

Faith and Humility

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The words, "The just shall live by faith," which were commented upon last week, in the article, "Living by Faith," suggested a few other thoughts that could not, for lack of space, be given in that article. The apostle quoted only the last half of the verse, as it was all that specially applied to the subject he was considering, but we may well note the whole. It is this: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).

This text connects faith and humility in the closest relation. Faith exists only in connection with lowliness of mind. This is shown by those texts which teach that only the humble can please God. Prov. 11:2 says that "when pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom." The prophet says too: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit," and that "trembleth at my word" (Isa. 57:15; 66:2). It is through the prayer of faith that we receive grace to help in time of need; and Peter says that "God resists the proud, and gives grace unto the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). So both faith and humility are requisite, and faith cannot exist without humility, as we shall see.

Faith is dependence upon another. If we have faith in Christ, we depend upon him. The man who is full of self-confidence will not depend upon another. No man will use crutches until he finds that his unaided limbs will not support his body; so no man will depend upon Christ for salvation until he finds that he cannot be saved by his own works. But to find out that one's own righteousness's are but as filthy rags; to be fully sensible that one is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, must produce humility; or, rather, to be sensible of such a condition is itself humility. But one must realize and acknowledge himself to be in this condition before he will accept Christ, who alone can give him health, food, raiment, and true riches. The man who feels that he is starving will gladly accept food when it is offered; so the sinner who comes to himself, and realizes that his only food is husks, will eagerly take the bread of life. He who thinks that his filthy rags are a prince's garment, will not accept anything better; but he who sees his condition just as it is will gladly accept the robe of Christ's righteousness. But in Christ are hid all the riches of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3), and the lowly of heart will accept him, and so it is that "with the lowly is wisdom."

"Behold his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him;" that is, the soul of the proud is not just; "but the just shall live by his faith." Therefore the just man is not lifted up. Walking humbly with God is what is required of men, which shows that without humility one cannot walk with God. This is shown, also, by the invitation of Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). A yoke of humility

and meekness cannot be easy to the neck of pride. From this we can understand how it is that everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. The reason is that everyone that is proud in heart is corrupt in heart; for, says the Scripture, "Only by pride cometh contention" (Prov. 13:10). For one to lift himself up in pride is to set himself against God. It was this that caused the fall of Satan in Heaven. Says the Lord through his prophet: "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness" (Eze. 28:17). He became so puffed up with a sense of his own importance that he could not receive commands from the Lord, and as the result he was cast as profane out of the mountain of God. If that was the effect upon one of the highest angels in Heaven, how heinous pride must be in one who is poor and vile.

"The just shall live by faith." That means that a man can live a just life only by retaining that humble simplicity that will lead him to distrust himself and to trust God. If when he has run well for a season, by the grace of God, he begins to think that the strength which has enabled him to gain victories resides within himself, then he will fall; for says the Scripture, "A man's pride shall bring him low; but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit" (Prov. 29:23). So it is that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). When a man is high up, he is apt to become dizzy-headed; and when he is in that condition, and has no strength at all, then he must surely fall. But there is no such danger to the humble-minded man, for, as Bunyan aptly puts it—

"He that is down needs fear no fall."

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). Humility leads to exaltation, that is, if the individual humbles himself, the faith which he exercises as the result of humility, makes him one with Christ, and in Christ he is lifted up to sit in heavenly places. This exaltation is nothing less than being owned as a son of God; but the world will not recognize it, because it knew him not. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination with God;" consequently that which is most esteemed by God is regarded as of little value among men. Therefore whoever would follow the Lord, must make up his mind to be of little repute. If all men speak well of him, and applaud him, he may know that his way is not pleasing to God. May the Lord help us to see ourselves, not as others see us, but as he sees us; and then may we accept his grace and righteousness, so that he may see us as he wishes to see us.