

A Light in the Valley

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

A New Kind of Self-Abasement

by: Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

In the second chapter of Colossians, the Apostle Paul twice refers to those who had a “voluntary” (KJV) or a “false” (NKJV) humility. The NASV and ESV, respectively, translate it “self-abasement” and “asceticism.” He, most likely, was referring to the early asceticism that arose in the early years of the church which likely was the beginning of the monastery system of Catholicism.

There are other kinds of “false humility” or “self-abasement” from time to time, found among Christians. We are now in a period when some stumble all over themselves to make their humility and self-abasement known. These miss few opportunities to tell one and all of their great humility before God. It seems that the new “cardinal sin” is acknowledging any blessing or gift from God without first issuing a disclaimer of having any part in the matter. They seem to think that without an open denial of our part in the reception of God’s great blessings, especially salvation, is arrogance

or lifting one’s self up against God and a failure to give God the glory that He richly deserves. They come across as glorying in their humility. They seem so proud of it.

Jesus indeed taught self-denial on the part of His disciples – meaning putting all we have and all we are at His feet to be used by Him to accomplish His will. But, this does not remove the human effort (work, deeds) from the equation.

True humility is a trait to be seen and not to be heard. It is the submitting of our will and interests to the will and interests of another, especially that of God. If possessed it will be seen both by God and man without our going out of our way to call it to their attention. Often this self-abasing practice feeds the doctrine that our salvation is solely by the grace of God without any effort on man’s part.

The following Scriptures emphasize our part in our salvation:

*“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man **according to his works.**” (Matthew 16:27 KJV)*

*“**So speak ye, and so do**, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” (James 2:12 KJV)*

*“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man **according to his deeds**: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;” (Romans 2:5-9 KJV)*

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive **the things done in his body, according to that he hath done**, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10 KJV)*

*“**I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth** there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8 KJV)*

Look at the above passages and notice the parts I have put in **bold type**. Does it not seem that God will be giving us credit for things that we have done toward our salvation? Yes, it is true that but for the grace of God we would not be saved. It is also true that but for our works and deeds of obedience we would not be saved.

But, you ask, “Does not the Bible say that our salvation is not by the works of righteousness that we have done. Does that not teach that the works we do have nothing to do with our salvation? Titus 2:4-6 does say: “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;” Taken in context, this is not talking about acts of obedience not having anything to do with our salvation, but that the appearance of the love of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, was not because of our righteousness but because of His mercy. In other words, Jesus did not come because we were so righteous, but because we were sinners. Thus, we have a Savior because of God’s grace – a Savior that saves us on the condition of our obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9).

We can recognize our unprofitableness before God without constantly playing down our part in our salvation: “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10 KJV)

The works of obedience that we do did not originate with us, hence we have no right to boast – not even of our humility. We cannot be saved by works of our own devising, nor by works of “the law” (of Moses) or by the works of any “law only” system. We are not saved by grace only, faith only, nor works only. We are saved by grace and faith and works. We depend on God for the gospel revelation (the word of faith or law of faith) that produces faith (Rom. 10:6-8, 17). We depend on God for the commands that we need to obey. We depend on God for the forgiveness we receive when we confess our sins when we disobey or fail to obey Him (1 John 1:7-9).

So, no way can we rightfully boast of salvation, but also there is no way that we can be saved without obeying His commands – and He gives us credit when we do. Nor does He expect us to deny that what we do has a part in our salvation or forgiveness – in fact, He expects us to constantly acknowledge that it does.

Brief Exhortations...

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:3-4)

A farmer was out plowing his field one spring morning. The spring thaw had just occurred and there were many muddy valleys in the field. Through one particularly wet place his tractor became stuck in the mud. The harder he tried, the deeper he became stuck. Finally, he walked over to his neighbor’s to ask for help. The neighbor came over and looked at the situation. He shook his head, and then said, “It doesn’t look good, but I tell you what. I’ll give it a try pulling you out. But if we don’t get it out, I’ll come sit in the mud with ya!”

Although we may not all be farmers, we do experience getting “stuck in the mud” from time to time. And chances are we probably know someone who is stuck right now. Have you tried “mud-sitting” with a friend? It may be the best thing you can do! (From Bible Illustrator)

Paul said, “...With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love...” (Eph. 4:1-2)

The Blood of Christ

by: Stefan Richardson

Our relationship with God, our true life, is defiled and destroyed by our sin and the death it brings to us — and sin has always been an incredibly bloody business.

Even before the Law of Moses, in what we sometimes call the Patriarchal Age, sacrifice of life was required. Abel offered the firstborn of his flock to the Lord (Genesis 4:4) and was subsequently murdered by Cain. After the flood, Noah sacrificed clean animals as a burnt offering (Genesis 8:20). On the cusp of the Mosaic Age, when the Hebrews were in Egypt, all of Israel was required to kill a passover lamb for each household and put the blood on their doorposts so the destroyer would pass over their house (Exodus 12).

After God made His people a nation with a codified law, their covenant with Him had to be dedicated with blood. Calves and goats were slaughtered and their blood was sprinkled on the book itself, on all the people, and on the tabernacle and the instruments of worship (Hebrews 9:18-22). The Levitical law gave specific stipulations to the nation about blood and sacrifice, noting that “it is the blood that makes atonement by the life” (Leviticus 17:11). At the end of his life Moses makes sure the people know God’s wishes about the sacrifices they make and how they treat blood. He tells them that “the blood is the life” (Deuteronomy 12:23). When the Aaronic priests were set apart to serve the Lord, a ram was killed and its blood was smeared and sprinkled on Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:20-21). Remember, when Israel swore their obedience to the Lord blood was splattered on the altar and thrown on them (Exodus 24:6-8; Hebrews 9).

For the people of Israel, there was constantly a sacrifice to be offered — today, or tomorrow, or the next day, or the day after that. Each year the passover had to be kept. Each year the high priest went beyond the veil into the holy place and made atonement for the people. The next year, he had to do it again, then again, then again. Israel’s blood-soaked rites were a cycle that never reached their own end.

But God did not leave His people to those shadows. He gave His Son as the ultimate fulfillment. Christ was the greatest high priest and the greatest sacrifice, putting an end to the need for that never-ending slaughter. He is our passover lamb without spot or blemish that was led to the slaughter (1st Corinthians 5:7b; 1st Peter 1:19; Isaiah 53:7). He was proclaimed as “the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the

world” (John 1:29).

As priests under the New Covenant, we can “have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19-21). Our great high priest “has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since He did this once for all when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:27).

Christ’s blood is for the forgiveness of our sins. We can have freedom. Shortly before His death, He told His apostles that the fruit of the vine was the “blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” and that the unleavened bread was His body (Matthew 26). The Hebrew Christians had to be reminded that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Hebrews 9:22-23). Paul wrote about “redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood” (Romans 3:24-25).

In the first sermon, Peter tells the Jews “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). The Jews were no strangers to ceremonial immersion. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome “that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3-4). Christ’s death on the cross was where His blood was poured out (Matthew 26; John 19:34). In John’s vision, the multitude of saints he sees “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14b). Earlier, John had written that “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1st John 1:7).

Christ shed His blood for us, made a new covenant, and entered as our great high priest “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (Hebrews 9:24) so that we can be washed clean from our sins.

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

He Loved Him

Ladies

Corner

by: Cynthia Brewer

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Mark 10:17-22).

There are so many good things to learn from this brief account, but I want to focus on a particular phrase. Notice what Mark tells us that Jesus did as he looked at the young man—he “loved him.” Jesus loved him. Then notice what Jesus said to him as he loved him. He did not say, “Great job, you are to be commended for your fabulous keeping of these laws. You will have no problem inheriting eternal life.” No, what Jesus said was, “One thing you lack...” He told this man the truth—the hard, blunt truth. He told him that he had to do more than follow a list of rules. He told him that he had to sacrifice, make a commitment, and follow Jesus.

People like to talk about love—God is love, Jesus loves me, God loves you. All these statements are true, but the problem is our understanding of “love.” When Jesus loved this man, He told him what he needed to hear and what he needed to do. He did not pat him on the back and try to make him feel good about himself. He told him what he lacked. That is part of real love—helping someone understand what is needed to be righteous. Yet we sometimes think that loving someone means overlooking sins, ignoring problems, and artificially building up self-esteem.

Not only did Jesus tell this man what he lacked, He let him go away when he was unwilling to do what Jesus had said. How many of us would have said, “Hey, wait a minute...maybe you’re fine the way you are. I’m sure I’m being too strict, so let’s just forget about it.” Jesus did not soften the message or back down from the truth because the young man did not respond positively to it.

What about us? Do we love people the way Jesus loved this man?

If we love the way Jesus loves, we will be found “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) so that we can help our husbands, children, and fellow Christians see how they can be more godly and understand when they are erring. We will be found teaching the truth to our family members and friends who are not Christians. Pretending that everyone is fine and everyone is going to Heaven is not real love.

If those to whom we talk accept the truth, then we rejoice. However, if they do not accept it, we cannot change it or back down! Sometimes we have to let them go, as Jesus did. We may teach and try to persuade to no avail, we may emotionally drain ourselves in an effort to bring someone back to faithfulness—and we may fail. I can tell you from experience that it is discouraging and heartbreaking when that happens. But, it does not change the truth.

We should also understand that when others correct us or talk to us about ways to improve ourselves, they are showing their love for us! (I realize some may have poor motives for giving correction, but let’s trust that most Christians are not like that.) As we study for ourselves or hear lessons presented from God’s word, and we see things that we need to do to be more godly, let us remember that God is speaking to us in love, trying to help us learn how to please Him.

When we sing “Jesus Loves Me” with our kids, we should remember that His love motivates Him to tell us what we lack just as He did the young man in Mark 10. Our love, likewise, should motivate us to tell others what they lack. As God loves us, let us love each other enough to help each other inherit eternal life.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:7-11)

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. (1 John 5:1-2)

Daily Bible Reading

June 2019

June 3	Genesis 1-3	June 17	Genesis 27:30-30:24
June 4	Genesis 4-6	June 18	Genesis 30:25-31:55
June 5	Genesis 7-9	June 19	Genesis 32-34
June 6	Genesis 10-11	June 20	Genesis 35-36
June 7	Genesis 12-15	June 21	Genesis 37-38
June 10	Genesis 16-18	June 24	Genesis 39:1-41:36
June 11	Genesis 19-21	June 25	Genesis 41:37-42:38
June 12	Genesis 22-23	June 26	Genesis 43-44
June 13	Genesis 24	June 27	Genesis 45-47
June 14	Genesis 25:1-27:29	June 28	Genesis 48-50

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