

WEEK 1

JUNE 11, 2023

# Digging Deeper

The Accused: Stiff-Necked

## Stiff Necked Fools

By **Bob Marley**

"Stiff Necked Fools" is a song from "Confrontation", a posthumous album by Bob Marley & The Wailers, released in May 1983, two years after Marley's death. The album is composed of unreleased tracks and singles recorded during Marley's lifetime, including the famous track "Buffalo Soldier". Many of the tracks were compiled from demos. The song is about people who are stubborn and refuse to accept simple and true things. The protagonist tells these people to stop being obsessed with material things and to erase their illusions. They say that those who are right teach important things, while those who are foolish will suffer for their lack of wisdom. Listen to the song here: <https://youtu.be/VUtX0ZKlwis>

### Is the Rastafarian/Rasta god "Nah" the same as the Christian God?

Rastafarianism, Rastafari, or Rasta is a religious movement originating in Jamaica in the 1930s. Rastafarianism takes elements of the Bible and combines them with the ideology of Marcus Garvey and the belief that Haile Selassie I, emperor of Ethiopia (1930—1975) was the second advent of the Messiah. Thus, Rastafarians believe that Emperor Selassie was God.

Rasta takes its term for "god," Jah, from the King James Version's translation of Psalm 68:4, which reads, in part, "Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him." The name for God in this verse is a shortened version of the tetragrammaton, YHWH. The tetragrammaton is usually transliterated as "Yahweh" (or "Jehovah" in the KJV) or translated "LORD." In Psalm 68:4, the KJV translators chose to transliterate the word as "JAH" instead. So, the name is certainly a biblical name for God. However, a group's use of a biblical name for God does not guarantee that the group is biblical. Just because Rastas apply a biblical name to their god does not mean that they are worshiping the God of the Bible. Different individuals may be named "George," but that doesn't mean they are all the same person.

The god Rastas refer to as "Jah" is not triune, and he does not provide eternal salvation. Neither did the man they claim to have been the returned Messiah rule the whole earth or bring perfect peace to the world (cp. Isaiah 9:7). The religious practices of Rastafari, while drawn from Jewish and Christian origins, are not what God commands or desires for His people. The Jah of Rastafarianism is most certainly not the God of the Bible in whom Christians put their trust for salvation.

### Lyrics:

[Chorus]

Stiff-necked fools, you  
think you are cool  
To deny me for simplicity



Yes, you have gone for so long  
With your love for vanity now  
Yes, you have got the wrong interpretation  
Mixed up with vain imagination

So take Jah Sun, and Jah Moon  
And Jah Rain, and Jah Stars  
And forever, yes, erase your fantasy, yea-  
yeah!

[Verse 1]

The lips of the righteous teach many  
But fools die for want of wisdom  
The rich man's wealth is in his city  
The righteous' wealth is in his Holy Place

So take Jah Sun, and Jah Moon  
And Jah Rain, and Jah Stars  
And forever, yes, erase your fantasy, yeah!

Destruction of the poor is in their poverty  
Destruction of the soul is vanity, yeah!

[Chorus]

So stiff-necked fools, you think you are  
cool  
To deny me for simplicity, yea-ea-yeah!  
Yes, you have gone - gone for so long  
With your love for vanity now



# Humble Yourself– Like God

By **David Mathis**, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)

*Behold, your king is coming to you . . . humble and mounted on a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)*

God commands us to be humble. “Seek humility” (Zephaniah 2:3). “Put on . . . humility” (Colossians 3:12). “Have . . . a humble mind” (1 Peter 3:8). “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another” (1 Peter 5:5). Jesus’s promise that God will exalt the humble enjoins us to pursue it (Matthew 18:4; 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). And his apostles too say, “Humble yourselves” (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6).

And yet, humility, according to the regular testimony of Scripture, is not something we can just up and do. As we consider the positive examples of those who humbled themselves (from Josiah and Hezekiah to Rehoboam, Ahab, and Manasseh) — as well as the negative examples of those who did not (Pharaoh, Amon, Zedekiah, Belshazzar) — what becomes clear is that humbling first belongs to the hand of God. He initiates the humbling of his creatures. And once he has, the question confronts us: Will you receive it? Will you humble yourself in response to his humbling hand, or will you kick against the goads?

“Humble yourselves,” writes Peter, “under the mighty hand of God” (1 Peter 5:6). First descends his humbling hand. Then the creature has his turn: God is humbling me. Will I embrace it? Will I humble myself?

Given this background, it is stunning to read about Christ in Philippians 2:8 — in perhaps one of the most striking assertions in all the Scriptures: “he humbled himself.” God himself, fully divine and fully human in the person of his Son, humbled himself. This is worth our slow meditation and our endless marveling.

But before we assume too much, let’s ask what humility is in biblical terms. Get that wrong and we might marvel for the wrong reasons. And then, with some biblical bearings in place, let’s see what’s so marvelous about our self-humbling Christ.

## **What Is Humility?**

Fittingly, the first mention of humility in all the Bible comes in the escalating showdown between Egypt’s Pharaoh and Israel’s God, mediated through Moses.

Moses first dared to appear before Pharaoh in Exodus 5, and spoke on Yahweh’s behalf, “Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1). To which Pharaoh replied, “Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh, and moreover, I will not let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2). Mark that. Pharaoh, swollen in pride, has miscalculated his status, as a creature, in relation to the Creator God. Through Moses, God speaks to Egypt’s head and calls for him to obey. And Pharaoh refuses.

Exodus 10:3 then describes this as a call to humility. After seven plagues, on the cusp of an eighth, God speaks to Pharaoh, “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?” The piercing question, in the context of this extended power encounter, gives us this glimpse into the heart of humility: humility acknowledges and obeys the one who is truly Lord. Humility entails a right view of self, as created by and accountable to God, which requires a right view of God, as Creator and authoritative in relation to his creatures. Humility is not, then, preoccupied with self, and one’s own lowliness, but first mindful of and conscious of God, and his highness, and then of self in respect to him.

## **Is God Humble?**

Put another way, humility embraces the reality that I am not God. Pride led to humanity’s fall when Adam and Eve desired to “be like God” (Genesis 3:5) contrary to his command. Humility would have obeyed his command — which is what we will see below in Christ.

Humility, then, is a creaturely virtue. It is a posture of soul and body and life that acknowledges and embraces the godness of God and the humanness of self. Which means that “Is God humble?” is a tricky question. The answer is no, but not because God is the opposite of what we would consider humble. He is not arrogant or prideful. Rather, humility is a creaturely virtue, and he is God. The essence of humility, we might say with John Piper, is “to feel and think and say and act in a way that shows I am not God.”

Which contributes to what makes us stand in awe as we read that the God-man, Jesus Christ, “humbled himself.”

## **Christ Humbled Himself**



Let's marvel, then, at this remarkable word from the apostle Paul — that Christ “humbled himself” (Philippians 2:8). Note first, confirming our definition above of humility as a creaturely virtue, that the eternal Son first became man (verse 7), then humbled himself (verse 8). The verb Paul uses to capture the action of the incarnation is not humbled but emptied:

[Being] in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:6–7)

The movement from heaven to earth, so to speak, is an “emptying.” The divine Son emptied himself not of divinity, as if that were possible, but of the privilege of not being human, not being a creature, not suffering the bounds and limitations of our finitude and the pains and afflictions of our fallen world. He could have grasped the divine privilege of not being subjected to the rules and realities of the creation, but instead he emptied himself by taking our humanity. His was an emptying not by subtraction (of divinity) but by addition (of humanity): “taking.”

### **By Becoming Obedient**

So, first, he became man. Then, as man, came the creaturely virtue: “he humbled himself.” Paul confirms what we learned about humility in the negative example of Pharaoh in Exodus 10:

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8)

How did Jesus “humble himself”? By becoming obedient. To humble oneself is to acknowledge God as Lord and to obey as servant. In order to do so, then, the Son had to take “the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7).

It is a mark of the fullness of his humanity, and identification with us, that he didn't come on special terms, to be spared the frustrations of our limits and the pains of our world. Rather, he was all in: fully human in body, mind, heart, will, and surroundings. Fully human in our finitude and common frustrations. Fully human in our vulnerability to the worst a sinful world can work. Nor was he, at bottom, spared the very essence of being human: being accountable to God.

“Although he was a son,” Hebrews 5:8–9 celebrates, “he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” We, as creatures, must obey our Creator — and he, as our brother, did the same.

### **To the Point of Death**

But his self-humbling does not stop at obedience. The apostle adds, “to the point of death.” Christ's obedience was an all-the-way obedience. A true obedience. He did not obey for a time, as long as it was comfortable, and then try another path. No, he obeyed to the point of death.

Real obedience endures in obedience. Christ did not begin in obedience and then surrender to disobedience once the greatest of threats loomed. He obeyed his parents (Luke 2:51), and obeyed his Father, in childhood, in adolescence, in adulthood, in Nazareth and Galilee, and all the way to Jerusalem. Genuine obedience sees the word of God all the way through in our lives — both right away and for the long haul.

Humility not only obeys God as Lord, but continues to obey even as obedience mounts its increasing costs. It doesn't say, “I will obey for a time, until I've had enough, and then I'll do it my way.” It says, “Your way, all the way, to the end, God.” It begins in Galilee, sets its face like flint to Jerusalem, and in the garden, at the point of no return — even through sweat drops like blood — it trusts the Father, stays the course, and rises to meet its foes.

One more phrase then puts the exclamation point on Jesus's humility: “even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). Of all ends, his was the cruelest: the Roman cross, emblem of suffering and shame. It's one thing to die; another to suffer torture; another still to be utterly shamed for the public eye as you are tortured to death.

And this obedience — this acknowledging and obeying his Father's word and will to the point of death, even death on a cross — is how Paul expands that most remarkable claim “he humbled himself.”

### **Humbled with Him**

God indeed does command our humility. His hand and plan conspire to humble us, whether through pandemics or through the consequences of personal sins. And there in our humbling, whether our own sin played a part in it or not, he invites us to humble ourselves — and in no small measure by learning from the self-humbling of Christ.



The humility of Christ shows us that true humility is not the denigrating of humanity, but God's image shining in its fullness. To humble oneself is not to be less than human. Rather, it is pride that is the cancer, pride that corrodes our true dignity. To humble ourselves is to come ever closer, step by step, to the bliss and full flourishing for which we were made.

The humility of Christ also clarifies that not all our humblings are owing to our own sin. Christ had none, yet humbled himself. Sometimes repentance is the first step in self-humbling; other times it is not. Our self-humblings may often come in response to the exposure of our sin, but even Christ, sinless as he was, heeded the Father's call to humble himself.

The humility of Christ also means God's command is not to something he himself has not experienced. As lonely as we may feel in our most humbling moments, we are not there alone. Christ has been there, and is there with us, fulfilling his pledge to be with you always (Matthew 28:20), and all the more tangibly when it's hardest. He humbled himself, and draws near in your humbling, to release you to receive it, welcome it, repent, declare his Father righteous, learn from it, and chart a new course with his guidance and presence.

## He Will Lift You Up

The humility of Christ, in his life and death and resurrection, also testifies to one of God's clearest and most memorable promises in all the Scriptures: he humbles the proud, and exalts the humble. So it was with Christ. He humbled himself, and "God has highly exalted him" (Philippians 2:9) — literally, "super-exalted" (Greek *hyperypsōsen*). And so too will our God, without exception, exalt those who are his in Christ.

No matter how deep your valley, no matter how long it feels like you've been left to rot in your humbling, no matter how alone you've felt, he will raise you. In Christ, you will be super-exalted, in time. God's favor for the humble will shine out. His rescuing grace will arrive. He will not leave his humbled unexalted.

σκληροτράχηλος σκληροτράχηλος, -ου, ὁ *sklērotrachēlos* stiff-necked; stubborn

LSJ stiff-necked

DBL Greek stubborn

TLNT hard-heartedness; hard, dry, stiff, inflexible, rigid; hardness; stiff-necked; to harden

TDNTA

LXLXLEX stiff-necked

LALS stiff-necked; קָשָׁה; top of the head, neck; קָשָׁה, hard, difficult, strict, impudent; 1 קָשָׁה; be or...

LXGNTLEX stiff-necked; stubborn

CDWGTB hard-naped; obstinate; stiffnecked

References	Verse
Exodus 33:3	"Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a <b>stiff-necked people</b> ."
Exodus 33:5	For the Lord had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a <b>stiff-necked people</b> ; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'"
Exodus 34:9	And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a <b>stiff-necked people</b> , and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."
Deuteronomy 9:6	"Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a <b>stubborn people</b> ."
Deuteronomy 9:13	"Furthermore, the Lord said to me, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a <b>stubborn people</b> ."
Proverbs 29:1	He who is often reproved, yet <b>stiffens his neck</b> , will suddenly be broken beyond healing.
Acts 7:51	"You <b>stiff-necked people</b> , uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you."