

“Only” Human?

Why we must be humbled, but never discouraged by our frailty.

Psalm 103:8-14

July 12, 2020

Opening ILL: Dirt Bags. In a former church, when teaching on this passage, I passed around a plastic bag full of dirt. I asked everybody, once the bag was passed around, “What’s in the bag?” There were some really creative and encouraging answers. Some said that the bag could contain little flecks of gold. Another said that the bag could contain valuable soil from which great crops could grow. Some of the more practical people in the rooms said, “It’s just dirt.” What they were holding in their hands was just dirt. However, they knew that there was still value in this dirt, and there could be hidden wonder in this dirt. As we will see in our text today. God sees value and beauty in us even when (especially when) we don’t see it in ourselves.

I. Introduction—*What’s the problem?*

A. The need for balance in our anthropology.

1. I need to “tell it like it is” about sin, but I don’t want to leave you feeling worthless.
2. We are sinful. Hopefully nobody would contest that.
3. However, we are special. God loves you. Hopefully nobody would contest that either.

B. The need for balance in our struggle with sin.

1. It is really easy to get discouraged by our constant struggles and our repeated failures.
2. It is really easy to give up the fight because it is so constant and intense.

Quote: "It is true, we ought to be humbled for our defects, and troubled for every failing in obedience; but we should not be discouraged, though multitudes of weaknesses be upon us, and many infirmities compass us about, in every duty we put our hand to: though we have no righteousness of our own; yet of God, Christ is made unto us righteousness; and that righteousness of his is infinitely better than our own; instead of our own, we have his. O blessed be God for Christ's perfect righteousness!" John Flavel

II. God knows that we are only human! Psalm 103:8-14

A. He is incredibly slow to anger (v. 8).

1. We must dispense with this idea that God is always angry at us.
 - a. **ILL:** Historic church tour—“When your dad is angry, who do you run to?”
2. It takes a lot to make Him angry at us.
3. Point: There is a difference between judicial wrath and temporal anger.

B. He is amazingly quick to forgive (v. 9).

1. **ILL:** How long does it take you to get over something that makes you angry? Do you stew over it? God never does.
2. **Jeremiah 3:12** "Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, 'Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD; 'I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious,' declares the LORD; 'I will not be angry forever.'
3. **Micah 7:18** Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

C. He is remarkably tolerant of our frailty (v. 10).

1. God puts up with a lot.
 - a. **Proverbs 25:2** It is the glory of God to conceal a matter...
2. God has not (yet) dealt with any living person as they deserve.
 - a. **Ezra 9:13** After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have requited us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us an escaped remnant as this,

- b. He will if they reject the gospel.
- c. He will never treat them as they deserve if they receive the gospel.

D. He is scandalously extravagant in His love (v. 11).

- 1. How much higher is the heavens than the Earth? What is the point here?
- 2. What is this intended to communicate?
 - a. That His lovingkindness is truly transcendent.

E. He is extremely thorough in His forgiveness (v. 12).

- 1. How far is the east from the west? Infinite.
- 2. Think about this for a moment. He has removed your sins from you completely.

F. He is fatherly in His affection (v. 13).

- 1. What does this mean?
 - a. That His dealings with us are affectionate.
 - b. That His discipline of us is affectionate.
- 2. Why is this so fantastic?
 - a. Because He is the only most supremely offended by our sin.
 - i. **Psalm 51:4** Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.

G. He is fully aware of our weakness (v. 14).

- 1. We can never shock God. He has literally seen it all.
- 2. He is fully aware of our highest intentions.
- 3. He is fully aware of our limitations.

III. It is a great honor to be human!

A. We are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).

- 1. This is beautiful.
- 2. This is true even after the fall.
 - a. **James 3:9** With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

B. We are a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5).

- 1. What does this mean?
- 2. Why does it look a little different in my Bible?
 - a. The translation issue: “angels” or “God”?
 - i. I prefer the NKJV here (or the ESV) to the NASB.
 - ii. We are not a little lower than God, but we ARE a little lower than the angels. This is true both geographically and in terms of glory.

C. We have dominion over the animals (Psalm 8:6).

- 1. We drink the milk of another mammal. Why? Because we can!
- 2. We are the top of the food chain.

D. We share a common form with Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5).

- 1. Remember, Jesus became a human!

IV. Jesus more than compensates!

- A. The Son of God became human so that humans could become the sons of God.

Quote: "It is good to be humbled for sin, but not to be discouraged; for though we are poor creatures, Jesus is a complete Saviour; and we bring more honour to God by believing in his name, and trusting his word of promise, than we could do by a thousand outward works."—**John Newton**, Works 2:10

V. Conclusions—Luke 15:17-32

A. Deal honestly with yourself *vv. 17-18.*

1. Face your sins and your sinfulness. It does you no good to convince yourself that you are good.
2. You really can't understand the gospel until you face your situation honestly.

B. Deal gently with yourself.

1. God is so much quicker to forgive you than you are to forgive yourself.
2. Remind yourselves that you are only human!

C. Praise the Lord for His infinite grace *vv. 19 and ff.*

1. God is the Father that runs to his prodigal children!

D. Rush to be reconciled to this God!

1. Invitation

Quote: "Therefore, though we are to desire a growth in grace, we should, at the same time, acquiesce in his appointment, and not be discouraged or despond, because we feel that conflict which his word informs us will only terminate with our lives." **John Newton**, Works 2:29