

“... and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

A Study Outline

I. This title is taken from the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:12.

II. Let us first define **humble**, **humility**, and related words.

HEBREW

- A. **Strong 6031** = *anah*, “to be afflicted, be bowed down, be humbled, be meek.”
1. Genesis 15:3. *“... they shall afflict them 400 years.”*
 2. Genesis 16:6. Sarah “dealt harshly” with Hagar, so the word often expresses harsh and painful treatment.
 3. Psalm 105:18. When Joseph was sold as a slave his feet were hurt with fetters.
 4. Deuteronomy 8:2, 16. The Lord led Israel for 40 years in the wilderness, *“... to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart ...”*, so the word expresses the idea that God sends affliction for the purpose of disciplining.
 5. Genesis 34:2; Judges 19:24; Deuteronomy 21:14; 22:24. It can mean to force a woman sexually, or “humble” her.
 6. Leviticus 23:28-29. Fasting on the Day of Atonement means to “humble oneself.”
- B. **Strong 6041** = *aniy*, “poor, weak, afflicted, humble.”
1. As a noun this word is frequently used along with “needy” (*ebyon*-34) and/or “poor” (*dal*-1802), but differs from both of them in emphasizing some disability or distress.
 2. Deuteronomy 24:14-15. Here a poor person is commanded to be given his hire that day, since he needs it to live.
 3. Psalm 9:12; 10:12; 10:17; 34:2: 69:32. David makes mention of the humble frequently.
- C. **Strong 3665** = *kana*, “to be humble, to humble, subdue.”
1. The word occurs 35 times in the Hebrew text, but not until Deuteronomy 9:3.
 2. II Samuel 8:1. Here, David smote the Philistines. The word is frequently used in regard to subduing or humbling enemies.
 3. Leviticus 26:40-42. *“But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt — then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.”* Here the message is closely tied to heartfelt repentance.
 4. II Chronicles 7:14. *“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.”*
 5. II Chronicles 34:26-27. *“But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Considering the words which you have heard — because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and*

you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, says the LORD.”

- D. **Strong 8213 = *shaphel***, “to be low, become low, sink down, be humiliated, be abased.”
1. This word occurs 29 times in the Old Testament, and is a poetic term that is used figuratively. See Isaiah 10:33, for example.
 2. It is used to show how human pride will be brought low, and God alone will be lifted up.
 3. Isaiah 2:11-12, 17. *“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up — and it shall be brought low — The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,”*
 4. Proverbs 29:23. *“A man’s pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.”*
 5. I Samuel 2:6-8. *“The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory.”*
- E. **Strong 8217 = *shaphal***. “depressed, literally or figuratively.”
- 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.”*

GREEK

- A. **Strong 5013 = *tapeinoo***, “to make low, bring low.”
1. Matthew 18:4. *“Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*
 2. Matthew 24:12. *“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”*
 3. James 4:10. *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”*
 4. I Peter 5:6. *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”*
 5. Philippians 2:8. *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*
- B. **Strong 5012 = *tapeinophrosune***, “humiliation of mind, i.e. modesty.”
1. This is a fruit of the spirit, expressed when a person through genuine self-evaluation deems himself worthless. “It involves evaluating ourselves as small because we are so. The humble person is not stressing his sinfulness, but his creatureliness, of absolute dependence, of possessing nothing, and of receiving all things from God” (W.E. Vine, in *Strong’s Concordance*).
 2. “Lowliness of mind” is emphasized for us in Acts 20:19, Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:12, and I Peter 5:5.
 3. Colossians 3:12-13. *“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.”*
- C. **Strong 5011 and 5014** mean about the same as 5012 and 5013.

III. True humility is a gift of the spirit of God placed within us, and without that spirit we are not His, nor can we please Him (Romans 8:8-9).

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.”*

IV. The opposite of humility is **pride**, lifting oneself up before God and man, breaking the First

Commandment (Exodus 20:3) ... and thus all of the commandments (James 2:10). Thus, harboring pride is a sin, and it cuts us off from God (Isaiah 59:2). Pride is a work of the flesh.

HEBREW

Strong 1341 to 1348 = *gaah*, “to mount up, to rise, to be majestic,”

GREEK

A. **Strong 5243 = *huperephania***, “The character of a person with a swollen estimate of his own power or merits, who looks down on others, and even treats them with insolence and contempt” (W.E. Vine, *Strong’s Concordance*).

Mark 7:20-23. *“And He said, What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”*

B. **Strong 5187 = *tuphoo***, to envelop with smoke, to inflate with self-conceit.”

I Timothy 3:6

C. **Strong 212 = *alazoneia***, “braggadocio, self-confidence, arrogance, boasting.”

1. I John 2:16.

2. Matthew 11:28-30. *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* Jesus Christ was gentle, humble, and lowly of heart, as we must be, to follow in His footsteps. The Father is humble, who owns all that is (Haggai 2:8), and Jesus strove to do His Father’s will (John 5:30).

V. What should we do to insure humility is an integral part of our character?

A. **Recall that humility is a gift of the holy spirit within us, so we must allow that spirit to direct every part of us** (II Corinthians 10:5; I Timothy 2:3-4). Recognize the hopelessness of our own carnal nature that wants to be proud (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 8:7), and expose the fulness of God’s spirit in us. [Easier said than done!]

B. **Resist the devil and his wiles** (I Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7-8).

C. **Serve the brethren**, especially those unable to help themselves (James 1:27; Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:3).

D. **Rejoice in being lowly** in an age that rewards the proud and lofty (Matthew 11:29).

E. **Have a sane and realistic view of yourself**: who you are (a child of God), your talents, and your gifts (I Corinthians 12).

F. **Pray without ceasing** (I Thessalonians 5:17).

G. **Do not strive to be rich, but accept whatever blessings God gives you**, knowing that whatever things you gain in this world cannot be taken with you when you die (Proverbs 23:4-5); I Timothy 6:6-11).

H. **Work hard at whatever you do, and find enjoyment in your work** (Ecclesiastes 6:1-6; 9:10; Proverbs 10:4, 22; Luke 12:15), **and get lost in serving others** (Luke 22:24-27).

VI. We need to be like Moses, a man who thought little of his own worth and was meek above all people on earth (Numbers 12:3); yet, God called him to do wonderful works, such as leading Israel out of bondage (Exodus 3:10-11; 4:10-13).

VII. Our eyes must be focused at all times on our Father in heaven. If we strive to impress Him, as in secret (note Matthew 6:6), we cannot become proud, for pride invariably involves comparing ourselves with others, lifting ourselves up above others in our own eyes, as do most leaders in this world (II Corinthians 10:12 and the scriptures below).

“But Jesus called them to Him, and said, You know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; for whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no salvation. His breath goes forth, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:3-4).