

Living By Faith: Humility And God's Justice

Humility is a Choice

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Given 01-Oct-11; Sermon #1069

In this present series regarding living by faith, we have completed sermons on God's sovereignty and on human pride but we have not finished the one on humility. Recall that the purpose of this series is to show a way of living by faith that can be more consistent.

Much evaluation of the self must be exercised by the Christian, because human nature is persistently aggressive in attempting to reassert its control of behavior following conversion.

First, at the very foundation of living by faith, is that we must be fully aware of God's sovereignty in every issue of life. If we are going to have a right standard to evaluate our conduct and attitude against, that is a must.

Second is that it must be resolved in one's mind that pride is forever lurking within, driving resistance against God, and that pride has its source in Satan and his world.

Third is humility, which over time as we grow, works to neutralize the evil pride lurking within our heart.

I did not complete the sermon on humility, so I want to begin where I left off in this message with more information on humility's importance to our submission to God's creative efforts on our behalf.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This is the key to understanding the most basic element—the most necessary element—regarding humility. This vital knowledge is necessary because being humble is clearly a choice.

That element is *poverty of spirit*. Perhaps it can be understood a little better by changing the word there. Poverty of spirit has nothing to do with anything physical, nothing to do with being hard up in one's financial circumstance.

Poverty of spirit implies one has many spiritual needs that must be supplied by God. Thus poverty of spirit implies a *dependence* upon God to supply those things that we either do not have by nature, or we have never worked to develop. Thus, being truly poor in spirit can be had only by those called of God. Why? Because it is God, by means of His Spirit, who enables us to have a right evaluation of ourselves, and to receive those gifts of spiritual riches we so greatly need.

God's calling enables us to see (I do not mean to physically see), what we are in relation to God and His awesome purpose for calling us into His family. Without this perception, without this understanding, we cannot make a proper evaluation of ourselves needed to make right choices.

I want you to notice a place where it shows how God reacts to our humility when it is expressed.

Isaiah 66:1-2 "Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool, where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? [In other words, "What is it that

you are trying to do to impress me?" God says.] For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord." But, on this one will I look; . . .

God turns this project, or their view toward this project, and the pride that they were having regarding doing this for God, and God turns it right back and says "Now, I am going to show you something that really impresses Me." And He says this in regard to his children:

Isaiah 66:2 But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

There He is talking about the expression of humility in His children toward Him, His ways, and His law.

I want you to go to the book of Micah, where there is a scripture here that is somewhat similar to what we just read in Isaiah 66:2. This is truly one of the great verses in all of the Bible. If you want to know how to please God, this is how you do it.

Micah 6:6 With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?"

In some ways this is a parallel of what we just read in Isaiah, only those people already had this project underway and they were feeling mighty good about it, but Micah, who lived near the same basic time as Isaiah did, came up with this.

There are not very many places in Scripture where God says something similar to what He is going to say here, but this one I think will do. In other words, "What impresses Me?" We saw it in Isaiah 66 and in some ways he is going to show the same thing here. Let us pay attention to the illustrations that Micah used that will help us to have humility's value enhanced.

First of all he says, "Shall I come before him with calves of a year old?" Notice it is plural. The offering of one calf would have been pretty great for the average Israelite, but how about coming before God with at least two or more calves in order to make an offering. Even one calf would be of value, but more than that would seemingly be pretty important.

Micah 6:7-8 [ramps it up a little bit] Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? [This might be something a king would offer to God, and that is pretty valuable. Is this the way to earn God's favor? The next line:] Ten thousand rivers of oil? [Probably olive oil. This might be an offering of many, kings of many nations—has great value. The next line:], Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? [This man wants forgiveness, does he not, so this offering that he is illustrating here would be far and away the most valuable, but is it the way to impress God? What follows in verse 8 is God's reply about what impresses Him.] He has shown you, O man, what is good; [This is an offering anyone can make, they do not have to be a king of one nation or many nations, anyone can impress God in this way.] And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

He names three things that He Himself considers to be great acts of love for God and fellow man. These pave the way for a good relationship with God.

(1.) To do justly is to be even-handed, absolutely fair to one and all, regardless of their state in life. Whether they are great, or whether they are small, they receive the same kind of attitude and treatment from you, regardless.

(2.) To freely and willingly show kindness to others. Our eyes are not shut to other people's needs. The very least that we can do is pray for them in their need. We may not be able to give them much because we do not have much, but at least we give something; that which we can—our concern and kindness.

(3.) Live in conscious and active dependence on the greatness and sovereignty of God, as exemplified by humility. That kind of person will not be walking before, will not be walking with God in pride. Humility gives God clear evidence that the person is growing toward the kind of character that glorifies God.

If you want to get a pretty good idea of how to please God, it is going to be these three things. Every single one of them is tied in some way to being of a humble spirit. If we are proud, we do not treat people with kindness. If we are proud, we do not deal justly, evenly, or fairly with everyone; we try to tilt everything in our direction.

I want to turn to some examples. The greatest One who ever walked on the face of this earth is, of course, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but despite His greatness, of what He was, He was dependent upon God to supply His needs. He did not just step out on His own without first consulting God for whatever His needs might be at the time. There was perfect communication between the Father and the Son.

John 5:18-19 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath [they *thought* He had broken the Sabbath], but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus said to them “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself. . .

Notice how straight out, boldly, clearly, Jesus said He was *dependent* upon the Father. He was not operating on His own, detached from the Father. That is what a proud person would do.

John 5:19 . . . but what He sees the Father do, for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

In this context, Jesus immediately put down the claim that He had elevated Himself as equal to God. He did this by showing His dependence upon God, and though He later claimed that He and the Father were one in terms of kind (they were both God), that oneness did not include *absolute equality* with the Father. Rather He was showing that because of Their oneness, there was perfect communication between the two, with the Father leading the way by showing Him what to do.

Jesus humbly claimed no equality in terms of authority or rank with the Father, but claimed dependence, even though He did fantastic things like walking on the water and multiple healings.

John 8:26-28 “I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him. [Another link

of dependency.] They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things”.

This is an oft-repeated statement of His. To defer whatever thoughts they might have had of Him, and turn them into the proper understanding that He was dependent on the Father. So in this context, He clearly ties His *verbal* dependence to the Father, to the things that He said to them.

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.

Jesus did what Paul counsels us to do.

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me [Paul said], just as I also imitate Christ.

Christ imitated His Father. There is a link of dependence right on down the line. We have this access to Him. It is direct access to the Father and the Son, and we are to imitate them, even as Paul did.

What we are doing here just in case you missed it is we are being shown poverty of spirit. As great as Jesus Christ was, He did not just step out on his own, He showed His dependence on the Father to make sure He did not step out of line with what the Father willed for Him to do. If Jesus did that, surely we should be able to do it.

John 14:8-11 Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father, so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father.’ [Jesus is affirming that His imitation of the Father was perfect.] “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

Commentaries believe that Philip was requesting a theophany, which is a literal vision of the Father. But Jesus refused, with a very gentle rebuke, confirming once again His oneness with the Father, and that if one has seen Jesus, he has seen the spiritual character exactly as if he has seen the Father. This is what we are aiming at and why our dependence has to be on the Father and the Son, that we seek them for the gifts that will enable us to be able to be replicas of Them.

When we begin to understand something like what we are going to read through, we begin to understand why Jesus said that there is nobody greater than John the Baptist.

His humility is awesome, despite him being pictured as a very surly character, bouncing all around Palestine area, doing this and that and other things, where he was considered a wild man, apparently, but he was about as humble as you could possibly get, except for Jesus.

John 3:22-26 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there, and they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison. Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s

disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.

That is going to prick John's pride. People are walking away from him, but John was humble enough to realize his place.

John 3:27 Now John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

This verse becomes more important as we move through this subject.

John 3:28-30 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. [Not only was he not angry in any way, he was happy that Jesus was being blessed.] He must increase but I must decrease."

In order for one to be humble, one has to understand, and fully accept the understanding. If one does not, then pride will come to the fore and it will muzzle humility by means of a character weakness. There was a measure of jealousy in John's disciples, because more people were being attracted to Jesus and the number of John's disciples was dwindling.

John's reply was one of wisdom. He understood—he was subject to it—that God assigns a place in the outworking of His purpose to everyone He calls, and He supplies what is needed for them to fulfill their responsibility. John knew and accepted that he had no right to lay claim on an honor to which he had not been given by heaven, and instead of envying Jesus' success, John rejoiced that both men's purposes were being fulfilled.

He knew and accepted, as a decision from God, that his place in the outworking of God's purpose was going down and out. We all know that he lost his head in honor.

I Corinthians 4:6-8 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against another. For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you have not received it? You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you.

Paul was really stabbing them with a sword of sarcasm, verbally.

This series of verses is, in a way, somewhat similar to what we saw in John 3, but in this case it involves members of the Christian congregation. To better understand what Paul was teaching, we have to consider the context. Go back to I Corinthians 1. There were a lot of relationship problems in the Corinthian congregation and Paul gives instruction regarding these problems.

I Corinthian 1:10-13 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but

that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

I think we know some of the answers to that series of questions. Here is the first of many controversies—quarrels—dividing the congregation. This was over whom each thought was the better minister and thus who one should follow—some favored Peter, some Paul, others Apollos, and even Christ was being argued over. Surely there would be no arguments over Christ, but there were.

Paul approaches pride's competitiveness and the resulting disunity, by exposing and by challenging the underlying attitudes driving the quarreling, right in chapter 1. That is where he begins to answer this, by asking them first of all, to consider deeply who they were. He begins by pointing out something that should have been obvious, but it is easily overlooked in the heat of an argument. They were blind to their pride.

See if you can begin to see the pin pricking the balloon.

I Corinthians 1:26-28 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh [these people were arguing over something they knew very little about; they were certain they were right, regarding the person they were supporting in their argument], that not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things that are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

He put them down pretty strongly there. I thought of it in this way: Paul said to these people, after giving them all these things that they were guilty of, and not ever approached in their life in the world, or in the church, he was saying to them, "Evaluate yourselves against this: Who in the world do you think you are making these judgments?" That is probably the way we would say it today, but Paul was a lot more gentle about it. He was better at it than we would be by far.

That is the first thing he put to them, "Who are you?" God has called the weak of the world, and you are doing this judging. God has called the base of the world, and you base are doing the judging. God has called those things that are not, and you people are the ones doing the judging. We will see who they were judging in just a little bit. It was someone a lot greater than the men named, except for Christ.

He comes to a solution though in regard to what we have to learn once we accept our poverty of spirit. These people without wisdom, they were not mighty, they were not noble, they were foolish, and so forth (not supposed to remain that way), but the reason God did it is in verse 29.

I Corinthians 1:29-31 That no flesh should glory in His presence [which those people were doing]. But, of Him, you are in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that as it is written, "He who glories let him glory in the Lord."

He put that in there so that they would understand that if there was anything in their life that was truly worthwhile, it had come into their life as a result of their calling, and because Jesus Christ was living within them. They were not that way yet, they had grown somewhat.

We will look at Paul's evaluation of these people. Notice the way this chapter begins.

I Corinthians 3:1-6 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. [What a put down.] I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. [What was the proof that they were carnal? That they were arguing over these things.] For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says "I am of Paul," and another "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

What is he beginning to do here? He is giving them information by which they can make a proper judgment of themselves. He begins by showing that they, Paul and Apollos, were no better in terms of men than they were, but rather they have been given a responsibility and gifts to enable them to do a job for God.

It was God who enabled them to do the job, and Paul was getting ready to point out to them that the same God is willing to work with you, if you will yield to Him and humble yourselves before Him. And they were just as important to the body as Paul and Apollos, but they could not do Paul's or Apollos' jobs, because God did not give them the responsibility to do this, and God did not give them the gifts to be able to do it.

This is why he said something that he did a little bit later that makes more sense when we come back at it again.

I Corinthians 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

Paul puts himself in the right position, just as John the Baptist did. He just accepted the responsibility that God gave him, and he carried it out because he recognized that God gave him the gifts, and he used those gifts and he planted; Apollos used his gifts, and he watered so that the plants grew.

I Corinthians 3:8-11 Now he who plants and he who waters are one [that is, they are of the same mind, same purpose, and they are one in the sense that God gave each one gifts to do his job], and each one will receive his own reward, according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The last couple of verses were given to them to give them direction. They are to begin right where they are and begin more fervently and in a better way to do the assignments that were given them by God, and for which they were responsible for carrying out. At least to this point, it is important for them to begin where they are and that they begin to build as carefully as they possibly could. The

implication being that in their prideful quarreling, they are not doing a very good job and that they are acting carnally. So he is warning them that if they do not change, their works will become ashes.

In I Corinthian 4, Paul clearly nails the understanding so important to godly humility.

I Corinthian 4:1-5 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. [There is Paul's and Apollos' responsibility. They are servants and they are stewards, charged with that responsibility.] Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. [What is he heading toward here? That God is his judge.] For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this, but He who judges me is the Lord. [In other words, "Your judgment of me, of Peter, of Christ, of Apollos, is not worth a thing," is what he is telling them.] Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes.

Now he does not mean that there is nothing in life that we should not judge. He is talking about this context here that he is writing about and the situation that they have gotten themselves into by means of their pride. They were judging something they had no right to judge.

Are we beginning to see who these people were calling into account in judging those ministers named in the first chapter? They were calling *God* into account. Without directly saying it, what they were saying is, "God, why you didn't put Apollos in charge? God, why didn't you put Peter in charge?" God sent them all there. They were calling God into account. They had no idea that they were judging Him for the way that He was running His church. Dangerous business, but forgivable because they were so childish, so carnal, that God overlooked it. But He did not just leave it the way it is. He told Paul, you straighten this out for their benefit, and Paul did.

The theme that begins in I Corinthian 1 goes all the way through the whole book. They were being called into account for one bad judgment after another about things that were going on within the congregation. They did not realize they were calling God into account—that He could not run the church as well as they could, as if He was not aware of what was going on.

I Corinthian 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

We should be thinking at this time—for anyone of us to do this—it is going to take a great deal of faith, a great deal of awareness of God, that He really is on the job, that He knows what is going on, He knows how everybody is conducting themselves, and allowing Him to work His work in each and every person's life. This is not easy, because pride wants to control things to the way it thinks is best.

Paul does not stop here. Go back to the verses we began in this section.

I Corinthian 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against another.

What are the "these things" that Paul mentioned? It is primarily those things mentioned between verse 1 and where he is right now in verse 6, and that is, the servitude position that he and Apollos

had under God. Like Christ, Paul and Apollos were there for the brethren's benefit and equipped by God to plant and to water. And that is all there is to it. They were thinking in much bigger terms than that for themselves, because they were assigning themselves the responsibility of appointing, see, in their own mind, who they would have in charge. It was their champion. And they really did not get it—that Christ is the one responsible for overseeing things.

Then he warns them “that none of you may be puffed up.” Most translations use the word arrogant—do not be arrogant on behalf of one against another.

I Corinthian 4:7 For who makes you differ from one another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you have not received it?

He is heading toward something that becomes really important several chapters later, but right here is an important mention of it, because we have to see this first in terms of the church itself. And that is, that the very fact that they were in the church, that they have received God's Spirit, that they have received some gifts from God to carry out their responsibility, it was God who gave every one of those things! He called, He chose, He gave His Spirit, He gave gifts, and whatever they had right now, God had already given to them. They did not develop it themselves.

I Corinthian 4:8 You are already full. . .

Just like the Laodiceans, they felt they had no needs, so they were not behaving properly and it led to quite a chewing out from Christ. But that is what these people were doing. Their lack of humility was leading them to take on positions, in their own minds and amongst one another, and it was not something that God had assigned them as a responsibility, and that is why he said:

I Corinthian 4:8 You are already full, you are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

Who makes every person different? God does! I want to give you something that amazed me, this little statement, “Who makes you different from one another?” I read one time that some mathematician, some scientist, has figured out that the joining of the chromosomes together—the DNA that makes us what we are inside and out—for there to be an exact duplicate of you, the odds are 75 billion to one.

God has built enough into our DNA that the chances of anybody being repeated, exactly as you are, is 75 billion to one! Everybody is different. How in the world does He keep track of all these things and deal with all that many different possibilities? Not only are we different in terms of the way we look, we are different in terms of the way we express our personalities, we are different in education, we are different all over the place. God is a God of variety.

I do not know how many people have ever lived on earth. It is a lot. How many had lived up to the Flood is something amazing to consider, but right now there is supposed to be about 6 billion people living on earth. It hardly seems to me that between Adam and Eve and now—despite the fact that all those people lived so many years up to the Flood—I do not think that 75 billion people have ever lived on earth. But even if 75 billion people did, God made you different from every other one.

That gives you a little bit of idea why it says that God has given names to all the stars. He calls them by name! How many stars are there? When you think how many stars there are, 75 billion people is mighty tiny. What a mind!

I did this for one reason. These people were calling God into account for the way He was running His church. Do you understand they really did not *see* God? This is why I began this series with sovereignty, because if that is the beginning of our judgment of ourselves, if we cannot see God, we cannot be humble, and if we cannot be humble, we cannot submit to Him. It is part of this process of evaluation that we have to make of ourselves in order to walk with Him in the right attitude.

Here in Corinth, he had to get those people straightened out and that is why the whole book is about those arguments that these people were going into in the first chapter. Everything builds out from what these people thought about themselves in relation to these people that God sent to teach them. They could not get along with the teachers, they could not get along with each other, because pride was blurring their eyes. So they were blind.

Paul had his hands full! Someone counted 21 different problems there in I Corinthians alone that he had to deal with, and most of them were problems with pride. They argued with each other, they offended each other, they got their feelings hurt by each other.

Let us advance the argument which keeps on going as Paul continues to instruct, but eventually he gets around here to I Corinthian 12, where he uses the body analogy in order to help these people understand that all of us are part of a body that God is putting together through Jesus Christ. Nobody is better than somebody else, but we have been assigned by God to fill a position in Jesus Christ's body and we are to carry it out as best we possibly can in kindness, in love, in gentleness, in a very good spirit.

I Corinthian 12:4-10 There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. [Do we see that it is the same God who works everything in everybody?] But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. [God gives the gifts so that everybody benefits from them. They are to be used in that regard.] For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

God distributes the gifts as He sees fit. I know from my own experience in talking to some of you, it is hard for us to figure out, "what is our place in the body?" Eventually it comes out. I mean that. God will eventually let us know.

I Corinthian 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Go to a number of verses further to continue to see this; that every one of us is part of the body and there is an equality here. The gifts may be different, but there is an equality as brothers and sisters within the family.

I Corinthian 12:14-18 For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He pleased.

In a way we have come full circle. These people were dividing the body (beginning in chapter 1); this one was better than this one and this one was better than that one, and so forth, not understanding that they were calling God into account. Paul makes it very clear that it is God who places us all. And it does take us a while to try to figure things out and work within it in learning to love one another, and to find out what the responsibility is and carry it out within the body and that God will enable every part of the body to do its job.

Two ways to illustrate this one is that God provides every cell in the body. Cells for the heart to do its job, but the heart cells cannot do the job of the kidney cells. It takes the heart cells to do the heart's responsibility. That is not hard to understand. God creates the gifts needed for every cell to carry out its responsibility within the body.

It is all part of God's design and each part is necessary according to the way God designed it to carry out its operations. Let us drop all the way down to verse 27.

I Corinthian 12:27-31 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

From there he goes into the love chapter, and everybody is required to do what the love chapter says, and God enables everybody to do what the love chapter requires of everybody. That is something that everybody, every part of the body, can do. God has enabled us to do it and in one sense that is the hardest job and everybody is equal in that regard. Later on, specialized responsibilities are understood and somebody begins to fulfill a more specialized part of it.

Luke 9:46-48 Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in my name, receives Me. And whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."

The unspoken issue in all this quarreling is that pride was pushing the quarrelers to attempt to rise above their fellow members in the congregation as to the greatness of their opinions regarding these issues, but the unspoken problem was that they were all disagreeing with God's oversight of the church. That encapsulates things pretty well, I believe.

Colossians 3:12-15 Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave

you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful.

I picked up on this verse because all of these qualities given here are something that must be put on, as though one were dressing himself, and humility is something that must be put on. We do not have it inborn within us when we are unconverted. This is why I started the sermon this way. Only those who are called of God can actually have developed within them the kind of humility that meets the standards of being poor in spirit—and that is at the foundation of it.

Humility, like the fear of God, is a learned quality, and it is one that requires a conscious decision on a person's part to humble himself before God, to humble himself before his brethren, and to truly become a servant giving love, rather than that which pride would want the person to put out there right away.

So it has its basis in how well one sees God, understands, and as fully as possible accepts God's supremacy over every aspect of His creation. And that most especially includes himself and his fellow man—who is also a part of God's spiritual creation and that means mostly church members—and being able to make a proper evaluation between God's supreme spiritual richness and our spiritual poverty. This paves the way for one to properly judge himself and therefore choose to humble himself. That is something we must choose to do. When we do we will obediently submit to God's instruction. Only then can a person truly live by faith, because he not only sees God fairly well, he also sees a much truer perspective of himself.

I am going to close here with a small number of scriptures because I want you to see God. Remember how I showed you there in Isaiah 66:2 and in Micah 5:6-8 where God says very plainly and clearly that humility impresses Him. It is something that He will respond to.

I Kings 3:11-14 Then God said to him [Solomon], "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you, among the kings, all your days."

First thing I want you to note here is that Solomon humbled himself before God and he made a wise request. If he would have been a proud man at that time, he would not have asked that way, he would have asked for the things that carnal people would normally ask for, but he did not. His humility at that time came through. So what was God's response? He said, "I will add what you did not ask for." So what will this do? It will produce honor from God.

Go to the book of Proverbs. Remember these are not things that will automatically come. They are gifts from God; it produces honor from God.

Proverbs 22:4 By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life. [That is wonderful.]

II Chronicles 7:14-15 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. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.

What a wonderful thing to receive from God! Forgiveness, and that He will hear our prayers.

We will go to Isaiah 57 for the last verse, a wonderful scripture.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with Him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Humility ensures God's blessing.

The evidence is clear. Without humility, there is no family relationship with God, without humility; there is no Kingdom of God. It is an absolute necessity, because God responds to those who are humble.