

Catch the revival: Humility of revival (messy stuff)

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About me

Who am I and how did the Lord Jesus entrust me with his message when I was formerly proud?

So, I experienced personal revival in March 2017 and I got baptised shortly after this. My life changed when after 20 years of living a wild life as a prodigal son the Son of God visited me and I had a radical encounter. Previously, I claimed to be a Christian and could even recite bible verses but I was a hypocrite living contrary to God's righteous requirements. I was very sexually promiscuous, proud, a lover of money, greedy, drunk a lot of alcohol and lived a hedonistic life among my other many, many sins.

After getting saved, which happened from reading the bible daily for about 3 months, I continued to sit at the feet of my Master Jesus and after some time, he commissioned me as a preacher of righteousness and for a number of years now he has given me his words or "oracles" and that is how towards the end of 2021, the Lord commissioned me to prepare a series of 12 messages called "catch the revival". For each message, he gave me the title and the core content the message was to focus on. I then did the research, aided by his Holy Spirit. I am excited that God has been faithful to me thus far in helping me and this message is message #8 in this life changing series.

The full series of messages can be seen here: <https://www.shaweleroad.com/revival>

About this message

It is impossible for revival to come unless people actually humble themselves before God almighty, but what exactly is humility? How can one "become humble" and what examples can we see from the bible and Christian history to learn more about this quality which is like a match being lit to a forest of dry trees?

Revival is impossible without humility

It is impossible for revival to come unless people actually humble themselves before God almighty, and then call on him. Often times as they do, they are grovelling, pleading, rolling in the mud before he comes and heals them. Why must it seem like we need to roll in the mud and go through such "messy stuff"?

Is it that God likes drama or antics of people rolling in the mud to get his attention perhaps like the prophets of Baal in the epic with Elijah as I shared in a previous revival message #7.

No, it seems this "rolling in the mud" or humbling ourselves before him is for us, is such that it strips us of ourselves – our flesh and its pride, arrogance or self-importance which is so offensive to God. Instead, when we recognize who he is and appear naked before him, empty of ourselves then he comes in with his power - and clothes us with his righteousness and fills the empty void with his Holy Spirit for he says "my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12: 9).

This is the reason why humility is usually the door that brings God. Infact, without humility you can expect that there will NEVER BE a revival.

How can I be so sure? Well, the bible shows this, but I will come to that, but from looking at church history.

The history of revival seems to be that God's power comes with those in "simple" or humble settings – those who are often weak, poor, in humble settings. For example:

- The twentieth century's most extravagant outpouring of revival was hosted in an abandoned Methodist church used as a horse stable and warehouse on a street named Azusa. The leader

of this Azusa Street revival, the one which birthed the modern-day Pentecostal movement and it's 500m plus followers, well he was a humble one-eyed black man called Seymour used to hide his head in a milk crate while praying.

- In the beginning of the nineteenth century the primitive woods of Kentucky welcome God's power in what became known as the Second Great Awakening. This is the revival that contributed to the abolition of slavery for example.
- Go all the way back to the sixteenth century, and a dilapidated chapel in Wittenberg contains the thunderstorm of God's word and power for the Reformation led by Martin Luther.¹

Here are even more examples

- The Lollards of Wycliffe in the 1300s were called "poor priests" - their poverty helped keep them humble and yet they were wrestling against kings and powerful bishops who put some in jail, killed others and threatened others.
- The Moravians of Bohemia inspired the First Great Awakening led by known figures like Charles Wesley. They were a small band of religious refugees who settled in Saxony Germany but for generations, they had wandered from place to place to escape intense persecution. Many had died for their faith. Others had been imprisoned and tortured.

The reason revival comes to humble places is because they house humble people. Humility is the best conductor for God's power. Humble people – who are usually poor, have given up depending on their own effort and ability and instead they depend on God.

What is humility?

The dictionary **definition of being humble** is: having or showing a modest or low estimate of one's own importance. Similar words are: meek, respectful, submissive, self-effacing, unassertive.

The opposite of humility is: **pride**. Which is described as: a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements or a reasonable and justifiable feeling of being worthwhile. Similar words for pride are: arrogant, conceited, egotistic, haughty, high and mighty, pompous, self-assertive.

Humility in the bible

Before we can understand why humility is critical for revival, we need to understand some more how the bible describes humility building on the definitions above and contrasting humility with pride. Here are examples and how to understand them better.

Definition of humility

"Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life." Proverbs 22:4 NIV

This means that one way of understanding what humility is, is the act of fearing God – trembling before him, holding him in awe and treating him with deep respect. That is an example of humility. In return, those who do this, God gives them a reward – riches (the one they gave up), honour (the one they gave up) and life (the one they gave up).

In our world today, the less people "fear God" the more arrogant you see them and that's why you have a lot of people in our society who are narcissistic "I" "I" or who so boldly say "God is dead" or putting more faith in science than in God. Humility at it's core starts with fearing God and thus being respectful of him.

How to become humble

"I humble myself by fasting, and people insult me; I dress myself in clothes of mourning, and they laugh at me." Psalm 69:10-11 GNT

"And there by the Ahava Canal, I gave orders for all of us to fast and humble ourselves before our God. We prayed that he would give us a safe journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled." Ezra 8:21 NLT

These two verses show one of the ways we "humble ourselves" before God so we can come closer to him to hear from him is by fasting. The act of fasting which is denying yourself physical food has the effect of causing you to realize that your strength is not in yourself – but in God.

No wonder the bible says in another place: *"man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the father". Mathew 4:4.* These are the words Jesus used to respond to the devil, while he was fasting and tempted to use his power to turn stones into bread.

Jesus instead showed that he did not rely on himself or his power – but his power came from God, whose words are power and strength!

The connection between humility and poverty

"Better to live humbly with the poor than to share plunder with the proud." Proverbs 16:19 NLT

This verse at first doesn't seem obvious to understand but is steeped in Hebrew proverb style of parallelism where part of the idea is left unsaid but you can tell it from the opposite. It seems to show:

Humble = poor. Parallel, which the verse shows.

Proud = rich. Parallel as well, but this time the verse leaves out the rich part, so you can think and come to the revelation yourself to show that those sharing the plunder are rich and hence proud!

This verse is showing that often times, to learn humility means to live as the poor because the opposite, having wealth often causes one to be proud through trusting in their wealth instead of God. It's why Jesus in Luke 12: 15-21 narrated in a parable of the rich fool about greed and wealth:

And He said to them, "Watch out! Guard yourselves against every form of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Then He told them a parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced an abundance. 17So he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, since I have nowhere to store my crops?' 18Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and will build bigger ones, and there I will store up all my grain and my goods. Then I will say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry!"'

But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated?'

This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."

It is for this reason that humility and wealth are really hard to balance and partially why it is really hard for the rich to get into heaven because money causes pride and greed! Help us Lord, help us those of us in our society today who are well off, let us not lose your kingdom.

Why humility matters aka God's attitude towards the proud (the opposite of humility)

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished."
Proverbs 16:5 NIV

This means that anyone who is proud, God actually hates them/detests them and because he hates them, he even punishes them!

Fruit/blessings of humility

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5 NIV

The best way to understand this verse is to think of the opposite. The proud person is one who thinks they are "high and mighty" – in other words, such people who think they will conquer the world. Instead what does God do – he gives the world to those who are humble - showing a modest or low estimate of one's own importance.

A connection between humility and revival

"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land."
2 Chronicles 7:14 NLT

This very important verse is showing a few things, starting with humility which are often a pattern for revival:

1. Humility is a choice – people choose to "humble themselves".
2. Humility opens the door – it leads you to trust in God, rather than your own achievements or strength (which pride brings) and to instead pray to God.
3. Humility therefore leads one to pray which brings one into contact with God – seeking his face.
4. Seeking God's face, God who is holy causes one to repent of their sins, turning from their wicked ways.
5. Once we do our part, humble ourselves, praying, seeking God and repenting, then God does his part:
 - a. He hears our prayers
 - b. He then answers them – with what we ask for, forgiveness for our sins.
 - c. He then restores our land – bringing revival, which is both spiritual and physical.

These verses also show us who does what.

If we humans do our part – the humbling ourselves, the praying, the seeking, the repentance; God will do his part – the forgiveness, the restoration.

Jesus' ultimate example to model humility for us

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Though he was God

*he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.*

Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;

*he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.*

When he appeared in human form

*he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

Philippians 2: 5-8 (NLT).

This example from Jesus shows what being humble means in practice: You can willingly give up your power, prestige, glory and then you can take up the lowest form of life – being a slave.

maybe if you work in hospitality say as a waitress or chef or in care professions like nursing can help you understand what it means to be a slave and perhaps to learn humility as the Lord got me to learn when he got me to work in a charity shop as a volunteer.

Being a slave sometimes involves doing the messy stuff – maybe cleaning the toilet, removing stinky shoes, taking out the garbage, cleaning the house after the children run all over the floor with muddy shoes.

It will often involve working for the boss even when you are tired – staying up late, bringing him food, waiting on them.

It will involve keeping your mouth shut – even when you are angry or having to speak – even when you don't feel like it.

As you can see in being a slave – you think of yourself less and you are literally SERVING OTHERS.

A slave as you can see further is often submissive, self-effacing, unassertive as the definition of humility shows and this is what Jesus became, even if he had it all, even if he had all the power. This therefore gives us an example of how to be humble ourselves and it's why when Jesus was going to die – he said nothing, he was submissive, trusting in God to give him justice, not justifying himself as worthwhile. It's why the bible said about him:

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. Isaiah 53: 7 (NIV).

It is funny if you think of it, the son of God, who created humans, allowing himself to be killed. It is probably like that child hood story in Gulliver's travels where Gulliver is washed ashore after a shipwreck and finds himself a prisoner of a race of tiny people, less than 6 inches (15 cm) tall. These people have pinned him to the ground with their little ropes. Ha ha!

Or maybe humility is like the example of Akeem in "Coming to America" – the royal heir to the throne of Zamunda but he took a menial job in a fast-food restaurant, cleaning the floor, but with so much joy in his low work.

That should help you understand the picture of humility – great strength under control, under submission.

A revival case study in humility: Girolamo Savonarola (reformation forerunner).

Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) led a powerful revival in Florence, Italy (1481). He began his career as a preacher in 1452, the same year Martin Luther was born. While unknown to many people today, Savonarola was a significant forerunner of the Protestant Reformation that later swept Europe and the world and Luther himself considered him the initial flame leading to the reformation.

He was a man of deep piety and protracted prayers, a powerful pulpiteer with a voice like thunder so that people shook with conviction when they heard his sermons. Savonarola preached that all believers made up the true church, the body of Christ. He denounced clerical corruption, despotic rule, and the exploitation of the poor.

At the age of twenty-three, Savonarola submitted himself to a Dominican priory because St. Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican, but he didn't ask to become a friar. He wanted to be a drudge, to do the lowest forms of servant work in the convent. He spent much of his time fasting, praying, and leading a quiet life. Only later in life did he become a friar. Records tell us that when Savonarola was engaged in prayer, he frequently fell into trances and lost all touch with the world about him. On Christmas Eve, 1446, while seated in the pulpit, he remained unmoved for five hours; the people waited patiently all during this time, for they knew he was receiving a message from God. As he sat in the pulpit, his face

appeared illuminated to all the church. There seemed to be a beam of light from his eyes, as though from heaven itself.

The revival in Florence became so great that even the hoodlums gave up singing their filthy songs and began singing hymns. The children went from house to house gathering all types of items people had acquired from carnivals, sinful entertainment, and other kinds of wickedness, bringing them to the piazza to be burned. The sinful articles that were burned formed an octangular pyramid some 60 feet tall and 240 feet in circumference at the base.ⁱⁱ

What many don't realize is that he preached against the backdrop of tremendous wealth and social progress and culture - the renaissance and this renaissance had its centre in Florence a province or city of Italy, the home of Savonarola. The Italian Renaissance basically made Italy the #1 country of its time in painting, architecture, sculpture, literature, music, philosophy, science, technology, and exploration. Italy became the recognized European leader in all these areas by the late 15th century.

For example:

- Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) also from Italy was born and lived in the same general time as Savonarola.
- Many of the famous artists of the day such as Da Vinci (1452-1519) who painted the *Mona Lisa* and Michelangelo (1475-1564) who sculpted *David* as well as painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome were Renaissance artists.
- The renaissance is the time when the printing press was invented by Gutenberg and precursor versions of many familiar modern instruments (including the violin, guitar, lute and keyboard instruments) developed into new forms during the Renaissance.

While others of the day were seeking fortunes and enjoying the culture of the day, this man a friar, a monk and was preaching against the Pope and the other rulers of the day and laying his life on the line for Christ - rolling in the mud so to speak instead of pursuing the things of the day.

Scoffers dismissed him as an over-excited zealot and "preacher of the desperate" and sneered at his growing band of followers as Piagnoni—"Weepers" or "Wailers"ⁱⁱⁱ

Through his emphasis on personal repentance, he singlehandedly caused a religious revival in the city of Florence, with men and women voluntarily disposing of frivolous clothing and indecent entertainment. He was unafraid to confront the rich and powerful about their immoral lifestyles, from local leaders to Church leaders all the way up to the pope himself. It was that final step—his public correction of Pope Alexander VI—that ultimately led to his execution.^{iv}

Even in his writing, he called humility the "foundation of virtues" when he described how Jesus, the creator knelt and washed the feet of the created, his disciples – not using angels but his holy hands, even washing the feet of Judas his traitor.^v

*God, wishing to show this love for humanity, deigned to come to be incarnated, to take up flesh, and to enlighten us and to perform miracles, and ultimately, He came for the sake of humanity. And further, as His Passion drew near, He summoned His disciples: Cum venisset in mundum et dilexisset suos, [. . .] in finem dilexit eos [Ioh. 13:1], that is, He did not abandon them at the end. Although He departed, He showed them a sign of great devotion, as if to say, "See, man, how much care I have for you and how much love I bear you!" He arose from the supper and laid aside His vestments; He did not call the angels, nor the servants; rather, with His holy hands He girded Himself and set about washing the feet of His disciples [Ioh. 13:4 ff.]. **See how much love! The Creator kneels before the creature: the Creator humbles himself to the creature and shows His devotion**—He wanted to show His love and He stopped at nothing to show us His love—He began to wash the feet of His disciples with such great humanity! Come here, proud man, you do not want to humble yourself; come, you will see your*

Lord before Judas, before the traitor. And He began to wash his feet, as if saying, "O Judas, you will betray Me, and I call you to penitence; I would like to show mercy even to you."

So, man, take this example of the Savior, Who has shown you humility, which is the foundation of all the virtues. Be humble in this way likewise, and come to this first step. Reaffirm, men, the faith in your hearts that God loves humanity, and have this great confidence in Him, Who will not allow anything bad to happen to you, except for the sake of your salvation. And even if you suffer tribulations, say, "I know that God is good and that He will not abandon me, and, therefore, what He sends me is for the sake of my salvation, for His love is so great that He has become incarnate and washed the feet of His disciples."

How was he rewarded? He was hanged and burned at the young age of 45 on 23 May 1498.

Conclusion and applying humility for revival in our generation

Once you understand humility as the bible sees it and from the examples, you can see how it becomes critical for revival because:

1. Humility causes you to fear God – to respect him.
2. When you respect someone, you want to know about them. This causes you to seek him – usually by reading the bible.
3. When you read the bible and see God's righteousness, you then realize you are a sinner.
4. Once you realize you are a sinner, you realize, even your best achievements, your wealth etc compared to God are nothing but filth, rags, rubbish, dung.
5. It is when you realize that next to the Holy One you are nothing, that you are no longer afraid, embarrassed or care to roll in the mud, to plead, to cry, to repent, to pray with passion for its only he who can save you. He is after all a king. It's why David danced naked before God!
6. You will also do all you can to humble yourself before the king and this will include fasting and denying yourself the pleasures of life. You will not be afraid to act like a slave – knowing that if Jesus acted like one, and a disciple cannot be greater than a master, so likewise you will not be afraid to act as a slave – even if Jesus calls you a child, a son, an heir. Humility causes you to willingly give up your privileges.
7. This humility "environment" is the one which brings God because remember if we follow the proverb style in the verse: Proverbs 16:5
 - a. *The Lord detests all the proud of heart = he loves the humble at heart.*
 - b. *Be sure of this: they will not go unpunished." = the humble will be honoured/exalted/forgiven.*

If you humble yourself before God, in return, he will use you as a vessel – to stand up against the popular culture of your day, however great and awesome it is and call them to repentance, because the kingdom of God is at hand. At the time God uses you, you might even not be as famous as other preachers just like not many have heard of Savonarola, but God used him as a forerunner to light the flame that lit the path for Martin Luther who became a reformation champion. The humility of revival means you go against the common order of the day and culture! You can't have revival if you conform to the ways of the world.

God always uses humble people so if you want God's favour, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and he will lift you and you will catch the revival of God!

Amen.

Notes/References

ⁱ <https://seedbed.com/what-humility-has-to-do-with-revival/>

ⁱⁱ "The ten greatest revivals ever from Pentecost to the present", Elmer Towns and Douglas Porter, 2000.

ⁱⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Savonarola

^{iv} <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2021/05/22/life-lessons-from-a-servant-of-god-girolamo-savonarola/>

^v <http://traditio-op.org/biblioteca/Savonarola/Selected-Writings-of-Girolamo-Savonarola-Religion-and-Politics-1490%E2%80%931498.pdf>