

Supplements and Humility

A lot of folks these days take supplements- vitamins, minerals, or oils and extracts from fish, plants, dirt (hey, don't laugh- remember we're made from the stuff!), etc. etc. etc. Though some seem to take such to the extreme with regard to both the number and varieties ingested, no one (at least to my knowledge) does so to the exclusion of actual food. They are, after all, designed and utilized as "supplements." Some of these products are marketed as having the unique ability to help us better *metabolize* and otherwise *enhance* the benefits of other essential nutrients. It is this capacity of supplements that got me to thinking...

Aren't there "supplements" to our faith that help us better *metabolize* it to *enhance* its benefits and capabilities? Absolutely and positively! 2Peter 1:5-6 contains a lifetime supply of them! *Moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and Christian love* ALL help to "metabolize" (digest/process) our faith *inwardly* and "enhance" its beneficial productivity *outwardly*, cf. 2Peter 1:8! Therefore, none of these "supplements" should be discounted as unnecessary, 2Peter 1:9-11. But as helpful they are, this isn't a complete list. There are other supplements that are also beneficial to our faith. One in particular comes to mind...

The Greek word, *tapeinophrosune* (tap·i·nof·ros·oo·nay), is defined as "1 the having a humble opinion of one's self. 2 a deep sense of one's (moral) littleness. 3 modesty, humility, lowliness of mind."¹ It is often translated in the N.T. as "*humility*." The root word (tapinos) basically means "low." Thus, it conveys the idea of having an *humble*, or *low*, opinion of oneself. But this is regarded as "Anathema!" to our current society, which deems *self-esteem* a virtue to be fostered at all costs. Thus, everyone is taught from their youth, and encouraged at every turn, to "stand up for yourself." Think about it: Where has this gotten us? This "me first, foremost, and always" mindset has produced the demanding of supposed "rights" where none actually exist, perceived "disrespect" when none was proffered, and the denying of "responsibility" where it abounds. So, we "*fight and quarrel*," cf. James 4:1-4. But the divine answer to such an attitude and its consequences is clearly set forth, "*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble*," James 4:6.

Isn't there a better way? You bet! But you might not like it, because although a lot of us want to be (at least thought of as) *humble*, no one wants to be *humiliated*. In etymology, the latter derives from the former, but in practice it's usually the other way around! To be truly *humble*, we have to be willing to be *humiliated*. Take **Moses**, for example. God declared him to be "*very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth*," Num.12:3. But that epitaph came at a great price...

- **He was *humiliated by God*, Num.20:2-13.** He had to take Aaron and Eleazar up on Mt. Hor in the sight of all the people (vv.27,29), and strip Aaron of his priestly robes (even after the events of Num.16), put them on Eleazar, and apparently watch his brother die! Additionally, though he *pleaded* with God to allow him to allow him to "*cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan*" (land that he had invested 80 years of his life toward!), but was refused, Deut. 3:23-28; 32:48-52; 34:1-7. And yet, note his *humility*, Deut.32:44-47; 31:26-29. Indeed, "*Since*

¹ Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face..."
Deut.34:10-12.

- **He was humiliated by his family. First, his wife.** Since the covenant with Abraham, all Jewish males were (supposed to be) circumcised on the eighth day of their lives. Though we are not told why Moses had refused to keep this requirement, perhaps it was because he was raised as both an Egyptian and a Hebrew, cf. Ex.2:1-10. But whatever the reason for his disobedience, he had not done as God commanded, cf. Ex.2:16-23. Zipporah, his Midianite wife, saved his life when God was about to kill him for his disobedience. But she did so in what was surely a most *humiliating* way, cf. Ex.4:24-26! **Then, his brother.** The intense *anger* Moses felt in Ex.32:19-20 surely stemmed from the humiliation Aaron had brought upon him, cf. Ex.32:21-24. Or perhaps it came from the humiliation brought through his sister and brother in Num.12:1-2,9-15?
- **He was humiliated by his nation.** Though he had dedicated his life to their salvation from slavery and deliverance to Canaan, his nation constantly rebelled and humiliated Moses. The examples are many, but consider just one from Num.14:1-5,11-21.
- **But** (and perhaps most importantly), **Moses was also willing to humiliate himself, Heb.11:24-26.** He was willing give up being Pharaoh's grandson "*choosing ill-treatment with the people of God.... considering the reproach of Christ greater than the riches of Egypt; for he was looking for the reward.*" Given all that we have seen which followed, this was some *humiliation*!

Now, let's get a couple of things clearly;

- 1) Moses was indeed *humiliated* by God and his wife, but was certainly not guiltless in either example! His own sin(s) brought about the *humiliation*, cf. 1Pet.2:20.
- 2) But at the same time, the *humiliation* from his nation and his siblings was through no fault of his own, cf. Num.16:15; 1Pet.2:18-19,21-24.
- 3) We can be *humiliated* by God (Luke 18:14a), our families (1Pet.3:1-9; Eph.6:1-4), or our nation (physically or spiritually, Prov.14:34; 2Cor.12:21) and learn and learn and practice *humility* by being *brought low*. But, it is far better if we learn to *humble ourselves*, Luke 18:14b; 14:7-11.
- 4) Now, before the "Yeah-but(ers)" get started proclaiming the necessity and value of self-worth and self-esteem, notice carefully one more passage, Matt.5:39. A *slap* is not intended to *injure*, but to *humiliate*. What did Jesus say was the right response to it, and why?
- 5) Moses was indeed a man of great faith, Heb.11:24,27,28. But it was his *humility* that was praised by God *more than any man on the face of the earth*, Num.13:3! It was his *humility* that "supplemented," and *metabolized* and *enhanced* the abilities of his faith to sustain and guide him through all of life's *humiliations*!
- 6) Is your faith properly supplemented with *humility*? Don't wait for God, your family, or your people (physical or spiritual) to bring you *low*- do it yourself and start receiving the benefits now!