

Romans (15:17-18)

Humble Pride

Part 92 - January 14, 2007

MESSY HUMILITY

One of my proudest moments as a young Christian is also one of my most humbling ... humiliating even ... very, very embarrassing. One of the first times I gave a message was around 1982, in a banquet room at the old Dickenson's buffet, in Bellingham.

- I was playing the drums in a worship band.

Anyway, I was feeling tired and ill, and half-way through dinner I suddenly needed a restroom. And I mean "suddenly"! I remember running down the hall, and then not so much running as shuffle-clenching into the men's room.

- Long story short ... too little, too late ... way too late!
- This was the 80's ... when *white* pants were all the rage!

I threw away my underwear, washed my pants in the sink, and prayed (harder than I've ever prayed) that no one would come in.

[Jesus said] Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." - *Luke 14:7-11 NIV*

So, I returned to the banquet room, backed against the wall, and slowly inched my way half-way round the room to my drum set.

When it was time to speak, I walked straight forward to the podium, and when I was done I walked *backward* to my drum set. Afterwards I tied a coat around my waist. I just wanted out.

Everyone kept telling me how touched they were by my humility.

- I *couldn't* speak with *any* pride ... I was just too pooped!

Today, we're talking about pride. And in these two verses people have struggled with what appears to be Paul's blatant self promotion.

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done ... - *Romans 15:17-18 NIV*

SELFISH PRIDE

The first line: “Therefore I glory” is also translated as:

“I have reason to *boast*”

“I am *proud* of what I have done for God”

Therefore *I [boast]* in Christ Jesus in MY service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through *ME* in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done (15:17-18)

Q: So, does Paul have an ego problem?

A: No; and there’s a great little lesson for us here, about the difference between selfish pride and “humble” pride.

Some folks think that humility is when we put ourselves down. But, humility doesn't mean putting ourselves down, it means putting ourselves in proper perspective.



- True humility admits both strength and weakness.

Selfish pride focuses only on strength; *humble* pride thinks neither too highly *nor* too lowly of itself.

Humble pride is all about honesty and openness; acknowledging both good points *and* bad points – both strengths *and* weaknesses.

That’s why Paul could assertively say in one breath:

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. - *1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV*

And then meekly say in the next breath:

Christ came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. - *1 Timothy 1:15 NIV*

Q: So ... we’re supposed to follow the example of the *worst* sinner?

Well, we’re supposed to follow the example of an Apostle who is utterly transparent and brutally honest. Each of us is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses.



To deny weakness is conceit.

To deny strength is false humility.

When we’re honest about our *man-made* weaknesses, we earn the right to be just as honest about our *God-given* strengths.

GLORY IN JESUS

And the battle against the ego has everything to do with reminding ourselves that *all* of our strength is *God-given*.

Selfish pride says, "I did it MY way; all by my lonesome!" It boasts and glories in its seeming self-sufficiency. Humble pride realizes there's no such thing as self-sufficiency. We're dependent for every breath and every heart-beat.

Q: So, who is Paul "boasting" or "glorying" in?

A: It's not in himself; look carefully again.

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God (15:17)

- "I can't believe how Jesus has used my offering!"
- "I'm thrilled and humbled by how He has used *me*."

Even though I was humbled by what happened at Dickenson's. I was very *proud* of how God spoke through me. And looking back, I'm a little impressed at how He accomplished it ... looking BACK!

Humble pride takes appropriate satisfaction and gratification from being used as an instrument in the Lord's hands. Paul is not boasting of his *own* achievements, he's proclaiming what Christ has accomplished *through* him!

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me (15:18a)

This passage is built on the truth that our Creator graciously and miraculously works through us as His created children.

Q: But, if Christ is the One who accomplished *everything* through Paul ... then what exactly did Paul do?

A: Paul trusted and cooperated and persevered!

And that's exactly what we're called to do.

- A. Trust the Lord's love, grace, and forgiveness.
- B. Cooperate with God's Word and His Holy Spirit.
- C. Persevere when only faith will see us through.

It's a joint-effort, but when it comes right down to it, *our* job is simply trusting Him and doing our best to follow His plans.

PROUD PARENTS

Q: And what is Paul so proud of?

... what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done (15:18b)

A: The faithful obedience of others to God, through Christ!



Nothing produces humble pride like a newborn!

It's one of the happiest and most exciting times of life; thrilled fathers hand out cigars; overjoyed moms gladly show off the new baby.

The parents are so proud ... and yet so fully aware that a power much greater than themselves was responsible for the creation that came through their cooperation.

- Paul is the proud papa of those newly reborn Gentiles!

And he's fully aware that a power much greater than himself was responsible for the creation that came through his cooperation. It is Paul after all, who said:

Let him who boasts boast in the Lord. - 2 *Corinthians 10:17 NIV*

And in the same way that a newborn affects a family, nothing will impact the energy and joy in a church more profoundly than when the lost are rescued, and the suffering are comforted.



This is why I always encourage you to come to the baptisms. To witness firsthand what God is doing in our midst and through our efforts!

It's a time to cheer and be proud ... and be humbled.

- The glory goes to God, but we share the gratification.

When we're seeing regular folks from Skagit Valley overcoming addictions, breaking through spiritual barriers, opening up to Jesus, and growing in grace and the fruit of God's Spirit, it means that He is pleased to be working among us!

I'll close with two questions to ponder:

Q: What is it that Christ is accomplishing *through* you?

Q: Is the fruit of your faith a source of genuine gratification?