

Humility

DARRELL DELANEY

We live in a culture that tends to celebrate pride, but when we are not careful, that pride easily turns to entitlement. Tik-Toks and short videos of individuals berating store clerks or becoming extremely rude to fellow patrons quickly go viral on social media for all the wrong reasons. It is those types of mindsets and behaviors that the Apostle Paul encourages Christians to lay down; instead, choosing to live with Christ-like humility. What does it mean to be humbled by Christ? What does it look like in our daily lives? Let's dig into scripture together to find out. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are on our second episode of our six-part series on Christian virtues, virtues that the Apostle Paul told us to put on as we grow in our faith; and in the first episode, we talked about compassion and the importance of suffering with people; because compassion...that is what it means...it is a compound word: *com* meaning with and *passion* meaning suffer; and so, Paul showed us how we could actually love people by suffering with them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And now, in this second episode, we are going to take up the virtue of humility; and in some ways, Darrell, the writer Robert Roberts suggested that humility is in some ways the core virtue of all the other virtues. It is perhaps the most Christlike virtue; and if you are not humble, the odds of your being any of these other virtues, or the odds of you bearing any of the fruit of the Spirit are going to be much, much lower, because humility is in some ways sort of like the hub on the wheel...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And all the other virtues are the spokes that come out from it.

DARRELL DELANEY

I can see that. I think that it would be very important for us to get a working definition of what humility is so that people know what we are talking about and we are on the same page. If you think about humility, the definition really talks about having a low regard for one's self, and making sure that you know that all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise do not come just to you for the things that you do, even though you have the skills and abilities to do them. If we think about it from a theological lens, we could say: Hey, listen; God is great; he is big; he is large; he is much more powerful than we are; and as human beings, we are not. We are lower than him; we recognize our place under his divine authority; and if we see ourselves in his light, even though that place is smaller, it is not insignificant to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the opposite of humility is the deadly sin of pride. The proud want all the attention; they want all the accolades; they want everybody else to look up to them. Pride is often associated with images of height, you know: She is on her high horse; or he always looks down his nose at me, you know; he has a high-flying opinion of himself. Humility is the opposite of all that. Now, we should point out that there is a difference between humility and *humiliation*...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are not supposed to be humiliating ourselves or allowing others to humiliate us...no; but it does mean that we are not always wondering: Am I in the limelight? How can I get in the limelight? How can I look better than that person? How can I make people want to envy who I am? No; we want to have what we are going to mention in a little while, kind of a sober opinion of ourselves—a realistic opinion of ourselves—in relation to other people. One of the things, when we talk about...and we have done a series of this on *Groundwork* before...the seven deadly sins...when we talk about antidotes to pride, proud people always compare themselves to whom they regard to be lesser; and so, we always say one of the ways to combat pride is: Why don't you only ever compare yourself to God?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because you are never going to come out on top in that one. That will keep you in your place.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, I agree. I think that it is safe to say that when you operate in pride, it is a view that keeps you from seeing yourself accurately...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And also, it taints everything else you do. So, you could do a thing...you could serve someone...but if it comes from the pride attitude and posture, it is definitely going to taint what you are trying to do; and the other thing is that scripture is definitely replete with plenty of examples of what humility should look like; and we have an example here from Proverbs 22:4 that says:

Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.

So, humility starts with the fear of the Lord, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and another Old Testament passage that speaks of this is from Zephaniah 2:3, where we read: Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger.

So, humble people seek God and they seek him humbly, which is kind of ringed in by humility there.

DARRELL DELANEY

And also, continuing in Proverbs, in Proverbs 3:34, it shows that God favors the humble. It says: He mocks proud mockers, but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.

I think with humility, you can still keep your dignity and who you are and your identity in who God says you are; but like you said about humiliation, that removes dignity from people; that disrespects them; and if you

are prideful, you actually disrespect yourself. You don't even give yourself an opportunity to see yourself the way God sees you, and God opposes that kind of thing, because you are setting yourself up as if you don't need him, and that is not what Christians are called to do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Pride affects how you view things and how you view other people. You are always looking down on other people. Again, as Robert Roberts has suggested, humility really is just seeing all of life as a level playing field, you know, when you've got gifts I don't have, I've got gifts you don't have; our producer has gifts neither of us have; but we need all those gifts in life, and when you add up all of our pluses and minuses, we all come out the same. We all look at each other at eye level.

Paul talks about this in Romans 12:3:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought; but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am pretty sure it is not just that that scripture truth only applies to the Roman Christians that Paul was talking to. We can all have an inflated view of ourselves if we are not careful, because vanity is very slippery; pride is very, very tricky; and we need to see ourselves with sober judgment; and sober judgment, in my opinion, is when you allow God's scripture to tell you who you are; and to remember that those things are the truth, not the opinions of other folks, not what you tell yourself, but what God has already spoken about us is the truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and again, it is just the matter of seeing each other at eye level; seeing life as a level playing field, in which we all have our various roles to play, and nobody has any cause to puff themselves up as saying: Well, the gifts I have that you don't have are more important. You know, it sort of reminds you of Paul's image of the body in the New Testament. The eye cannot say to the foot: I am more important than you, right? The hand cannot say that to the nose, you know. No; we need all these things working together in harmony and in unity; and when that happens, then life goes much, much better; because, indeed, we abuse ourselves in many ways when we are proud; we abuse other people because we think we can, because we think we are better than them. Humility is all about an honest, clear-eyed assessment of life: Sober judgment, which we just read in Romans 12; that sober judgment that says: You are not better than me and I am not better than you; God is greater than all of us, that is for sure...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, as we go through life together, we do so as partners...as brothers and sisters...as coworkers in the Lord.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is something that we are going to need to do; and I think not only do you think about that in terms of what scripture teaches about who we are, but if you have a mentor or a coach or someone who you look up to that can speak into your life and hold you accountable, those are the kinds of people that you give permission to tell you that when your head is in the clouds, or you are going too much, or you are thinking...you are doing too much. They are the people who can love you and say: No; you have to come back down to the ground now. You have to be able to hold a mirror up in front of me so that I can see that I am not being humble; and that is the kind of person that I need in my life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, in just a minute, we want to continue to talk about the virtue of humility and what it means in our lives, so stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and we are talking about humility, which is a position and posture that Christians are called to live in; and we have another example here from Philippians Chapter 2. The Apostle Paul says: ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

We are called to not just live as if we are in a silo. There are other people around us who are affected by our actions, whether we do well or do poorly. So, Paul is saying we ought to look at other folks and see how we might serve them, because he is setting us up in this passage to show us that Christ did the exact same thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, because Christ is the ultimate example of humility and that comes through very, very clearly in that Philippians 2 passage. We said a minute ago in the first part of the program, another passage in Romans: (verse 3) Think of yourselves with sober judgment. We said we try to see each other at eye level. I don't try to put myself over you. Here Paul says, actually it is okay if you go a little bit the other way, and you value *others* above yourself. That is okay. Don't put yourself above others, but let others go above you; you treat them that way, anyway. Don't look only at your own interests, but look to the interests of others. Serve each other. We are going to talk about that in just a minute, that humility leads to a posture of service; and again, it is what Christ did; and were we to read further there in Philippians 2, we would get to that famous song of the self-emptying, what in Greek is called the *kenosis*—the emptying of Christ; and Paul says: Look, Christ is the Son of God. Christ had it all. He is God...he was God, but he didn't hang onto that...he didn't grasp that. He gave it up; he let it go for a time so he could be born as a true human being, vulnerable to death, and who did die a humiliating, humble servant's death on a cross as a sacrifice for many. That is what Jesus did, right? So, we said early in the program, humility may very well be the core Christian virtue from which everything else springs; and here is why: It is what made Jesus sacrifice himself for our sins.

DARRELL DELANEY

I mean, scripture specifically says that he is made from the same essence as God in that passage. If you think about the journey that Christ had taken, which is the journey that we are supposed to take, it looks like a bell curve in reverse, where he starts in heaven and he goes down, down, down to human life, down into death, down into hell, actually; and then resurrects and becomes the one who has earned the right to have the name that is above every name; and he does that by demonstrating a life of humility.

Also, the other thing that was important was, I think that for those of you who hear Scott say: Hey, you are supposed to put others before you, I don't want to get into the other extreme of that, which means you lose yourself and you become a doormat and you become a people pleaser, because that is not what Scott is saying. Scott is saying that as you keep the dignity of what God has taught you to be as a believer, you can learn how to put other's interest before your own and not lose the character of who you are while you are serving; because when Christ served, he was still who he was. He just found a way to do that in a way that honored the dignity, not only in what God had called him to do, but in the person that he is serving, which I think is one of his mission statements that came from Mark 10:45: He did not come to this world to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many; and that was out of the humility that you are talking about.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And perhaps the greatest example of this is the well-known foot-washing scene in John 13. Let's read that whole story: ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, (now, that is interesting; there again, Jesus had all things, right?) and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my

feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”⁹ “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

DARRELL DELANEY

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now if you do these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

So, Jesus being their ultimate Teacher—their Rabbi—in their culture, in their day, people were expected to serve him. The disciples washing his feet will be commonplace because that is kind of the posture that they have with rabbis, but Jesus flips it on its head. He literally shows them: I am here to serve you; even though the culture and the wider society says you are supposed to serve me, I am showing you a better example; and now that I am modeling that, I need you to do that, because that is the way of humility.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Again, I love how John sets that up. Jesus knew that God had put all things in his power; Jesus knew he had come from God and was going to God, that he was God. So, in other words, Jesus knows that he is the all-powerful one; and then we get the word *so* that is when he took his clothes off and started to wash their feet. It is like, wow, that is not what you would think to come after this *so...so*, then Jesus said to his disciples, aren’t one of you going to wash my feet? You know, get down there and do your job. I am your rabbi. No; he goes the absolute opposite direction, gives them an example of what they are supposed to do for each other and for all people going forward: a posture—a position of humility.

We often talk about grabbing for the brass ring or grabbing for the top rung of the ladder, Jesus says: Get used to grabbing the bottom rung of the ladder; you know, dive down deep to do the menial stuff that proud people won’t do, and in that way, you show that you are like me.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, he shows the way up is the way down, actually...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

Like I said, it is back to that song in Philippians 2; but here is a little litmus test. I have been testing myself with this one. The people who serve us in our lives, or let’s say they are waitresses or they are clerks at the cashier desk, or they are people who take our trash away. How do I treat them? Do I treat them a certain way because they are working “for” me? Or it is their “job”? Am I able to serve them by saying: Hey, thank you for what you do; or give them gratitude. The people who bring letters to my house—the mail carrier; how do I treat them? Because the Bible tells us not to show favoritism to people who we think are important, who can do something for us; and then the people who will do things that serve us, we treat them a certain way. The Bible tells us not to do that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and you know, I mean, we do sometimes see installations of pastors or other people in positions of power, they literally do a foot washing ceremony up on stage. The truth is, we don’t do foot washing in our culture anymore; but those things you just mentioned, Darrell, would be the modern equivalent of foot washing. Treating others as though they are better than you; being polite; saying thank you. You know, I remember my dad every once in a while, even though we paid our trash service to haul our garbage away, every once in a while, Dad would just stick a twenty-dollar bill on the top of the trashcan, just for the trash man to see and maybe even get himself a little extra something for lunch that day. Just kind of going over the top to be kind. That might be a modern-day equivalent of foot washing; but as we wrap up this program, we

want to think more about how we put this virtue of humility into practice, so stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we have covered a lot of ground when it comes to this concept of humility, but now we want to kind of land the plane. We have kind of a longish passage...we might skip around a little bit...but let's hear some words from Colossians 3, and again, Christ being our example.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now, we get this clothing image: ¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive... (the sins, right? So, these are a lot of the virtues we are talking about in this series.) ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the message of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.

So, we are called to put on Christ. We dress up like Jesus, and humility and all the other virtues that spring from it spin out of that.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what is interesting, I was thinking about this clothing image. The other day, I saw my son wearing my jacket when he went out to the car to grab something; it was cold outside and he didn't want to grab his jacket; he grabbed my jacket, and then he put on my shoes; and so, what is interesting to me is that, not only are his feet getting big enough to fit my shoes as a teenager, but I think that when he put on...I don't know how deep this goes for him...but he took on my jacket; and when I put on my dad's jacket, I tried to imitate my dad. I tried to walk around and be, you know, say the mannerisms and all the things that he did; and that is the image that sticks with me, because when we put on these virtues, humility included, we are to imitate Christ and walk around as he would walk around and say what he would say and do what he would do; and hopefully, that will resonate with us and change us to the place where we will use our responsibility to put to death the other things, and to live into this life that Christ has called us to live into.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, I was on an airplane recently and I was taking notice of the pilot and the copilot; and you know, airline pilots wear those uniforms—they wear those hats—those formal caps; they have their jacket with their rank insignia on it; and all the rest. You don't have to wear that to know how to fly a plane, but it is part of their identity. Pilots dress that way because it is part of their identity. Military people have uniforms. Lots of places have uniforms; waiters in restaurants have uniforms; because when you put something on, you are that role; and so, we are to put on Christ. As you said, Darrell, if we put on someone else's clothes, particularly a

beloved parent or a father, maybe you want to act like that person. Well, we want to put on Christ—we want to put on his humility—the opposite of pride; so that we can be Christ to each other. So, we put on those new clothes.

Part of this, too, reminds me of...this veers away from the clothing image a little bit...but it is when you put things into practice, right? As C. S. Lewis famously said: If you don't feel lovingly toward somebody, just act lovingly toward them; and you know what happens most of the time? Eventually, the feeling follows. Act lovingly toward someone whom you do not particularly love and the day arrives when you realize: Hey, I love this person after all. So, kind of lose yourself in being Christ and see how it transforms your whole outlook.

DARRELL DELANEY

I believe that if we are honest with that whole notion, Scott, to do what Christ is telling us to do is definitely going to be counterintuitive to what we would be comfortable with doing. Like when Jesus says if someone asks you to go one mile, go two miles. It is not something that you would actually feel comfortable doing all the time, but if you trust the Master, and the way he calls us to live, it will eventually, along the journey, change our character. This whole series is about the Christian virtues of the character of Christ being displayed in us; and so, if we take these new clothes that he is calling us to wear, and we imitate it and put it into practice, it is the best way to love God and love neighbor.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And just to kind of look forward a little bit in this series: Again, we said humility being Christlike is what feeds all the other virtues; and indeed, eventually we are going to have the fourth program in this series is going to be on generosity; and there have been some hints of that even on this program already, kind of anticipating two programs from now. We are generous people. We are going to have the final episode on forgiveness, and we have talked about that a little bit in this program. We forgive as Christ forgave others. When we look at all of those things, we are also...the other two programs...we are truthful people; and our very next program: we are grateful people.

When you put on Christ as a garment...when you take his humility and you look at yourself with sober judgment...you look to the interest of others; that is when you start to act like Jesus in every aspect of your life.

DARRELL DELANEY

And even though it is not easy to do, it is definitely worth it. So, we actually pray that God will give us the ability to live in such a way that whenever good happens, we give all glory, all honor and all praise to God. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we learn about the Christlike virtue of thanksgiving and gratitude.

Connect with us now at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or what you would like to hear discussed next on a *Groundwork* program.

DARRELL DELANEY

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