

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Grace to the Humble**

**# 1302-A**

**Series: The Mind of Christ**

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.  
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • [www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org)



# Grace to the Humble

The story was told that there was a certain pond where a frog and two ducks used to swim together. Day after day, they had fellowship, until they became the best of friends. But the rains ceased, and little by little, the pond began to dry up. "What shall we do?" they pondered. The ducks could fly to another pond and find fresh water, but they would have to leave their hopping friend behind, for he was unable to fly.

The solution finally came. The ducks would each put one end of a stick or vine in their mouths, and the frog would clench his mouth over the stick. That way the ducks could fly, and the frog could go along for the ride. So long as the frog didn't loosen his grip, he would arrive safely at another pond. All he had to do was keep his mouth shut.

The story goes that they were flying across a field on their way to another pond when a farmer, watching below, uttered, "What a unique idea. I wonder who thought of that?" The frog, it seems, unable to contain himself, answered, "I did."

As he fell to his death below, it occurred to him that the moment he opened his mouth to take credit, what he was so proud of mattered no more.

And so it is with us. If we could just remember that so long as we quietly cling to the stick of grace, we will be carried on wings of love to the next place in our lives where our needs will be met by the enabling power of God. But, oh, the moment we open our mouths to take the credit, we fall back into the grave of pride, and though the power to soar is still present, we have relinquished our hold upon it and thus are no longer the recipients of its freedom.

The miracle of the grace of God! We sing about it, pray about it, talk about it. Yet I wonder how many of us really understand what it is? We talk about it being the "free, unmerited favor of God". It is, without a doubt, free. It is without a doubt, unmerited. It is without a doubt, awesome. But it is, as well, much more

## Grace to the Humble

than that. The grace of God is not a passive response to our need to be changed. It is the incredible life of God set free inside of us, allowing us to live supernaturally in a natural world. It is God's enabling power. His mercy forgave us, allowing us to be saved, but it was His grace that enabled us to say yes and be saved. It is His grace that enables us to endure suffering graciously. It is His grace that enables us to resist temptation. It is His grace that enables us to bear spiritual fruit. It is His grace that enables us to interpret and apply spiritual truth. Whatever takes place that is spiritually beneficial, does so because of His amazing grace.

So the grace of God can best be defined as "the life of God spiritually enabling fallen man to have the power of God active within his life". To simplify it still further, it is Christ living in you. Let's imagine you have suffered the loss of a loved one, for instance, and by all standards, you should be unable to function. But people are praying for you and something incredible happens. There is a gentle peace about your soul. There is a joy you cannot explain. There is love and rest. Why? Grace. When you are tested in the crucible of life in a way in which you normally would fail, but suddenly there is power to be strong and praise God for the circumstances even though you don't like the circumstances, you are experiencing grace. God is living his life through you. When you are tempted and you claim God's Word as your authority, and suddenly you are able to resist a temptation you have always fallen to before, what has happened? You have experienced God's precious grace. God's grace is God's life pouring through you, enabling you to do or to be that which you could not do or be apart from God.

But we don't always seem to have that grace in the same proportion. Some of that is because, as the need increases, grace increases. Some of that is because God's grace is given totally without merit and, therefore, is a result of the deeper purposes of God. So it is given in greater measure at different times, but according to His higher ways. But there are some things we do that cause us to lose hold of it and fall crashing to the turf below. Jesus obviously wanted us to understand what those things are. Therefore, He painted on the tablets of His Holy Word a clear understanding of what robs us of that grace. One of those is the subject of this study.

We are making our way through the principles found in Paul's description of the life of Christ, found in Philippians, chapter two.

## Grace to the Humble

He was troubled about two things:

1- The Philippians didn't seem to understand the concept of suffering. Paul wrote:

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

(Philippians 1:29 NKJV)

They understood how wonderful it was to be a Christian, but they were confused as to why the devil didn't just go away once they were saved. So Paul described suffering as a necessary ingredient to achieving the mind of Christ. They didn't grasp that.

2- They didn't seem to understand that true unity comes from humility (Philippians 2:1-4). They didn't grasp that the conflicts that divided brother from brother and church from church were the result of an improper understanding of what living the Christian life was all about. Living the Christian life involved "not letting anything be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, letting each esteem others better than themselves." A correct understanding of those two issues, suffering and humility, were keeping the Philippian believers from attaining the Mind of Christ. So Paul began to explain the process to them, but instead of a theological treatise on the effects of exaltation on fallen man, he simply said, "Let's look at Jesus". What a great way to teach spiritual truth.

What follows is a remarkable portrait, only six lines long, of how a godly man or woman can achieve greatness in the kingdom of God. It includes such descriptive terms as "made Himself of no reputation, humbled himself, became obedient, even unto death." It is a seven-step spiral that begins with a knowledge of who you are in Christ, and ends by willingly submitting to unjust, cruel death at the hand of those you thought you'd come to save. It begins on the mountaintop of heaven, crashes into the abyss of the grave, only to be resurrected once again to the exaltation of glory. The trouble is, it is only the humbling experience of dying that qualifies you for the mountaintop of living in godliness. If you strive to reach that mountain any other way, you will find yourself having to be humiliated.

Like the frog in the story, the secret is to keep quiet and soar. Frogs don't soar naturally. Neither do we. So, the minute you turn loose of the stick of grace to be sure someone is looking or listening or giving credit where you think it's due, the grace that

## Grace to the Humble

took you into the heavens departs, and you fall hopelessly to the ground.

Apparently, we don't understand that. If we did, most of the hoopla and conversation that surrounds our Christian experience would be replaced with quiet words that call attention to God and His amazing grace. We would not boast of our churches, boast of our ministries, boast of our talents, boast of our experiences, boast of our pastors, or God forbid, even boast about the fact that we're not boasting. We would leave our lips wrapped around that stick of grace and soar undeservedly, but gratefully, into the heavens.

As strange as it may seem, the best way to learn the details of how our receiving the grace of God is affected by our pride is to listen to the Apostle Peter. He is a perfect illustration of how God makes strength out of weakness. Before Pentecost, no one was more convinced of his own worth in the kingdom than Peter. His philosophy was basically, "I understand, Lord, that those other eleven guys may let you down, that's understandable. But not me. You can count on me, Lord. You can count on me." What humility.

And Jesus could count on Peter. He could count on him to curse, lie, and even deny that he had ever known the precious One. In his self-confidence, Peter berated God for even implying that he was nothing apart from the Father. But now a forgiven Peter, deeply humiliated and repentant over his obvious inability to be faithful apart from some divine enabling, begins to write of things so marvelous the mind can scarcely grasp them. He was the same man. But now he's been to the Cross, and now he's been forgiven. And now he has received that wonderful commodity known as grace. That means that now he has the supernatural power to let Christ live in him and through him.

Listen to what this man, transformed through the grace of humility, has to say. It is found in I Peter, chapter five.

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers —not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

## Grace to the Humble

not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

(I Peter 5:1-11 NIV)

Peter is writing to explain the Mind of Christ just as Paul had. To make sure we would recognize that there were no strata of self-righteousness in the kingdom, he starts out with a warning to those who have been elevated to places of leadership in the church. He then addresses those least likely to have cause to be puffed up, and follows by drawing a net around the whole church. The subject is humility. The object is to explain that there is a direct correlation between the grace God gives to the believer and how humble or proud that believer might be.

He begins with the church leadership. He obviously understood the temptations that go with leadership, having been one of the chosen twelve, and having seen it go to his head until he thought himself invincible. So he approaches the elders of the church, relating his own position as an elder as his qualification to address them, and he exhorts them to lead the flock by the example of a servant heart, rather than by condescendingly driving them. He reminds them that any motivation of personal gain will destroy their ministry. They are to lead by example. They are to become the servants they expect the people to be. The end result will be a crown of glory that awaits them in heaven.

## Grace to the Humble

Then Peter turns to the group that would seem to be least likely to exalt themselves, the young people. He asks them to submit themselves (to willingly rank themselves under) to the church leaders. The Amplified Bible puts it this way:

Likewise, you that are younger and of lesser rank be subject to the elders—the ministers and spiritual guides of the church, giving them due respect, and yielding to their counsel...  
(1 Peter 5:5 Amplified Bible)

So he has approached the ones most likely to exalt themselves and the ones least likely to become proud, and given them much the same counsel. Now he decides to take the two ends of the spectrum and draw them together into one indivisible unit. He says, “Yea all of you...” (KJV) Here is a commandment followed by an explanation of the cause and effects that follow obedience or rejection of that commandment. Peter was good about clearly explaining the laws of sowing and reaping.

Now he paints a picture for the Christians at all levels of service or rank, and tells them they must all dress alike... spiritually, that is. He tells them to be “clothed with humility”. The Amplified Bible continues like this:

...Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility [as the garb of a servant, so that its covering cannot possibly be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance]...”  
(Philippians 5:5 continued)

The picture is identical to Paul’s description of the Lord Jesus Himself. The Amplified translation of Philippians 2:7 reads:

But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being.

The story is told of a rich man who invited a group of guests for dinner. His own chair, richly decorated, was at the head of the table. He waited until all the guests had seated themselves, watching as they clamored to get as close to his chair as possible. Then he entered the room and pulled his chair to the other end of the table. That’s what Peter is saying here. That’s what Paul is saying in Philippians. God sits down at the end of the table where those who did not feel worthy to sit by Him have seated themselves. Those who felt worthy do not deserve the Master’s presence.

Peter is recommending that all believers tie on the aprons of



## Grace to the Humble

a servant, rather than strutting around in the garb of royalty. Dwight L. Moody quoted a friend of his who was describing the process of spiritual growth. It went like this: “The more a believer is growing in grace, the more his conversation ought to elevate the Master, and the less he ought to talk about himself.” He further described him as one who “would become smaller and smaller in his own estimation, until like the morning star, he faded away before the rising sun.”

Don't you see? If the Spirit of Christ is controlling you, you are becoming more and more insignificant in the scheme of things. Because your eyes are so filled with Him, you cannot see yourself. There is a story told of William Beebe, one of the great minds in the field of nature in his day. He and his good friend, Theodore Roosevelt, often would spend time exploring nature together. Beebe would recall that he and the president would go outside, and try to locate the Andromeda galaxy in the constellation of Pegasus. Then, gazing at the tiny smudge of distant starlight, one of them would say, “That is the spiral galaxy of Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 750,000 light years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our own sun.”

The story goes on that the two men would sit there until those facts had time to sink in. Then Roosevelt would flash his toothy grin and say, “Now I think we are small enough.” Once they saw themselves in the proper perspective of God's universe, they were able to deal with their own place in history properly.

That's the way we ought to be when we look at Jesus, the way Job was when he finally beheld who God is. He fell on his face and cried, “I repent in dust and ashes.” But the most awesome truth in this passage comes in the next verse. In the King James Bible, it says this:

and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud,  
and giveth grace to the humble. (I Peter 5:5c)

Here is the crux of the Mind of Christ. It isn't just that God prefers humility. Peter is saying that the enabling power He gives us to live the Christian life will be in direct proportion to the presence or absence of pride in our lives. The word translated “resisteth” in that translation, comes from the Greek word *antitasso*, which is two words put together: “anti” meaning

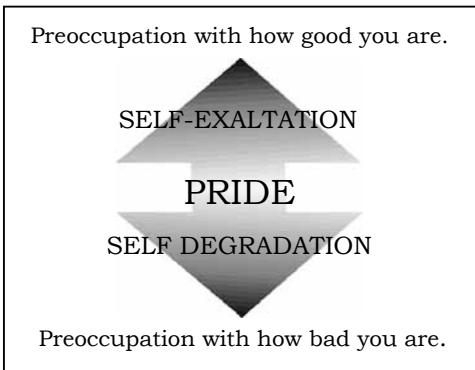
## Grace to the Humble

“against”, and tasso, meaning “to set”. So it literally means God sets himself against those who are proud. Thus the NIV translates it “opposes”, but even that does not truly generate the intensity of the word. It is the same word used in Acts 18:6. Listen to its usage there:

When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, “Your blood be upon your own heads.”  
(Acts 18:5,6 NKJV)

It is not a passive turning away from, it is an active kind of resistance that speaks of warfare. God literally comes out in direct opposition to the proud, seeing them at the moment, as enemies of the Mind of Christ. Peter was speaking to believers here. He wasn't categorizing the proud as those who know not Christ. He was addressing Christians who hadn't learned to humble themselves.



The word proud (huperphanos) is a word that means “to prefer oneself above others”. It literally can be defined as “preoccupation with self”. There are two kind of pride. One is preoccupied with how “good” you are (self-exaltation). The other is preoccupied with how “bad” you are

(self-degradation). Both are elevating self by focusing on self, rather than focusing on God whose lens always turns to others.

Humility, then, is the reflection of a mind that is so yielded to God that its focus automatically falls on everyone else before it falls on itself. Therefore, it has no rights to claim, no applause to deserve, no recognition to demand. If that person that shoves in front of you in the checkout line is more important than you are, then why would you demand your place? If he were the president, you would gladly invite him to step in front of you. If that person on the freeway is more important than you, why honk in anger if he pulls in front of you? If that person who has

## Grace to the Humble

so discredited you or wronged you is more important than you, then wouldn't you respond in love, rather than in anger?

That's what Paul meant in Philippians 2, when he said:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3,4 NIV)

The two opposing alternatives are selfish ambition or humility; and vain conceit or humility. One is the desire to better yourself, the other is the desire to protect your reputation. Both are the opposite of the humble life. So to whatever degree we operate with our own selfish interests in the forefront, we operate outside the will of God, and God is in the process of opposing us, of actively resisting us. He is not ignoring us. He is not teasing us. He is opposing us. At that moment, we are operating as His enemies. We are operating in the flesh. We are operating in pride. And God resists the proud.

But the story does not stop there. Peter goes on in I Peter 5 to add:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

(I Peter 5:5c NIV)

So now we have the crux of it all. The more humble a man or woman becomes, the less they think about themselves, thus the more grace God gives them. Grace, remember, is God's enabling power, allowing Christ to live His life through you. So the less you focus on yourself, the more power you have, the more peace you have, the more joy you have, the more fruit you bear. All of the things that grace produces are produced in direct proportion to your loss of consciousness of your self, which has been replaced by a God-consciousness resulting in unselfish behavior, behavior which places the good of everyone else ahead of your own.

It sounds crucial to achieving the “exchanged” life, doesn't it? If Christ is to control my life and live through me, and if that control is relative to my humility, then how can I achieve that? Or does God just make some people more humble than others, and thus they have the inside track? Remember what grace is: it is unmerited. So if grace is available in proportion to our humility, and that grace is undeserved, then it isn't something God gives out with favoritism. Look at the next verse:

## Grace to the Humble

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand,  
that He may exalt you in due time. (1 Peter 5:6 NIV)

Let's get this straight. Grace is a gift. Grace is from God. Grace is proportionate to humility. But here's our part. Peter says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand." Nine times in Scripture, this phrase (humble yourself) is used. Notice that:

1- It is a commandment. Therefore, in order for the life of Christ to be a reality in your life, you have absolutely no choice but to do whatever it takes, at whatever the cost, to humble yourself.

2- It is a choice. The fact that it is given as an order means that it is a choice. The phrase "Humble yourself" indicates that if you choose to do so, it will happen, not because you made it happen. God made it happen because you chose to let Him.

3- It is an act of surrender. You are to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. That means that the choice you are making is predicated on the assumption that except God empower you, you cannot do it, but unless you make the choice, God will not do it.

4- The results are predictable. You will be exalted in due time. I didn't write that, God did. There are two ramifications to that promise. One is that God will honor your humility by blessing your life here on earth, not necessarily with physical benefits, but surely with spiritual blessings. Your ministry will have the capacity to be effective, because you will be living the victorious life. Your heart will be filled with joy and peace, because the focus of your life will not be upon yourself but on God and those God sent you to "die" for. But secondly, you are guaranteed rewards in Heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal.

I'm going to give us an assignment. Not you, us. All of us. I'm going to ask us to ask God to turn the spotlight on our lives for the next week. Let's ask Him to personalize this lesson. Here's what we'll do. We'll pretend this week that we are frogs and our ponds of grace are all dried up. We want to fly on the wings of the Spirit to new springs of living water. We'll wake up every morning and tell God we want to be humble. That's right. We're going to ask God to expose us this week every time we quench the grace of God through the absence of humility.

## Grace to the Humble

We want Him to prompt us every time we interrupt someone else's conversation; every time someone speaks to us, but we don't really listen; every time someone comes into our lives with a need, but we don't stop to meet it because it would inconvenience us. We're going to ask him to shock us with an electrode of conviction every time we inject the pronoun "I" into a conversation needlessly; every time we talk about our spirituality, our prayer life, our ministries. We're going to ask him to open our eyes to menial tasks; little things no one else wants to do; things we may have thought beneath us. If God washed dirty feet and said, "Now you do the same", nothing is beneath us, Beloved. And as He calls it to our attention we will promise God that we will humble ourselves. We will count ourselves as nothing, and count everyone else as more important, and everyone else's needs as more important.

We're going to do little things for our parents, our children, our disciples, our friends; things we never do, but wish others would do for us. And we're going to do them as humbly as possible, lest we open our mouths and let loose of the stick of grace. One more thing: as we humble ourselves, we're going to expect God to give us grace—the grace to be a servant, to be forgiving, to be available, to be whatever we normally would not be. And we're going to expect some miracles

In the lessons to come, we will explore the incredible world of humility—where it comes from, how it happens, what it looks like, and why it so pleases the heart of God. For now, however, I leave you with one final thought. When you choose to humble yourself, you set yourself against the very gates of hell. Every sin that has ever poured out of the heart of man has had its roots in the pit of pride. Satan's fall was simply and clearly predicated on this one thing: I will be like the most high. Nobody tells me what to do. Eve's fall was predicated on one thing: Ye shall be like God. Nobody tells you what to do.

This is why the next verses warns us:

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, (1 Peter 5:7-9a NIV)

If he's prowling around looking for someone for lunch, why would he pounce on you? There are lots of others with

## Grace to the Humble

more potential. Why? you chose to humble yourself (verse 6). You made a deliberate choice to become nothing and he hates that. When you become nothing, God becomes everything, and Satan's desire to elevate you to a position of importance comes crashing down. He doesn't like that. So he prowls around your life, seeking to destroy you. It says to resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

How do you do that? How do you resist Satan? You cast all your anxiety on God. To do that, you have to humble yourself even more. And the more you humble yourself, the more grace He will give you, and that grace will sustain you, enable you, and lift you...to even higher levels of victory. You, like Theodore Roosevelt and his friend, will become less and less significant, and God will become more and more so. You will go from grace to grace, from victory to victory, every time you humble yourself. And what will happen then? The next verse tells us:

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

(I Peter 5:10,11 NIV)

*To him be the power, indeed.*

Grace to the Humble

GRACE TO THE HUMBLE

He gives grace to the humble, power to the meek  
That's the Mind of God.

He sends his loved ones the valleys deep  
Where few before have trod.

And as they walk, and as they wait  
Where few have been before,  
The Master asks, "Would you know me best?  
Humble yourself yet more."

And as you do, this God of grace  
Gives yet more grace to you.  
The more you are willing to humble yourself  
The more God empowers you.

Constant joy awaits you  
As you give your life away  
And the God who gives grace to the humble  
Will exalt you one day.

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

---

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230  
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778  
[www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org) • © Russell Kelfer

(09.08.21)