possible that Jesus might have asked Peter three times not consecutively but spaced out throughout the entire time He was with the disciples.

Imagine having the Lord Jesus come to ask us whether we love Him once; then again after a few hours, and then later again towards the end of the day. Peter was freaked out. He knows that the Lord knows all things. To be asked the first time by the Lord Jesus Himself would be pretty demoralizing if we do not have our lives right with Him. To be asked three times! Wow, that takes the cream off the cake. No wonder Peter was grieved when he was asked the third time (John 21:17). The Lord, of course, knows that Peter loved Him. Why then did the Lord asked Peter whether he loved Him? It was to prepare Peter to love others. When we love God, we will love others; it is the spiritual law (1 John 4:7-11). After Peter had affirmed to Jesus that he loved Him, Jesus told Peter that he had to die for Him. Peter would have to love Jesus so much that he is willing to die for him. He would have to love Jesus so much that he would be willing to die to bring the gospel of love to others. True discipleship is that our love for Jesus and others becomes so great that we are willing to sacrifice our life in love to others (1 John 3:16).

The one commandment that Jesus gave His disciples was to love one another (John 13:34-35). Not only was this His commandment to us but it is the main distinguishing mark that He wants us to be known by the world - by THIS shall all know that you are My disciples! By this commandment of love, we shall be known to be His disciples.

Discipleship is thus not just working signs and wonders alone. It does include that, of course, but the main thing that Jesus wants us to demonstrate in such a manner that the world can distinguish us is our love. It is not just teaching and preaching, either. It includes that, of course. It is the practice and discipline of love that is the true hall mark of a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After making His super defining statement of what true discipleship is (John 13), Jesus went on for two more chapters of the Bible to talk about this commandment of love. In the context of John chapters 13-16, the commandments referred would have to include the commandments to love God and to love one another as Jesus had done. We can allude to the fact that Jesus was painting with broad strokes on all the commandments of God but contextually, we need to see that this was a special conversation privately given after Jesus instituted the new commandment of love that establishes His standard of true discipleship. In John 14:16, Jesus said that if we love Him, keep His commandments. This would mean that if we truly love God and Jesus, then we should truly love others as well. John the apostle, himself, understood these words to apply to the commandment to love for he speaks in his epistles of the commandments of God (new and yet old commandments) the essence of which is to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves (1 John 2:3-10). The key that John the apostle sees as important in Christianity is that we should love our brother for to hate or do anything else is to walk in darkness (1 John 2:9-11).

If the call to discipleship is a call to love, why is it then that there is so much lack of love in many quarters of Christianity?

1. We have either strayed away from the commandment to love, replacing it with other commandments that put other things before love. We have turned the unconditional love of God into

a conditional love. All the replacement commandments have tendencies to make the love of God more inaccessible until very few people qualify to be loved by God or hence be able to love others in return. Thousands of years after Moses, the Pharisees have turned the commandments of Moses into heavy burdens that they themselves can't fulfil but expect others to fulfil (Matthew 23:1-4). They were no longer interested in the commandments of God themselves but were only interested in pleasing men and positions in the religious and secular world (Matthew 23:5-6). In the end they had neglected the weightier matters of the commandments like justice, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). Likewise, the modern church has added so many sub-clauses to the laws of righteousness and neglected the most important bulwark that holds the laws of righteousness in place - the love of God (Romans 5).

2. The proponents of the replacement commandments have themselves not experienced God's unconditional love. We can only love in proportion to how much we have been loved (1 John 4:11, 19). Also, there is a lack of the true knowledge of God. We know about God, but we don't know God. For to know God is to love. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:8).
3. There is a lack of true discipleship to love in the church. We are disciplined in doctrine, in gifts, in works and to do all the various aspects of the work of the ministry. But we neglect the most important discipleship program - teaching people to love, making them disciples of love. It is not easy to love just as it is not easy to do many other things in God's kingdom. Yet, there is almost no training program for Christians to be taught how to love one another.

4. It is costly to love another person. True love costs something. It costs God the Father His Son (John 3:16). It costs Jesus His life (Romans 5:6-8). We are all afraid of paying the price to love others. We know that love would make a demand of our time, our resources and our energy. And for fear of the cost of the sacrifice of love, we choose only to mildly love others according to our convenience; rather than loving others to the hilt.

The question we ask ourselves this week is "Are we disciples of love?" If our answer is anything but the affirmative "Yes" then we have not truly followed even the first and most important covenant commandment Jesus gave us, "Love one another as I have loved you and by this all men shall know that you are My disciples" (John 13:34-35).

If there is a willingness in our heart to love people, God will bring people into our lives to love. We are God's eyes, ears, hands and legs on earth to show His love. We are the members of His body, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones (Ephesians 5:30). It is only through us that God can love the many individuals on this planet. To love and help the entire world is beyond any one of our capacities but to help those within the circumference of our life and influence is possible. And it is only through our love that the world can see that we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ.

Fatherly Talk 6.17

The Love of the Father

Dearly Beloved

We read of the love of the Father in our introduction into the New Testament within the famous verse of John 3:16, how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. We also know the great extent of the love of Jesus for us (Romans 5:8). There has never been a problem about the revelation of God's love to us. The problem has always been as to whether we understand and receive the revelation of God's love. Not everyone of us know how to receive and appreciate the great love of the Father.

In the parable of the talents, three servants are given different amount of talents: to the first, five talents, to the second two talents, and to the last servant one talent (Matthew 25:14-30). The first produced another five talents, the second produced another two talents but the last servant had hidden the original talent and not produced any results. The strangeness of the story is also the fact that it would have been naturally easier for the one with one talent to produce as he had only one responsibility and that was to multiply that one while the other two servants had more responsibility and yet succeeded gloriously. The answer is revealed in the one talent servant. Since in this story, the owner represents God and Christ, the perception of the owner by the servant is as follows:

1. He perceived that the master was a hard man reaping where he has not sown and gathering where he had not scattered seed (Matthew 25:24). Such accusations cannot be true for it is against the law of the Bible which states clearly that everyone reaps

what they sow (Galatians 6:7). He might not have seen how the master sows or scatters, but it is a fallacy to think that one can reap what they did not sow. It would be equivalent to calling the master a thief.

2. The servant also expressed his fear and reacted by hiding the one and only talent he had (Matthew 25:25).

In his judgment and punishment of the owner, the owner reveals the true nature of the one talent servant: he was wicked, and he was lazy (Matthew 25:26). Who do we believe, the owner or the one talent servant? Of course, the owner for the other five talent and two talent servants had no such problems with the owner. The real reason why the one talent servant did not multiply the talent was because he was lazy and probably did wicked things which the owner knows about (could be the very reason why the owner tested him with one talent) (Matthew 25:26).

The above parable illustrates how strange perception can be. We perceive other people through our own inner perception and lenses. We sometimes see the reflection of ourselves in others, whether good or bad. The wicked and lazy servant perceived the master to be wicked and lazy. When we judge other people, we are judging ourselves (Matthew 7:1-2). The same measure we use is the same measured back to us. How then can we perceive truth? Only the Spirit of truth can show truth. Only God who has no darkness in Him can perceive all of us for who we are. And only in His Spirit and light can we perceive the true nature of people (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

For this reason, despite having created the whole world in His great and abundant love, people still mistrust and misperceive God. Some people see God as a cruel master because of the cruelty in their own hearts. While others perceive God as lacking love because they themselves lack love. We see our own belief system and convictions reflected at us when we see God through our own eyes. The Bible has the story of the prodigal son and the father that clearly illustrates this misperception of God. The story of the prodigal son is not really just the story of the prodigal son, rather it is the story of the Father of the prodigal son who represents our loving Father in heaven (Luke 15:11-32).

The prodigal son asked (demanded) for his inheritance from the father and received it. He spent all that he had and when he was in want, he ended up working in a pig sty. In great hunger such that even pig's food looked good to him, he reasoned within himself that it was much better to work as a hireling for his father than to remain where he was (Luke 15:14-17). He even was willing to repent, acknowledged his sin and be disowned remaining just a hired servant. We then have the famous story of the prodigal son's father running to the lost son from afar putting on the best robes on him, plus rings and a pair of sandals on his feet, slaughtered the fatted calf for a celebration. The elder brother upon hearing of the celebration became angry and refused to go the party. His anger was probably directed at the father and the brother. He clearly stated that even though he has served the father faithfully all these years without transgression, his father had never given him a young goat that he might make merry with his friends. Thus, we have the contrast of two sons who had grown up and lived with the same father. One a transgressor and the other a law-abiding man. The saddest thing was that both did not know the love of the father.

The prodigal son was like one of those who knew how to claim his rights and knew how to wriggle his way to have his needs met. He claimed his right of inheritance and received it. In famine and having nothing, he knew how to join himself to a swine herdsman. And when he compared how good the life of the servants under his father with the hard life he was living, he decided to become like one of the father's servants. At no time was it ever stated that he returned to the father because he loved the father. He was only interested in himself. That was his life. It typifies many Christians who are only in it for themselves. So long as God provides for them and feed their hunger, they will serve Him. Like the people who would make Jesus king because He could supernaturally feed them (John 6:15). Their motivation for singing Hail King Jesus would have been that which arises from self-interest. The prodigal son did not return to the father for the sake of the father. He cared not that his father was pining for him and longing for him each day. He cared not that his father was in pain and distress wondering where his beloved son was. He cared not for the sense and loss of the father. He never cared when he demanded for his inheritance nor did he cared when he was returning home to work for the father. He only cared for himself. In all his selfishness, he never ever saw the heart of the father. He never knew the love of the father nor could he empathize with his father's compassion.

The elder brother did not fare better either. He served the father. He obeyed the father. He was law abiding and most likely was very thrifty since he never had a party with his friends before. He was also self-righteous for he considered himself better than his brother pointing to the harlotry of the younger brother. In all his law abided-ness, in all his self-righteousness, in all his hard work slogging day and night to serve and work under the father, in all his thriftiness and avoid waste, he never knew the love of his father nor understood his father's compassion and love. It was clear that he had no confidence

in his father's generosity and love. For he was the opposite from his brother; his younger brother was selfish and dared to ask and demand of the father; he was not confident in his father's love for him and never dared to ask of the father. All his life working under the father and yet he still was not confident in his father's love. His father had made it clear that all the time that he was with the father, everything was his to use and be blessed. It was not the father who stopped him from having a party and enjoying the goat and all that was in the household, it was his own perception of the father that prevented him from enjoying the father's generosity. It is quite apparent that he did not understand the father's love and compassion for he was angry at the love shown to the younger son. He never shared the pain and the loss of the father heart when his younger brother left home. He never shared in the constant grief and compassion and pining of the father for the younger son. Because he did not share in the sorrow of love of the father for the younger son, he could not thus understand the joy that the father had when the younger son returned.

Two brothers living in the same house, brought up by the same father, having opposite personalities (one a transgressor and the other a law-abiding man) both did not know the father's love. How can this be? I believe that the basic reason is that the two sons probably never ever took time to be with the father to understand his heart, to understand his nature, to know him for who he was and is. One son was too involved in satisfying his own desires, the other son was too involved in work and duty to be with the father. One took from him; the other dare not take from him. Both failed miserably in the test of love for the father. Where were the empathic tears that the elder brother could shed for the father when, finally the pining and agonizing pain of the loss of a father for his son was healed upon his brother's return? Where were the tears of the younger son, that said he missed the

father and wanted to be with him forever? Nay, they both did not know the father's love.

In a similar way, we who are believers all share the same Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But do we know the Father? Do we truly know His love? Do we feel His heart beat? Do we know His love for all of His creation? Do we feel His compassion flowing in our veins? Do we truly, truly love Him?

May we know the Father's heart and let our heart beat in tune to His heart beat of unconditional and eternal compassionate love.

Fatherly Talk 6.18

The Joy of the Lord

Dearly Beloved

In exegetically teaching through the book of Philippians, which is a book of New Testament joy (Greek words *chairō* and *chara* as expressed by Paul writing from prison, I saw more clearly the place of joy in the Christian life (the sermons are available free online in the Singapore cathedral of glory site – 8 sermons in all with notes from Philippians 2 onwards). Paul spoke of the joy of faith (Philippians 1:25) and called the Philippians his joy and crown (Philippians 4:1). We do know that this joy is spiritual and supernatural and not from ourselves. It is the joy of Jesus in us and can be at different levels, the highest being full (John 15:11). It is as real as and more important than food or drink (Romans 14:17). It is the result of our believing and faith; believing fills us with joy and peace which crushes Satan underneath us (Romans 15:13; 16:20). Joy is something which we cannot quite express with words and it is the strength through which Jesus underwent the cross successfully (1 Peter 1:18; Hebrews 12:2).

The fact is that many Christians have a measure of peace through forgiveness of sins but not many Christians seem to have joy. All of us are greatly loved by God our father, yet this joy of the Lord promised to us by Jesus is not sufficiently demonstrated by many Christians. There are several attributes to the joy of the Lord that we need to know:

1. It is not dependent on outward circumstances

When we are persecuted, hated, reviled, cast out as evil, and excluded by those who are against Christ, then we are exhorted by Jesus to rejoice and even leap for joy! (Luke 6:22-23). This joy

is demonstrated in the apostles rejoicing and counting themselves worthy to bear the sufferings and shame of Christ even though they had just had a physical beating for preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:40-41). The apostles Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, many stripes were put on them, thrown into prison and their feet put in stocks, yet they could rejoice and sing hymns to God (Acts 16:23-24). Paul was imprisoned, facing a death sentence (but knowing that God will deliver him as his ministry was not over yet), yet he wrote one of the most joy-filled epistles to the churches - the book of Philippians. He constantly exhorted everyone to rejoice in the Lord, and again rejoice (Philippians 4:4). He speaks about being poured out as a drink offering unto the Lord for the sacrifice and service of the faith, yet he was glad and rejoice with them all and urges the church to rejoice with him (Philippians 2:17-18).

There is something lacking in modern Christianity when the joy of Christians is only dependent on their outward circumstances – success, ease, comfort, provision, etc. God will always provide for all of us as we seek Him first and His righteousness, but we must have a joy and peace which is higher and greater than circumstances; that which is completely unaffected by the changing scenery of our daily lives. Many Christians are not like the New Testament Christians of the Bible, instead they are like the mixed multitudes of Israel who complained at the slightest inconveniences or lack or delay; expecting to be fed hand and mouth by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is something fundamentally wrong with modern Christianity if we produce a softie bunch of Christians who cannot even bear the inconvenience of a delayed bus let alone physical persecution because of the faith.

2. It is not our joy but the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ in us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of His joy remaining in us and causing our joy to be full (John 15:11). In His prayer at Gethsemane for all of us, Jesus prayed that His joy might be fulfilled in us (John 17:13). It is possible to be filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit because this joy is not ours but the joy of the Lord that is imparted into us (Acts 13:52). This imparted joy is the result of God filling us through our believing and trust in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). One of the key marks of one who is filled with the Holy Spirit is joy, joy and joy. We are exhorted to be filled with the Holy Spirit speaking in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts (Ephesians 5:18-19). Joy is also the result of being filled with the word of Christ, also resulting in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs causing us to sing with grace in our hearts (Colossians 3:16). Anyone claiming to be either filled with the Spirit or filled with the Word of God would have to demonstrate joy in their lives. It is the hallmark of a Spirit-filled and Word-filled Christian.

Knowing that it is not our own joy but the joy of the Lord that gives us true joy, should make it easier for many Christians. It is a matter of reception and impartation rather than a question of achievement and earning merits with God. Joy is received and imparted by the Holy Spirit Himself. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Joy. Lacking joy in our lives is lacking the very presence of the Holy Spirit. In the presence of God, there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). If we are truly in the presence of God or God's presence fills us, joy is the obvious natural and spiritual result. This is not to say that there aren't times when we weep and intercede for the lost or feel compassion with tears for those we

minister to. There will be such times but even when undergirding, the tears and intercessions will be a sense of joy knowing that God's love is flowing through us to others. At times this joy is like a fountain bursting forth, at times this joy is flowing in streams of tears for others in love. At all times it is the joy unspeakable and full of glory that comes from the very presence of God our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:8).

3. Joy is the strength of sustaining our life, ministry, vocation and walk with God.

The joy of the Lord is indeed our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Someone ably put it in this manner, that if the devil can't steal our joy, then the devil can't steal our goods. Indeed, Adam and Eve lost their joy first before they lost their lives to physical death and physical lack and needs. Fear and sorrow came into their lives when they fell away from God (Genesis 3:10, 16, 19). If you think carefully, joy is also the antidote for fear (besides love). We are not speaking of outward merriment or laughter alone in which people try to calm their fears or anxieties with merriment. We are speaking of a genuine heart-felt, Holy Spirit inspired and imparted joy that comes from the Lord. Such joy that God gives leaves NO room for fear. Paul and Silas were not afraid of beatings, stripes or imprisonment when they were rejoicing in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25). The apostles were not afraid of persecution completely ignoring the warnings to stop preaching Christ (Acts 5:40-42). Jesus experienced the joy of the Lord and went forth to the cross for us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews

12:1-2). The Macedonian Christians, through the empowerment of the joy of the Lord, overcame the poverty mentality and gave abundantly. They were in a great trial of affliction and in deep poverty, yet through the abundance of joy they gave liberally and broke the spirit of poverty that tried to rob them of the joy of serving God and enjoying themselves in the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). God indeed loves a cheerful giver for he or she is one who is unafraid and completely trust in God (2 Corinthians 9:5-8). Indeed, God causes abundance unto them for every good work (2 Corinthians 9:7-8).

The secret of having this supernatural joy that is imparted and not earned or merited, that is not our joy but the joy of the Lord that He allows us to experience and identify with Him and His presence, is love. For when we love the Lord greatly, we will experience great joy. And when we love others greatly, we will experience great joy. Peter speaks of a joy so great that it is beyond comprehension and unspeakable – something more to be experienced than it is to be rationalized. He says clearly that this joy comes to us because we love the Lord Jesus even though we might not have seen Him (1 Peter 1:8). Yes, this joy comes through love – loving God first and then loving people. The apostle Paul wrote of his great love that he felt for the Corinthian Christians and in speaking of love, spoke of the joy that he felt for them (2 Corinthians 2:3-4).

Yes, yes, yes. The joy that we can experience from God is directly proportional to the love we have for God and the love we have for people. The greater love we have for God, the greater our joy will be. The greater our love for people, the greater our joy can be. The only reason that many Christians do not have joy is that they do not love God or people in the same manner and level in which Jesus has

exhorted us to do so. Think about this. Has not the greatest experience of joy been when you had shown love to your loved ones or to those whom you have felt great compassion? When was the happiest time in your life? Was it not when you were with loved ones and when you were showing love and tender compassions? And the experience of great joy in the Lord and His presence, was it not when you were greatly in love with the Lord, perhaps telling Him of how much you loved Him or just spending time with Him because you desired Him and love Him with all your hearts? Great love produces great joy. To have more joy, we need to increase in our capacity to love. For the same capacity to experience love is the same equal capacity to experience the joy of the Lord.

Grow in love, dearly beloved, and you will indeed grow to know and experience this wonderful joy of the Lord.

Fatherly Talk 6.19

Motivation: The Most Important Thing in Life

Dearly Beloved

In this present life that can sometimes get so busy with people hustling and bustling through all the activities, people tend to be oriented towards results or goals rather than motivation. The 'what' we do and the 'how' we do it occupies the main consciousness of most people. From the spiritual point of view, it is more important 'why' we want to do what we do or how we do some things. For this reason, it sometimes takes time for God and His angels to bring about an answer to prayer, not because He could not do it sooner, but rather because the person concerned has a lot of work to do to get the motivation correct. It sometimes takes years or decades for a person to yield their motivation to God.

Moses took forty long years before his prideful desire to be seen as the deliverer of his brethren was eradicated from his life. In his Egyptian pomp and pride, he killed the Egyptian guard thinking that with that act of protecting his brethren, they would have understood that by his hand God would deliver them (Acts 7:25). He was greatly learned in all the Egyptian wisdom and was mighty in deeds (Acts 7:22). The book of Josephus (a Jewish historical book) records of successful wars fought by Moses (Book 2 chapter 10). What could be Moses' motivation when he killed the Egyptian or visited his brethren constantly (Acts 7:23)? I am sure that there is some level of compassion and empathy, but the central motivation was that he would be seen and known as their deliverer. And this is not acceptable in God's sight. Thus, God allowed Moses to enter a wilderness period for forty years, till he had no more motivation to be the superman for Israel. In fact, he became so contented as a herdsman

that he preferred if God sent someone else (Exodus 4:10-15). Moses became the very opposite of what he was, even denying his eloquence when he was mighty in word and deeds before. He had no more self-ambition. And this is what God can use to make a man great in Him, for then the instrument He uses will always give God the glory for all things accomplished.

Paul, then known as Saul, before he became a great apostle of God was a man full of pride and learning. He admitted he was a persecutor, a blasphemer and an insolent man who obtained mercy only because he did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). He thought that he was serving God in being zealous for the law, but it was no different from all the pride that the Pharisees demonstrated when confronted by Jesus (Acts 22:3; Matthew chapter 23). The grand motivation of the Pharisees is pride of self. They wanted the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogue, greetings in the market places. How different is this from the modern desire of people to be in the best clubs, seen in high society, recognized and adulated by all of society? It is the same thing clothe in different modern perspectives. God cannot use anyone greatly until He has thoroughly cleansed all their motivation so that all they ever want is Jesus, Jesus and more Jesus and God in their lives.

At the same time, it would be wrong to assume that just because we have the right motivation everything is going to be alright. The right motivation needs to be accompanied by the right methods. We learn that lesson from David bringing in the ark the first time in the wrong way (using a cart instead of being hand carried by priests) (2 Samuel 6:1-10). David's heart and motivation were right, but the methods used can never be justified or compromised just because the reason for doing it is right. The end never justifies the means. We can never excuse our theology or methodology because we have the right heart.

There are far too many sincere people who are sincerely wrong in their theology and methodology. At the same time, there are people that studious in the Word and seek out the right methods and principles diligently, but they never got their motivations right. They fall flat on their faces after many attempts to get the results promised and end up thinking that perhaps their principles or methods could be wrong, when it is biblically correct. Both groups of people (those who have the motivation right but methods wrong, and those whose motivations are wrong but whose methods are right) end up in the same depressing camp of those who are discouraged, down and backslidden away from God because what they believe did not work for them. They end up questioning God and, in the end, gave up on spirituality, church and God altogether. Of course, when things don't work people do get discouraged for hope deferred makes the heart grow faint (Proverbs 13:12).

Since much has been taught on the correct principles and biblical perspectives, we also need to emphasize that nothing will work when we apply the correct theology, principles and methods if our motivation is incorrect. This is always the starting place in God's working with us in the Spiritual World and the main reason why a lot of prayers are delayed. Only God can see out true motivation which is sometimes even hidden from ourselves. And sometimes humans can misunderstand and misread our motivations even when they are clear and clean. David was rebuked by his elder brother when he spoke genuinely and sincerely about Goliath challenging his right to come against the people of God. His elder brother Eliab thought that his motivation was just a boyish desire to see a great battle and accuse him of pride and insolence (1 Samuel 17:28). God saw that David did not have pride nor insolence and used him mightily in destroying Goliath. David in his heart only had God's honour and reputation in mind.

Although not excusing the wrong methodology, there is a plus point for those whose motivations are genuine and sincere in God, in that God does make more provision and grace for them for they do mean to do the right thing and serve God. Despite all his faults and imperfections, David was still a man after God's heart and God used him mightily (1 Samuel 13:14). The apostle Paul thought he was being zealous unto God using the wrong evil methods to get rid of the Christians whom he thought were pests to the concept of God that he had, and God showed him mercy for that (besides the prayers of Stephen) (1 Timothy 1:13). Motivation is at the heart of all things in this life and the Spiritual World is more concern for 'why' we do things more than just the 'what' or 'how.' And of course, the main motivation for doing anything should be love towards God and towards everyone. There is something powerful released when the spiritual gifts are operated in love - Paul calls that the more excellent way (1 Corinthians 12:31).

Besides the above, there is also an emptiness a person feels when they are motivated by any other thing but love. If a person's motives are for fame and recognition and they achieved it, it feels hollow and empty though the applause of men may be loud. If the person's motivation is money and things, it feels empty when they have sacrificed all to obtain these perishable earthly things. If the person's motivation is pleasure and they succeed in procuring it, it feels so shallow and unsatisfying without the permanent sense of happiness that they thought they could have. To truly have the greatest satisfaction in this life, the greatest pleasure in this life, the greatest sense of achievement in this life, all one has to do is to flow out of the motivation of love towards God or love towards another, and when one has done it all out of true love, there is a sense of joy, a sense of pleasure, a sense of satisfaction that passes any experience possible in this life. It is the same sense of joy and love and peace that God has

when He loves us unconditionally. We become one with God and experience His pleasure when we love as He loved.

All that people do in this life is the pursuit of happiness. People want families because they want love and happiness. People want success because they thought the success would give them happiness. People want things because they thought things would make them happy. People do all that they do in life because directly or indirectly, they want a life that they could feel and enjoy happiness and peace. Happiness however is found only in love and not in outward things. Happiness for many people is dependent on outward circumstances but love starts feeling happy without the outward changing yet. True happiness is found when one loves God with all their heart, minds, souls and strength. True happiness is found when one can love another person or persons with the same love that God has for them. Only the motivation of love in our hearts can bring true happiness to our hearts.

None of the heroes or heroines in the Bible are perfect in all their ways, their understanding or methods. But all of them end up with at least a perfection of motives in their reason for living. Abraham told lies and mess up some things, but he did love God. Moses murdered and had quite a temper, but he did love God and love people enough to intercede for them when God said that He would destroy them and start over again with Moses. Joshua made some mistakes in his campaign to conquer the land of Canaan, but he did love God and put Him first when the pressure was on. David committed adultery, plotted murders and kept some grudges but he did love God and always sought to put Him first, quickly repenting when he knew he was off tracked. Peter was imperfect and boisterous in his ways, but he did love Jesus in his own way, sometimes over estimating his love for Jesus. Paul regretted all his sins against the church and causing the

deaths of some, but he did have a general love for God which become a deep love for Jesus as he came to know Jesus. He also had a deep love for people.

God always look at the heart and not any other part of our being when He deals with us. For this reason, we must also learn to be like God and not look at people in their outward ways but just keep looking at their hearts and love them the way God does. There is still no excuse for any wrongs done as we see God dealing with the people who loved Him throughout the Bible. But we do see Him dealing with them tenderly and patiently. Having the right motivation can never excuse us if we do the wrong thing but it is always the right place to start and also the best place to be; for no matter how many mistakes a person with the right motivation makes, you know that in the end that person will fare well because all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

In all of life, in all that we do, in each and every moment of our heartbeat, we must always do all things and conduct our lives in such a manner so that we do it out of the love of God and love for others. The next time you are thinking of doing anything, ask yourself, not just 'what' or 'how' but 'why' are you about to do what you are thinking of doing. In the end when we finally finish our lives on earth, only that which is done out of a love for God and love for people counts. Everything else is burnt and unacceptable. Let us build our lives not on wood, hay and stubble but rather on the precious, precious love of Jesus which He has poured into our lives.

Fatherly Talk 6.20

Our Heart: The Centre of Gravity of Our Lives

Dearly Beloved

The word 'heart' from the Hebrew word *leb* and the Greek word *kardia* has been understood differently by many ministers throughout the Christian ages. In our modern history, Watchman Nee in his book, *The Spiritual Man*, identifies the heart as consisting of the three parts of the soul man (emotions, mind, will) plus one part of the spirit man (conscience) and Kenneth E. Hagin generally defines the heart as equal to the spirit man. The definition of Watchman Nee is more accurate as there are many incidences of the heart as the source of bad things which cannot be from the spirit man (Example, Genesis 6:5; Matthew 12:34-35; 15:18-19). At the same time, there are incidences in the Bible where the heart clearly refers to the spirit man (Ezekiel 36:26; 1 Peter 3:4). The question thus remains as to whether the heart is part of the spirit or part of the soul. If it is part soul and part spirit, then it raises the issue as to what really is the heart.

Building upon Watchman Nee's understanding that the heart consists of all the soul and part of the spirit man, we need to define the true function of the heart in relation to our walk with God. The best definition of the heart is given by Jesus in Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be." In the Bible times, there were a lot of words and concepts that were not present for them to describe spiritual realities and concepts. For example, the sword that comes forth from Jesus' mouth was a laser beam and not a real sword (Revelation 1:16). And the concept of multiple dimensions of reality (Quantum Physics) was not there to describe the reality of our Triune God which left most theories and definitions of a singular dimension Trinity explanation more confusing to those who try to wrestle with

the concept of a singular Almighty God. In line with bringing modern vocabularies and mathematical concepts to describe the realities of the spiritual realm, we re-define the heart as simply “the centre of gravity of our lives” which would be in line with what Jesus said about the heart, whether for good or for bad, being where our treasure is. Jesus then went on to describe this concept using the eye, saying that if the eye (singular) is bad the whole body is bad but if the eye is good, the whole body is full of light (Matthew 6:22-24). He concludes with the fact that we can have only one master.

Understanding the heart as the centre of gravity is important to many spiritual concepts in the spiritual realm. What is the centre of gravity? The centre of gravity of any mass or object is the point by which the entire mass of the object can be balanced or pushed or accelerated. If you exert a force and push it directly at the centre of gravity of an object it will go forward; if you exert a force and push it outside of the centre of gravity, the object will not move but instead spin around on its axis (which is the point of where the centre of gravity is). If you want to lift or balance an object at only one point, you would have to ensure that your force exerted to lift it is directly acting upon the centre of gravity.

Now let us suppose that if we are more ‘heavy’ in the flesh realm than in the spirit, than the centre of gravity (our heart) would be in the flesh realm and not in the spirit realm. And if we are more ‘heavy’ in the soul realm or intellectual realm or emotional realm, then our heart would be in that proportional realm. Of course, if we are more ‘heavy’ or focus on the spiritual realm, than our heart would be in the spirit realm. The place where our heart is, is influenced by our overall mass depending on which area of our lives (spirit, soul or body) acquires more of our consciousness and thoughts. If we spend more time building mass on our body, then our heart will always function in the

body realm; if we spend more time building mass on our soul, then our heart will always function in the soul realm; likewise, if we spend time on God's Word and on spiritual things, our heart will always function from our spirit man.

Why is this important? It is important because the heart by itself cannot be relied on for guidance.

1. The heart can be evil and directed against God (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Exodus 7:14; Mark 7:21)
2. The heart can be deceived by pride (Obadiah 3)
3. The heart can be deceived by idolatry (Deuteronomy 11:16; Isaiah 44:20)
4. The heart can be full of fear (Genesis 42:28)
5. The heart can be hardened to the leading and things of God (Exodus 8:32; 9:7, 35)
6. The heart can be discouraged (Numbers 32:7, 9)

On the other hand, the heart can be a good instrument:

1. David was a man after God's heart and his heart kept him in the right things (1 Samuel 13:14; 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10).
2. The heart can be a source of joy and health (Psalms 16:9; Proverbs 17:22).
3. The heart is the place of meditation on God and the place where trust is exercised in God (Psalm 19:14; 28:7; 49:3; Proverb 2:2; 3:5-6).
4. The heart is the place where God is desired and where desires arise before prayers are made (Psalm 37:4; 42:1; Mark 11:22-24)

5. A pure heart is the pre-requisite to seeing God (Matthew 5:8)
6. We are commanded to love the Lord with all our hearts and it is from our hearts that the filling of the Word and Spirit flows forth (Matthew 22:37; Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16)
7. The heart is the prime organ of exercising belief and faith in God (Romans 10:8-10) and the main instrument of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:10-12; 10:16-17).

It is because the heart is an instrument that needs to be trained and nurtured in God that John specifically tells us that if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our hearts (1 John 3:19-22). The Word of God is greater than our hearts, thus a knowledge of the written Word of God is important before one simply relies on every inclination of the heart. An instrument must be trained and sharpened first before we can rely upon it. Only the Word of God can train and sharpen our hearts before God. Only the Word of God can bring our spirit, souls and bodies into the correct spiritual centre of gravity around the Lord Jesus Christ. We must hide God's Word in our hearts and meditate frequently upon God's Word for the heart to be trained as a proper instrument of God (Psalm 119:11, 80).

Besides the Word of God, the heart needs to be filled with the love of God to be free from fear. A fearful heart cannot discern nor know the pathways of God. The Lord has poured out His love within our hearts when we were born again (Romans 5:5). Only perfect love can cast out all fear from our lives (1 John 4:18) and God's love for us is perfect. The heart can feel troubled and yet the perfect Will of God was being done as when Jesus was going to the cross and told His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled (John 14:1). The hearts of the disciples of Jesus were greatly troubled by all that had occurred and all that was about to occur but Jesus simply told them to have faith in Him (in other words 'trust Him') for He knows what He was doing and

would lead them into the way of God. He was the way, the truth and the life that they were simply to follow (John 14:6). The heart can be filled with sorrow even when God's Word and direction is being fulfilled as it happened in the time of Jesus while He was conversing with His disciples of the things that will happen at the cross (John 16:6). He encouraged them to continue as He has instructed, relying not on their sorrowful heart which was being overwhelmed by the events of the cross, but rather to rely on His words and instructions and then their hearts will again be filled with joy (John 16:22). All these events show that we cannot always rely on the fears, the troubled feelings, the heaviness, etc. of our hearts all the time but rather we should always rely on the Word of God which is beyond us to guide our paths towards doing the right things in God. In fact, there may even be times when the untrained heart condemns us, and we must rely on the Word of God and the Love of God to bring us through a difficult road (1 John 3:20-21). The apostle John exhorts that if our heart condemns us, we are to keep God's commandments (1 John 3:22-23). And in his context and emphasis, the main commandment in which we must walk in is the love of God – to love God and to love everyone else.

Seeing the heart as a focal point like the centre of gravity is important as it means that the heart becomes subject to a greater force outside of itself. By itself, the heart can be a source of either confusion or clarity, fear or love, doubts or believe, trouble or peace, sadness or joy, condemnation or assurance. That is why our heart needs to be fixed upon something or rather someone (which is God Himself) and a force greater than the heart itself. Thus, David declared that his heart is fixed or steadfast upon God and not upon himself (Psalm 57:7). The heart is a focal point for the forces of the Word of God and the Love of God to flow. And because the heart is being trained and being enlarged as we grow spiritually in God, there will be times that our

heart feels overwhelmed with confusion, fear, trouble, heaviness, sadness. All these just means that the heart has reached the limit of its capacity. At such times, we should always turn to the Word of God and the Love of God to increase in our lives through prayer and meditation. We should not be relying on an overwhelmed heart but rather on the Word of God whether we feel like it or not. We should also rely on doing things that are in line with the Love of God. Thus, when we keep walking in line with the written Word of God and the Love of God, the heart will then grow to its next level of strength and be nourished and renewed into a higher level of walk with God.

Our heart is the most important instrument to be trained by the Word of God and the Love of God. For it is the heart that will then train our mind and our emotions and everything else within us. Once we get the centre of gravity correct, everything else in our lives will come into order and be properly revolving around the perfect Will of God.

Sanctify the Lord God in our hearts (1 Peter 3:15). The peace of God which passes understanding garrisons your hearts and your minds in the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:7).

Fatherly Talk 6.21

Humility in Disagreements

Dearly Beloved

Almost everyone in life knows that quarrels and disagreements will occur in living our lives: we disagree with our teachers, parents, family members and love ones all the time. The development of maturity in life is how never to turn a disagreement into a quarrel. Firstly, we need to differentiate a disagreement from a quarrel. Disagreements are fine as everyone sees from their viewpoint, education and experience but quarrels are the mere venting of emotional energy which usually is negative. Disagreements are a part of growth in life and sometimes as we grow our viewpoints, education and experiences changes and we can understand life from a different perspective. They are a sign of growth and maturity when we handle them with love. Quarrels are an example of immaturity and a lack of growth in one's personal life. Just remember the following points:

1. Quarrels have never ever changed anyone for the better but instead have always produce hurts and damage to those we quarrel with.
2. Quarrels are a sign of immature handling of emotions and one demonstrates a reversal into childhood tantrums as one releases negative emotions upon the participant of the quarrel.
3. Quarrels only seek to establish one's personal viewpoints usually through more emotional standings then intellectual arguments; it seldom wins converts but only hardens opponents.

4. Quarrels become emotional shouting matches as adults begin to behave like children to shout their viewpoints because they are afraid of not being heard.
5. Quarrels are based on fear: fear of being rejected if viewpoints are disagreed with, fear of being unheard or neglected, fear of being overwhelmed by a different viewpoint, fear of change and many other forms of fear.
6. Quarrels are more emotional displays of strength of emotions and when physical abuse is present, strength of brute force; rather than allowing the higher and better principle win in its own merit.
7. Quarrels have separated friends, family, lovers, partners and co-workers, sometimes making them into enemies.

Once one understands the futility of all quarrels, one would never quarrel again. For if the true motivation is to love and help another person, whom one loves, since quarrel does nothing to help in changing another person, what is the whole point of quarrelling anyway? It is better to win and change another person through silent love and caring actions than it is by an open mouth of negative emotions and abuse.

On the other hand, acknowledging and accepting differing opinions and viewpoints is a sign of maturity. The difference between a disagreement and a quarrel are as follows:

1. A disagreement is merely an intellectual point whereas a quarrel is more an emotional stand expressed with deep emotional outbursts stating the intellectual point, which may or may not be correct or true.

2. A disagreement is a recognition of differing viewpoints and possibilities and can be expressed with love and gentle conviction. A quarrel always includes a disagreement, but a disagreement need not be a quarrel.
3. A disagreement might involve a principle, a method, or even merely different collection of data or interpretation of the same data. A quarrel might involve these but is expressed in uncontrolled emotional outbursts.
4. A disagreement is never a personal attack on a person, but a quarrel always involves personal attack of a person, including character assassination or throwing emotional mud on a person.
5. A disagreement can wait for further discussion or more input of data with more time given but a quarrel is always a demand for a stand required or expected from a person often on the spot or in that same instant, without allowing time for prayer or reflection.
6. A disagreement considers the possibilities of two different opposing views existing via differential experiences, cultures or context but a quarrel accepts no other viewpoint but that of the one who shouts the loudest.
7. A disagreement involves a dialogue and allows room and time for each to contribute their viewpoints, but a quarrel always propagate only one main viewpoint as the correct and only one delivered through a monologue.

It takes humility and maturity to handle disagreements and one must always listen to every side before jumping to conclusions. He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him (Proverbs 18:13). The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbour comes and examines him (Proverbs 18:17). Moses showed

great humility when he did not answer to Miriam nor to Aaron when they questioned his ability to hear God while in their hearts were questioning his marriage to the Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:3). It was God who came and gave the conclusion to the questions raised.

A good or great argument will stand on its own merit, especially when it is in line with the Word of God. One need not raised one's voice to convert believers but merely just depend on the power of the spoken Word. Jesus did not need to raise His voice for all to believe in Him, the truth contained in His spoken words was enough to win its own converts (Isaiah 42:2).

For any relationship to last in this lifetime and throughout eternity, one must learn the maturity to accept differences, diversities and disagreements of thought, word, methods, principles as everyone is at a different point of growth in wisdom, knowledge and in God. Again, we ask the simple question, 'Why do you want to waste time and energy in a quarrel?' When you know this is not the way to change people and never the way that God espouses to effect change in others to conform to His image. From this day forth, do not waste mental or emotional energy, do not waste time or words in a futile effort of quarrel for this will cause more harm and hurt. Instead invest in silent love and caring actions to win hearts and minds to our Lord Jesus Christ until everyone is conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

Fatherly Talk 6.22

Action Speaks Louder Than Words

Dearly Beloved

It is important to express one's love through words but even more important is to express it in actions. For actions will always speak louder than words. Wives under authority to husbands, which is a very difficult position to be when the authority is not expressed beneficially to the family, find it difficult to win husbands through mere words. In such situations, the apostle Peter advocates winning the husband by actions of love rather than mere words (1 Peter 3:1). He speaks of the inner beauty of the heart with its gentle and quiet spirit that can win all to the Lord Jesus. For husbands who have the responsibility to protect their family through being head of the household, it is also important to express love through caring actions rather than mere words of command or demand. Our Lord Jesus who is the head of the church, His bride, expresses His love for us while we were yet sinners through His sacrifice and action on the cross (Romans 5:8).

Words are important and death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). And we indeed need to be careful of every idle word we speak (Matthew 12:36-37). The tongue is a most important member to be conquered for when it is done, it is the complete control and victory (James 3:1-10). Even our Lord Jesus said that His words are spirit and they are life (John 6:63). However, words can only be powerful when the speaker and author of them backs up each and every word with action that precedes the word and which follows the spoken word.

The problem with the ability to do genuine actions is that it must flow from the heart. Sometimes people's actions, gestures and words do not seem sincere and that is because it is not from the heart. Even God desires to know what is in our heart. For forty long years in the wilderness, God allowed various circumstances and tests to occur so that He can know what is in the heart of His people (Deuteronomy 8:2). He allowed them to be humbled through hunger and many other tests and trials so that they can become dependent on Him and His Word and not upon themselves (Deuteronomy 8:3-4). The key word here is the word 'humble.' Only when one is humble can the actions flow forth fully from the heart and not out of pretence.

Of course, it would be good to be able to love both in word and in deed (1 John 3:18). Sincere, heartfelt words of love are like refreshing water in the desert and the sincere actions of love are like God's manna and covering against the deserts of life. The interesting thing is that everyone wants to be loved and everyone needs love, yet many forget Jesus' words which says, 'do to others what you want others to do to you' (Matthew 7:12). But most people would rather others initiate love towards them and they respond rather than be the initiator of love. If truly one is a disciple of Jesus, then one should follow the Master Jesus and become the initiator of love.

The apostle John advocates that we initiate acts of love to others purely because we have been born out of the DNA of love. Whoever loves shows forth that they are truly born of the DNA of God which is love (1 John 4:7-8). True knowledge of God causes and brings one to a loving character. The world will know that we are the disciples of Jesus through our love (John 13:25).

Finally, if anyone still struggles to initiate love, remember that it is the command of our Lord Jesus that we love one another (John 13:34). Love is the true mark of a follower of Jesus and not just signs and

wonders. There is authority, there is power, there is knowledge, there is revelation, there are giftings but the greatest of all abilities that transcend heaven and earth and all dimensions, is the ability to love like God loves; to love like Jesus loved.

Fatherly Talk 6.23

Triumphing Over Unchangeable Circumstances

Dearly Beloved

In my guest room in Singapore sits a small little plaque that says, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." I have seen this little poetry in my early days as a young Christian before I entered the ministry and the words are not easily forgotten. Perhaps instead of serenity, what we need is biblical patience. So, I would like to rephrase it by touching on these three areas of life:

1. We need patience to accept the things we can't change
2. We need courage to change the things that can be changed
3. We need wisdom to know the difference between the two

In each one of our lives, we are always concern with the Will of God in our lives. The major part of God's Will in our lives is what we came into this world to be and do, our mission from God, our destiny in Him. This God ordained destiny is what drives each of us who love God to pursue and to fulfil in this life, so that we may be able to say at the end of our lives that we have finished the work which God has given us to do like Jesus did (John 17:4). What many people don't realize is that although we have free choice in these areas, we sometimes do not have the privilege of free choice in other areas. The environment and circumstances are sometimes already determined for us. For example, none of us had a choice on our parentage, our racial characteristics, our culture, our geography, etc. Those choices are made by our parents. Sometimes society, as a whole, flows in a certain direction and we seem to be 'victims' of circumstances and

environments created by others or society at large. For example, Daniel was only a youth when he was captured and enslaved into Babylonian captivity (Daniel 1:1-6). Yet, despite the lack of free choice in the environment and circumstances, there is still the freedom to exercise the free choice to honour and love God no matter what circumstances exist. Some people struggle so much in trying to make their circumstances palatable to themselves, constantly in bitterness and fighting the obvious circumstances that God had thrust them into; that they forgot to accept the circumstances and seek to honour God through the circumstances rather than to try to change the circumstances.

Much of modern Christianity is concerned with mountain moving faith and the ability to conquer and change our circumstances, especially Pentecostal theology. Triumphant over demons, sicknesses and even death are hailed as the victories of militant Christianity. Not all Christianity is like that for evangelical theology doesn't always acknowledge the existence of demons or the authority over sicknesses and diseases delegated to the church, sometimes bring forth a 'fatalistic' approach in life. While we acknowledge the legends of the heroes of faith who change things through faith (Hebrews 11), we need to also recognize that in real life, there are some circumstances that are not in our domain or authority to change. And this is not for the lack of faith but rather it is because we are to go through them rather than change them. Let us consider the Bible incidents when the godly people in the Bible did not have free choice in the circumstances that they were thrown into and they can't change the circumstances they were in but they exercise their free choice to change their attitude to the circumstances in which they lived; still seeking to please God against great odds and difficulties they encountered. Their only free choice being to accept their circumstances and try to live as pleasing

a life as they know how in God within their environment, which many times is imperfect.

Samples of Bible figures who encounter circumstances they could not change but lived their lives successfully for God:

1. Joseph was sold into slavery and had no say or choice in his enslavement to Egypt (Genesis 37:26-28)
2. Joseph was presented with the Egyptian high priest's daughter, Asenath, to marry by Pharaoh (Genesis 41:45). It looks like he could have said 'No' but that would have meant going against Pharaoh and certain death. The same Pharaoh who easily killed the baker who displeased him would have easily have Joseph killed if he defied his order.
3. Caleb and Joshua had to endure another forty long year delay because of the disobedience of all the other Israelites (Numbers 14:6, 24, 30). God preserved Caleb's strength and youthfulness because the delay was not his fault (Joshua 14:10-12).
4. Samuel had no choice in his life of service to God for he was covenanted to the Lord even before he was born by Hannah (1 Samuel 1:8-28).
5. Michal, David's first love and wife, had no choice when her father Saul took her and gave her to another man, Phalti, when David was chased out of Saul's kingdom (1 Samuel 18:22; 25:44). When David became king over all Israel, asked that Michal be returned to him (2 Samuel 3:13). Michal was just a pawn in the political game played by Saul but so much emotional baggage had gathered between David and Michal by the time they saw each other again that Michal could not probably bring herself to love David like she did the first time, and her despise of him

came out when David was bringing in the ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:16). David, himself, also had by that time gone on and remarried other women, and things were not the same as when they were young love (2 Samuel 5:12-13).

6. Esther was one of the finalists of a beauty pageant held by King Ahaseurus to replace his former wife, Vashti (Esther 2:3-18). Esther had no choice in participating in the pageant nor had she any choice when the king selected her to be his wife. Yet Mordecai, her uncle, recognized that God had put her into the kingdom for such a time as when God would need her to be the one person whom the king would hear, thus saving the entire Jewish people (Esther 4:13-14).
7. Daniel did not have any choice as he was one of the youth captured by the Babylonian army when Israel was defeated. He was most likely castrated and taken to serve under the eunuchs (Daniel 1:2-6).
8. Mary, the chosen vessel for Jesus to be born through, probably had no choice but to say Yes to God, even though she was already engaged to Joseph and the requirements of her virgin birth was extremely unusual (Luke 1:26-38). It was so unusual and unacceptable to the society of that time that Joseph, her fiancé, was wanting to put her away secretly because of the baby that she was carrying (a disgrace to Jewish culture and traditions) but an angel had to tell him that all this was of God (Matthew 1:19-20).

We cannot imagine the emotional trauma some of the people above faced but we do know that although they had no free choice in the circumstances they went through, they had a free choice in their attitude and their acceptance of their circumstances. One of the secrets

of life is to bloom wherever one is planted. We are all like the plants and seeds of the Lord, sometimes He puts us in a difficult place and at other times in an easy place. And with the Lord as our Lord, ours is not to ask the reason why, but only to obey and humbly serve Him. In time, He does reveal to us and give us understanding but it takes as much faith to accept circumstances that we can't change and live victoriously through them as much as it takes faith to change and realigned circumstances to our command and bidding. It is not a fatalistic embracement of reality but rather a loving and faithful attitude to show our God and Father that we can, indeed, bloom wherever He plants us by His grace.

It takes a different type of faith. Not mountain moving faith but a preserving enduring loving faith in God. It is this trusting and loving attitude that brings forth miracles that we read about in the Bible. The miracle of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego going through the fiery furnace of King Nebuchadnezzar and the miracle of Daniel in the lion's den are examples of people triumphing through their circumstances (Daniel 3:16-18; 6:16). These people were not trying to change their circumstances, they were willing to die in their circumstances because they refused to compromise God's principle despite the pressure of the circumstances. They did not ask to escape, nor did they ask for circumstances to be changed. They exercise their free will to have the right attitude to God despite their circumstances – they loved God so much that they were willing to lay down their lives for God. They do know that God can change the circumstances if He wants, but they were prepared to die with their last breath praising God if circumstances do not change. The apocrypha listed the song of the three young men in the fiery furnace, a praise and hymn to God. And Daniel continued to pray even knowing that it may cost him his life. Sometimes being courageous and brave is enduring

the circumstances and living through them rather than trying to change it.

When Peter was told that he would die as a martyr for Jesus, he wanted to know what would happen to John (John 20:21-22). Jesus said that it was His decision and not Peter's as to the destiny of each of His disciples. God has made all of us in His image to bring forth that particular aspect and beauty of the Lord refracted through our lives. No two lives will be the same as each has their own destiny to fulfil. We must however, choose to bloom where we are planted. Sometimes, we have no choice in the circumstances and environment that God created for us. And the sooner we discover those types of circumstances, the better for us. We will then enter the rest, knowing that if it is God who has chosen a certain path for us to walk in this life, as His choice is always better than ours.

Like Jesus, we all will have our Gethsemane when we pray, "Father, not my will but Yours be done." The only choice is either to obey and yield or to disobey and displease God. Every Christian will have victories in both areas: we will have our victories and triumphs over circumstances that we are able to change and command to the obedience of Christ – our resurrection experiences; but we will also have our Gethsemane experiences when we realize that there are circumstances that we can never change but only pray that His Will and not ours be done.

At all times, we must always be able to know that God knows better than us in this life. He even knows us better than we know ourselves. We must trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, acknowledge Him and He will always direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

May your resurrections be powerful and your Gethsemanes be sweet.

Fatherly Talk 6.24

Overcoming Through Love

Dearly Beloved

In the book of Revelation chapters three and four, there is an emphasis on the end time church becoming overcomers through all the seven church scenarios. The rewards for overcoming last from this life unto all eternity. Our Lord Jesus provides us the ability and energy to be able to overcome and triumph over all circumstances and situations. There is nothing, there is no one, there is no enemy and no devil or fallen angel which should stop us from overcoming through our Lord Jesus Christ. When we do overcome, what is the sense and finality of our sensations? I believe that true overcomers become filled with the awesomeness of God's multi-dimensional love that envelopes us without and transforms us within.

Our Lord Jesus overcame all things and sat at the Right Hand of God. When we examined closely the life of our Lord Jesus and every detail of how He overcame, we cannot but be struck by the fact that He overcame through His love. His love for the Father, His love for us, His steadfast unconditional love through every challenging situation of life, through every onslaught of the enemy. His love prevailed and we are more than conquerors through His love (Romans 8:37-39).

It seems that there awaits the fullness of what we can receive from God in all the four dimensions of love (Ephesians 3:17-19). The fullness of God is directly linked to us receiving together with all the saints all the width, length and depth and height of the love of Christ. The apostle Paul understood that the greatest is always love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Far above overcoming sicknesses, moving

mountains, attaining knowledge and communicating in angelic tongues is the ability to love like God loves.

Yet, how many Christians have made it a goal to love like God loves? Most are distracted with either getting their needs in life met, pursuing some esoteric gift or power or attaining some supernal position in all eternity and neglect the most fundamental of all principles; that is to love like God loves. The currency of heaven is love and no one – neither angel nor men or any other created being – can live close to God without being like God in all the power and fullness of His abundant love.

The wonderful news is that in growing in love, one does grow in power and authority and in experiencing every conceivable gift and dominion over Satan, fallen angels, sickness and diseases, or any other known or unknown things to overcome. Overcoming all things is the natural side effect of growing and overcoming through love. The greatest growth comes by learning to overcome through the DNA of love. The greatest challenge in this fallen world is to love unconditionally and the greatest victory is to have the full ability of God to love unconditionally. There is nothing more moving in the Universe than God giving His only begotten Son to die on the cross for us. And there is nothing in the Universe greater than to see this same love of God in the Father and in Jesus entering our lives and making us exactly like Him in love.

Whatever you need in this life, whatever your desire in this life, the place to start with is always to begin to love. Starting with your immediate circle of life then expanding it to cover all of God's creation. As we turn our lives outwards in loving all through God's love, the fullness of God's love that is locked in our DNA is released and we are transformed into the fullness of the image of God in Christ Jesus. We have been predestined to be conform to the image of Jesus

(Romans 8:29). What is this image in essence? The apostle Paul asked, 'what then shall we say to these things?' (Romans 8:30-31). What shall we say to the predestination, to His calling, to His justification (freedom in the gift of righteousness), to His glorification? We are predestined to love, we are called to love, we are freed to love, we are glorified to love. The love of God is the beginning and the end of all things.

In our eternal future of unnumbered eternities, we are the image and expression of God's DNA of love to all His creation through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are the Melchizedek priesthood of the perfection of love, the ambassadors of God's power and authority demonstrating love, the multiple wisdom of God's love expression to the Universe. We must understand this principle of overcoming through love now in this life so that we can continue to express this powerful overcoming love in all the rest of eternity.

We have not triumph until we have triumph in love. When a person conquers another person without love but through strength and other means, the conqueror only becomes the stronger, meaner and more oppressive person. But when a conqueror conquers through love, then the conqueror becomes more like God. And we can be more than conquerors through Christ Jesus, because He has conquered, and we enter into His love to establish His conquest. In love we triumph, in love we establish the conquest of Christ! Rise up and walk in the powers and dimensions of God's love! Sickesses will flee, demons will run and all darkness and Satan himself flee in terror at the manifestation of God's DNA of love. For perfect love casts out all darkness (1 John 4:18).