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## Lowliness

Mt 11:28 & 29 *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.*

Today we begin a new study on the word lowly in the Holy Scriptures. Lowly occurs 6 times and lowliness twice.

The word lowly in the Oxford dictionary means “*humble in feeling, behaviour or condition, modest, unpretending.*”

What do the Scriptures say about this word *lowly*?

1. Lowliness is to have a humble spirit.
2. Our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ was lowly in heart
3. We are to walk with all lowliness
4. In lowliness we are to esteem others better than ourselves

Let us add a little depth to each of our points

### 1, Lowliness is to have a humble spirit.

Prov 16:19 *Better [it is to be] of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

This verse provides a similar meaning to the word *lowly* as the dictionary meaning we looked at, “*humble in feeling, behaviour or condition, modest, unpretending.*” Our verse infers that the humble spirited man is lowly. And the word humble is “showing a modest or low estimate of one’s own importance.” So in this instance the worldly meaning of *lowly* agrees with that established in the Holy Scriptures.

Can you think of any word which has a different meaning in the world compared to the Scriptures?

The words *marriage* and *hell* are two that come to mind, where society is changing the use or meaning of a word.

The word *marriage* in the bible is set apart specifically for a union between a man and a woman, where the two become one flesh. Whereas in the Netherlands this word is being when sodomites enter a civil union. They have set up an act of Parliament to legislate on same sex unions and they call it marriage.

The other word is hell, and there are many others. This word can now refer to a company that makes pizzas. The effect of this change in meaning is clear on the streets of Auckland.

When preaching on heaven and hell one Friday evening, I had a young lad walk past and heard the word hell mentioned, and ask, in what appeared to be all seriousness, was I talking about hell pizza. It appeared, that the only use of this word hell that this lad had heard was in reference to the pizza place. He didn’t stop long, but there was sufficient a window to explain the *hell* as used in the bible. So, when we witness to the young, we need to be aware that just because we live in a Christian country does not mean that everyone knows the gospel message and the meaning of the words associated with that message as taken from the context of Holy Scripture.

Back to our point, on the meaning of lowly. we understand that lowliness is to have a humble spirit.

Let us keep this meaning in mind then, as we cover the other 3 points.

### 2. Our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ was lowly in heart

Mt 11:28 & 29 *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.*

See also Zech 9:9

The Lord Jesus Christ is lowly in heart. In Matt.11: 29 he teaches that he is both meek and lowly, which means he is quiet, gentle and *lowly*. But our study today is on the word lowly, and Jesus is our example of lowliness. He himself taught he was lowly and we see in his ministry and finally on the cross, that he was lowly. It is for that reason what we are encouraged to take his yoke upon us.

Now note, that his lowliness, is in his heart, but the Lord does not say that he was humble, he specifically uses the word lowly.

In contrast the heart of a proud man is an abomination before the Lord (see Prov.16: 5), it is a sin (see Prov. 21: 4). Moab were identified by the Lord (through Jeremiah the prophet) as being *exceedingly* proud (see Jer.48: 29). In this verse Jeremiah links, pride to loftiness, arrogance, and to haughtiness. We know that the Lord Jesus Christ committed no sin (1Jn.3: 5) and therefore he had no pride, but rather he was the opposite, he was lowly. Even though as a child, his parents found him one day in the midst of the doctors, listening and asking them questions (see Lk.2: 43-48). And then later on his life he had the wisdom and knowledge to be able to teach in the synagogue, even though he appeared to those around him to be only a carpenter's son (see Matt.13: 54-55 & Mk.6: 2-3). Yet he was lowly.

What do you find at the Bible colleges today?

You find me that have spent years getting their masters and doctrates...they have laboured much and often have a bucket load of pride. You try and challenge them about their ideas of the text of the bible. They will often defend their position, rather than come to the discussion with a desire to give up their learning for the truth. Are we surprised? No because knowledge puffeth up (1Cor. 8: 1). These men have learnt their knowledge and so it is easier to feel good about what you have done and that you earned the knowledge, whereas with the Lord his knowledge came from above, so it was perhaps easier for him to not boast, but rather be lowly.

But taking the high road in an argument is always the easy way, the way of the flesh, I have done this and I know this, to be true. It is often the way on the street, when you are challenged about your faith. Rather than doing as the Lord did, and listening and asking questions, I find it easier to tell me what I know, where as it is very hard to take the lowly road and follow the example of our Lord and Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

So once again the example of who we should emulate in our behaviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

### 3. We are to walk with all lowliness

Eph 4:1-2 *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

When a person becomes a believer they are to walk with ALL lowliness, and you will note that meekness is again linked to lowliness. Paul in Ephesians is encouraging us to following the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and walk worthy of the vocation we are called IN ALL lowliness. Now, I doubt he means that we are to walk in lowliness sometimes, when we remember to, or when we come to church and are around brethren. But rather I would suggest that Paul is encouraging us to walk in lowliness at work, home with the family, on the street, or any other time. In a similar way that the Lord spoke of Mic.6: 8.

What was part of the reason for God taking the fledgling nation of Israel into the wilderness?

It was to humble them (see Deut.8: 2, 3 & 16). They were the opposite of lowliness...and this was God's chosen nation.

But the same was for Jesus' disciples who wanted to know who would be greatest in the kingdom heaven (see Matt.18: 1) and Jesus replied, *whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven* (see Matt.18: 4). Anyone know how or experienced the humility or lowliness of a child? A child has nothing to boast about...and that is how we are to be before God, as lowly as a little child.

Do you remember what Paul boasted about?

He boasted in the cross (Gal.6: 14).

How are we to practically walk in lowliness before the Lord?

\* Put yourselves down (just as Paul, I am the least of the apostles (see 1Cor.15: 9).

\* Use the 'I' word less - in other words, speak less about what we do and more about what the Lord is doing.

\* Direct any praise that we get to, so he receives the glory.

Let each one of us today ask the Lord for help to walk in all lowliness before Him.

### 4. In lowliness we are to esteem others better than ourselves.

Php 2:3 *[Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

To add to our previous point, Paul encourages us to do things in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than ourselves. In doing so we add something else that we can do to help us walk in lowliness before God. So, as part of biblical lowliness there is esteeming others better than ourselves.

1Thes.5: 13 teaches that we are to esteem very highly in love those which labour among us and are over us in the Lord. Our teachers, elders and those labour in the work. Then we are to esteem very highly in love. So, on the one hand we are to esteem all our brethren (and yes it applies to our brothers in Christ because Php 2: 3 is to the Church and says, *let each esteem other...*

This follows on from our previous teaching on the word edify, where we covered the need for us to speak words that edify our brethren (see Eph. 4: 29). Here is Php 2: 3 we are to act in lowliness of mind and esteem others better than ourselves. Boy that goes against the flesh! We love talking about ourselves, we love listening to ourselves, we love being better than others.

The world is shaped, in part, by the philosophy of, *survival of the fittest* that was established by Herbert Spencer, and later coined by Charles Darwin in his book, *Origin of Species*. When Herbert and Darwin used the phrase *survival of the fittest*, they referred to animals which are most suited to their environment, are those *fitted to survive*. Whereas today the phrase means those who are more highly trained and physically fit, they will survive. Hence the drive for education and physical fitness. From this thinking we have the commonwealth Games, Olympics, Rugby world cup, etc, where every one strives to be better than the other. One of the sports that typify this is boxing, and one of the boxers who rings true to this philosophy was Mohammad Ali...I am the greatest!

So, for the Bible to teach that we are to esteem others more highly than ourselves, is certainly contrary to the world view, and our flesh, and our Spirit wars with the flesh daily.

Do you esteem others more highly than yourself?

Do you esteem those that labour amongst you and are over you in the Lord? Do you esteem them, very highly in love?

In doing so, I am sure we would put down the flesh and our actions would be in lowliness. Now add to this, do nothing in vainglory! So don't glory in yourself falsely, but rather in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.

What better way to walk in humility, but to esteem others.

Can you think of any examples in the Scriptures where someone esteems another more highly than themselves?

What about David when Saul was king and he was trying to kill David. David continued to speak highly of the Saul as he was the Lord's anointed. The people esteemed David more than Saul but David esteemed the King.

What are some examples where you have seen someone esteem another more than themselves that we can use as an illustration and add some practical help in our everyday walk?

What about a headmaster at the school prize giving. At the prize giving he does not, generally, stand up and say, now it's because of my leadership that this school has done so well. But rather he esteems his teachers, and the students. Not falsely, but he esteems them, and he does so in front of their peers. It's a bit like, showing charity, when we say something praise worthy about our brother, and leave the criticism (remember that suggestion in our first teaching on edify), the brother is encouraged.

Does this represent what you do?

Let us all ask the Lord to help us, *in lowliness*, esteem others more highly than ourselves.

Having said what we said, let us say it again.

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