

Faith (Part 7)

Pride and Humility

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Please turn to Proverbs 16. We find an interesting comment here from God through Solomon in regard to the subject we were on last week, and which we are going to be continuing today

Proverbs 16:16-19 How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul. Pride goes before [or precedes] destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

In addition to that I want you to turn to the book of Psalms. Here God writes:

Psalms 101:5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; the one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.

There are two very strong and clear warnings from God in regard to pride. It is something that very definitely has to come out—be eradicated, be removed—from our character. We are going to see more about why as we proceed through this sermon. I think that we clearly established last week that there are many manifestations to pride, but it almost always comes about in a person because of perverted comparison—comparison that will elevate one above another, make one feel better than another, or more deserving than others. Also in last week's sermon we had a couple of quotes from noteworthy people stating that pride may very well be the father of other sins, and indeed we saw a comment from God that said that pride plows the way, or pride lights the way, and other sins are produced.

The natural corollary of pride is prejudice. Remember the comparison idea. You might remember a popular novel of a number of years ago (maybe I will be dating myself in saying this) written by Jane Austen and entitled *Pride and Open-mindedness*. No, that is not what the title is. It is titled *Pride and Prejudice*. Prejudice falls on the heels of pride because of this perverted judgment component that is a part of it.

Pride is the father of numerous emotional disorders because it brings people into conflict either openly or internally. Whenever it is held within, very likely the outbreak is going to be in some sort of emotional disorder. We call the people unbalanced. We might even call them mentally ill, but churning away in the inside of this person is a perverted comparison. There is pride there that brings them into conflict with someone and they never get that conflict resolved. Most frequently the conflict is within the home, usually with someone who is very close. Sometimes it can be on the job. But good personal relationships are almost impossible where pride and its firstborn, prejudice, exist.

Perhaps another one of the more damaging children of pride is intellectual arrogance, because it produces an inability to learn either from one's own experiences or those of others, and an

inability to be criticized. The greater ones pride the more dangerous the consequences to the relationship. You can see this at work within a marriage. You can see it at work within politics. It is one of the major things that leads to war between couples, in companies, or between nations.

It is interesting that I recently read a short excerpt—actually it was a critique—of a book that was written about the cause of the First World War. It was the author's contention that what led to the First World War was pride, the pride amongst the leaders of the nations that led them to be backed into corners where they felt that they could not back down without loss of face, and the only resolution was to go to war—an interesting analysis of that.

It is so interesting that America offers few rewards for modesty and moderation. The big rewards in the United States of America go to the arrogant, and we have produced a competitive and violent society that is sliding in right on the tails of this proud attitude. I happened to think as I was preparing this sermon when this thought came to mind that maybe there is no better place that this is illustrated than in entertainment, maybe in the movies.

When I was a boy the heroes in the movies were almost always valiant men or women. Think of men in this case. They also tended to be shown to be modest. They were usually portrayed by the actor with an understated strength by someone like Jimmy Stewart, Gary Cooper. Can you ever remember them playing somebody arrogant? How about Spencer Tracy? How about Allan Ladd? You know *Shane* comes to mind. Today it is the arrogant Rambo, or RoboCop, reflecting the attitude that has changed from the '30s and '40s, and even up into the '50s, to the '90s. Now the icons of the entertainment world are the arrogant, the proud, the aggressive, the abusers.

We were just beginning, in the previous sermon, to see that pride has its roots in a sense—or a feeling—of strength or wealth or prosperity or accomplishment. Sometimes these things are imagined and sometimes they are real. But whether they are imagined or real, a confidence in self begins to arise that is misplaced if it produces a "better than" feeling—the perverted comparison.

There is nothing wrong with having confidence in your ability to perform something. However, your ability to do something does not make you or me intrinsically better than the other person. All you or I have done is develop the skill that you already had a latent ability to perform. It does not make us better in the eyes of God at all. Now skill is good. Skill is, we might go so far as to say, great. We should strive for it, but always with the understanding that skill does not equate with "intrinsically better than." There the comparison is becoming perverted.

Let us go back to that scripture that we left off in last week's sermon.

I saiah 2:6 For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways; they are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners.

Now watch all of the material here:

I saiah 2:7-11, 17 Their land is also full of silver and gold [affluence, wealth, a sense of power, a sense of accomplishment], and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots. Their land is also full of idols;

they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. [My] people bow down, and each man humbles himself; therefore do not forgive them. [He tells them to] Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. . . . The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

When I told you toward the end of that sermon that everywhere I could find in the Bible it showed the same principle: that pride has its roots in a feeling of wealth or accomplishment which is then used to compare. Just tie this to Lucifer—the things that we read about him in the book of Ezekiel, how that pride arose within him because of his beauty. See, he had something there that he could brag about that made him feel good. But vanity developing into an outright pride began to get to him. He then felt better than the other angels and eventually he became equated with God, and eventually he became greater than God, in his own eyes—the perverted comparison thing.

It does not have to be intelligence or beauty or power like it was with Lucifer. It could be things like money, position, social position, natural ability, social status, knowledge, strength, hair, clothing, a house, furniture, automobile—and as I said the list could be virtually endless. I mentioned to you that in the New Testament, the Greek is *huperephania*, and it means "to show oneself above." It does not mean that it is one who others look up to, but one who stands on his own self-created pedestal.

Psychologists tell us that pride is actually a mark of inner inferiority and uncertainty, and that such people compensate by over-emphasizing and flaunting the qualities they think they possess that will make others think well of them. This feeling of wealth is highly relative because each person is capable of setting his own standards of comparison regardless of the real accomplishments.

I referred you to the sluggard who is wiser in his own eyes—who can render more answers—than seven wise men can. The sluggard, even though he is virtually devoid of anything that anybody can see that is worth bragging about, has created his own set of standards. He thinks he already knows the answers. He has a feeling of wealth, a feeling of prosperity, a feeling of power or security in whatever standard it is that he in his own conceptions has set. He is so sure that he knows the answers he is undeterred by facts and he continues then in his ignorance. He is self-sufficient.

Proverbs 18:10-12 The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. [Now look to where the righteous feel their strength, their wealth, their power, their accomplishments lie. They run to the name of the Lord.] The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own esteem. Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility.

In this illustration the person of wealth takes confidence in—he trusts in, he relies upon—whatever it is he thinks is his strength. The *New International Version* has for that series of verses:

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall. Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before [or precedes] honor [the real honor].

Men may give the proud man honor, but real honor is preceded by humility, not by pride. Let us turn back to the book of Daniel, and we are going to look at a man who was really proud. God was dealing with this man. But in thinking about this man, I think that we have to understand—and I think that you will all agree—that he was a man of very great accomplishment. He was a man of power. He was a man of wealth. He was a man undoubtedly of a great deal of intelligence. He was a fine administrator, a military man, a fine leader among men. And yet God could see what he really was. God could see that before any of this natural ability that this person had could really be used in a right way, something had to be done with him. The man that we are talking about is Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.

Daniel was speaking in God's behalf to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4:28-29 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon.

Do you know what happened in the intervening time? God was giving him space to repent. You might connect to this Ecclesiastes 8:11, where it says "because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

After Daniel, speaking in behalf of God, told Nebuchadnezzar what he needed to do to repent of his iniquity, lightning did not come down out of the sky. The earth did not open up. The river through Babylon did not empty all of its water into the city of Babylon and flood it. Nebuchadnezzar's wealth was not wiped away. He did not lose his power. His intelligence was still there. He could still think. He still had all his power, nothing happened; therefore God was only fooling. Ha!

Daniel 4:30-31 The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!"

There it went. There is a legend that is at least partly affirmed by the Bible of a thing called *boanthropy*, in which a man takes on bovine characteristics. Nebuchadnezzar was turned into what we might say was a big, old cow, though still a man, because he drank the dew of heaven and he ate the grass of the earth and his hair undoubtedly grew and he became looked upon in the city as a wild man—deranged, lost his mind.

Daniel 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor [this is seven years later] the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to abase.

Nebuchadnezzar repented. But you can see that God does deal with it and there is a very good reason why he has to deal with it. We are going to spend time reaching those answers as to why it is important that pride be gotten rid of.

Let us go back to I Corinthians 4, where the apostle Paul makes a very significant statement that we really need to take to heart because he is speaking to a church that had a lot of people that had a lot of spiritual gifts from God. They had intelligence. They had faith. You can read the gifts that were given to this church back in I Corinthians 12. But it was also a very badly divided congregation. It was divided because of pride—spiritual pride, pride in their gifts. They had a haughty spirit.

I Corinthians 4:6-8 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another? [Now look at this next question] And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? [So Paul says sarcastically,] You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

Why is pride so bad spiritually? Because the Bible shows very clearly that it stands between us and a good relationship with God. Because it stands between us and the source of true spirituality. Because it stands between us and the receiving of God's gifts. Because it is proclaiming its self-sufficiency. Its strength is in that. Its confidence, its reliance, its high wall, its tower, as we might say in more figurative language, is standing between the person and God.

In Isaiah 66 is a very significant statement in regard to this subject. God says,

Isaiah 66:1 Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?

God says, you want to impress Me? You want to impress Me by building Me a wonderful temple which you can point to and say, "Look what we've done for God. Look how much we love our God. Look at all those jewels that we donated. Look how much we sacrificed." God says,

Isaiah 66:2 For all those things My hand has made. . .

God makes the diamonds. God makes the marble. God makes the granite. God makes the trees grow. God designed the beauty in those trees. God made the wood to shine and give its warmth and sense of awe that we think that we have brought to it. What is it that we have that we did not receive?

Isaiah 66:2 For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the Lord. But on this one will I look; . . .

Do you want to impress God? Do you want to get His attention? Do you want Him to turn His face toward you? Do you want His face to shine on you? Do you want Him to smile at you? Do you want Him to love you, to respond to you, to hear your prayers?

Isaiah 66:2. . . On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

If you want to impress God, it is humility that impresses Him. Because pride gets between us and God and without realizing it, we actually shut Him out of our lives.

The Bible very clearly shows that our spiritual well-being is dependent upon acknowledging, with our lives, our reliance upon the revealed will of God—His Word. Pride results from arrogating to oneself something for which one is indebted and would not even have except for God's benevolence. Who gave Lucifer his beauty? Who gave Lucifer his intelligence? Who gave Lucifer his position of power from which to operate? Pride perverted Lucifer's thinking to where he clearly rejected his dependence and he elevated himself above God.

Now what do you have that you did not receive? Think about that. What do you have that you did not receive? Did you create yourself? Did you create the great goal in life to be in the Kingdom of God, to be very God? Did you reveal God to yourself? Did you manipulate somehow the forgiveness of sin? Did you die on the stake for the forgiveness of your sins? How about the gift of the Holy Spirit? Did that come to you from your own workings? Did you lead yourself to repentance? Who gave you the power to believe in the true God and in His Son Jesus Christ?

It is interesting to reflect back on Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Lucifer comes along and he says to them, "you will be as God." Do you know what entered into Adam and Eve? The pride of life. And the result? They rejected the revelation of God. They rejected His Word and they sinned. Pride subtly elevates a man to the same level as God and results in him rejecting the very gifts God would give him for his salvation. A perverted comparison.

So the man, then, you and me (hopefully not as much as it used to be), consciously or subconsciously is saying that he already knows better, or has the power and ability within himself by nature, thereby subtly turning salvation into something God owes. It becomes earned. Do you realize that this was the Pharisees problem? It was. We will get to that a little bit later.

I Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Think of this in the light of what I have just said. Did you create yourself? Did you create the goal in life? God's Word refutes that, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard." God's own testimony through the apostle Paul is that what we are talking about here is impossible apart from what God gives, because the human spirit is what? It is confined. It is constrained by its "humanity" to the things that come through the senses: the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, the sense of touch.

I Corinthians 2:10-11, 14 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so [in like manner] no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. . . .But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, [Did you read that? Did you understand it?] for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually

[through God's Holy Spirit] discerned.

So God calls. That is a free, unmerited act on His part. God reveals Himself and He reveals the true Christ, and separates Him away from all of the false Christs that this world has. Otherwise we would never ever find them in the midst of all the confusion that Satan has spread. We cannot have faith in something that has never been revealed to us. We cannot have faith in someone who has never been revealed to us.

Humanly we have a capacity for spiritual faith. I think that is easily attested to because all over the world, amongst all people, there is a hunger to worship something perceived as being greater than the self. But this same book of Corinthians in chapter 8 says that there is a demon behind all of these idols. The spiritual thing that is being worshipped by the spirit in man is a demon, not the true God. The true God has to be revealed. It has to be given.

The corollary is that once God reveals the faith by which we believe the revelation has been a gift of His, we would never have that faith unless He gave it to us. Unless we are led by His Spirit there would be no saving faith. God leads us to repentance. Again it is His Spirit that convicts us of sin, judgment, and His righteousness. He then gives us His Spirit as a gift, impregnating us to eternal life, and the production of the fruit of His Spirit.

He tells us that our righteousness is in reality Christ. Faith is a gift. Eternal life is a gift, and a whole slew of other qualities are likewise gifts to enable us to serve the church. He tells us that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by His Spirit and that the fruits produced in our lives are from the Spirit that He gives (Romans 5:5).

Indeed, what do we have that was not given? None of us have any of the spiritual qualities capable of being generated by means of the spirit in man, is holy enough, pure enough, strong enough, humble enough. If they were, then who needs God? Salvation would be able to be earned.

Isaiah 10 is an interesting illustration of the outworking of this principle whereby in this case a nation accomplishes a work for God and then credits themselves for having accomplished it.

Isaiah 10:5-15 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations. For he says, [Now listen to the haughtiness beginning to rise up] 'Are not my princes altogether kings? [My princes are like kings compared to others.] Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arphad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? [I am going to conquer all those places.] As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?' Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; also I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasuries; so

I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth; and there was no one who moved his wing, nor opened his mouth with even a peep." Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it?

What do we have that we did not receive? If God chooses to use us—if God chooses out of His mercy to give us salvation—how could we possibly say that any part of this is self-generated and take pride in that? If we begin to take pride in it there is going to be a wall between us and God, because pride is iniquity and sin separates from God.

I do not think we have to go any further but it is a vivid example of the position we find ourselves in as a result of God's calling to use us in His service in some way. Now why is pride so bad spiritually? Because our recognition of our dependence upon God for what we are and what we know spiritually is essential to the production of humility. Humility is essential because it leads to a right, wholesome, obedient relationship with God. What we see in these verses here is pride resulting from Assyria arrogating to itself something for which they were indebted. If God had not decided to use them they would have never done what they did.

What did it do? What did this pride rising up in them do? Well the same thing that it did to Lucifer. It began to lift them to the same level as God and led them to rejecting God's part in all of this. They did it themselves and so for their own good in order that they might have a right relationship with God, He is going to have to bring them down. And He will.

Pride then prevents growth because all right and true spiritual growth is an outgrowth of the relationship with God. When a person is sure that he knows everything about a subject, he is not in the frame of mind necessary to learn more and if one is blind to his defect, he has little or no chance of ever correcting it.

Proverbs 26:12 says that there is more hope for a fool than for a man wise in his own conceit. Do you know why? Because a fool may stumble on knowledge that will help him and he may use it. But the arrogant, the conceited, already thinks he knows. He is self-sufficient. That is why it said in Psalm 10, (which we spent a good deal of time in last week) that God is in none of his thoughts. God has forgotten. God hides His face. He will never see it.

Let us go to Revelation 18, and we are going to look at some characteristics God shows us of godless Babylon.

Revelation 18:7 In the measure that she glorified herself [exalted herself] and lived in luxury [a sense of wealth], in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen [pride], and am no widow, and will see no sorrow.'

Do you see how secure she felt? How God is illustrating this entire system feels and what it is that is cutting them off from God? Self-sufficiency. Let us go back to the book of Ezekiel. (Several sermons ago Sodom was the one that was the subject or the basis for a couple of sermons.) Notice the way God describes Sodom. Here He likens Samaria, Jerusalem and Sodom as being sisters.

Ezekiel 16:49 Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food [prosperity, wealth, a sense of security, no need to be

dependent. "I have all of this wealth, all of this power. I am safe inside of this wealth, my little cocoon, my little bubble."], and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

I think that we can safely say that God pictures Sodom as proud. And what led to the utter destruction of this city in a way that no other city has ever been destroyed on the face of the earth was arrogance, being over-fed, a false sense of security, spiritual apathy, and disdain, which brings us around to what we might call the daughter of Sodom—Lot's wife—lingering, dragging her heels all along the way. Do you know why she looked back? She had no faith in what the angels said. Who has need of God? She felt secure within herself. Her pride turned her into a pillar of salt because she could not get faith from God.

We need humility so badly. Perhaps it is almost beyond our sense of appreciation to realize how much we need it. This includes myself. I am not cutting myself out of this. It means so much to God that we have a right perspective of ourselves in relation to Him because it is what begins to establish the right perspective of other people and of things and of life itself. All the right values and standards begin to spin off from this and it is so badly needed that God will go to what we might think of as being extreme ends to make sure that we feel our dependence upon Him, and it is humbling. He will sweep away our money. He will take away our jobs. He will take away our health. He will take away our possessions. He will do anything necessary in order to make us see our need—that every good gift flows from Him.

Just to give you an example of how important this is, turn with me to II Corinthians 12.

II Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations. . .

Was there ever a man given so many gifts as the apostle Paul? I do not know. But judging from how much God wrote through that man, how much God used that man's mind, used that man's intellect, used that man's training, used that man's experience, used that man's yieldedness to Him, used that man's willingness to work and to spend himself on behalf of God and the church, it might have been very easy for him to have been puffed up. He even said himself that nobody worked any harder than he did. He said "I labored more than they all."

But we understand because of what we see in other parts of the book about him that he was not bragging. And that is what I said. It is not wrong to take the right kind of pride and to have truth in terms of what we really have done. There is nothing wrong with a developed skill and there is nothing wrong with confidence in being able to do those things. If we do not have any confidence at all, will we ever offer ourselves in service to others? No, we will not. There must also be a rightful recognition of where all that power, strength, and everything flows from. It flows from the gifts. It flows from what God has given.

II Corinthians 12:7-10. . . a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore [look at this approach] I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions,

in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God mercifully allowed Paul a problem to keep him ever mindful of his dependence. The truly humble are knowledgeable of their dependence and they cry out to God continually for help. Let us get this straight. There is not just a feeling of weakness, because everybody experiences weakness—the converted and the unconverted. The people with pride experience a feeling of weakness too, and they compensate by flaunting what they think that others will accept and bring praise to them. It is a true recognition of their need for what God only can supply: His Holy Spirit, His love, His faith, the forgiveness of sin, we could go on and on. As long as a man continues to depend on himself, this world will continue as it is. Nothing will change. It is said in the beginning in Genesis 3 so simply. Adam and Eve told God, "We don't need you," without actually saying the words.

Let us connect this back to where we began on the subject of faith. In Habakkuk 2 is the writing of Habakkuk that the apostle Paul quoted in Hebrews 10, "Now the just shall live by faith."

Habakkuk 2:4 Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but [here is the contrast] the just shall live by his faith.

Is that not saying in reverse that the proud are going to die? But the just are going to live by faith. Indeed it is showing that the just are humble. There is a contrast unstated, but it is nonetheless there, between the just person and the proud person. The just person is submitting to God by faith.

Habakkuk 2:5 Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man [not the just one], and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples.

The way that this is written is indicating that the proud cannot live by faith; that a proud person will instead live by his desires rather than in faith humbly submitting to God. His desire is not to submit to God. That is the implication from those two verses. Why? Because the spiritual qualities able to be generated by the spirit in man is essentially confined to the things of a man. It has to do with the things of sight, sound, touch, hearing, and smelling, and demons as I mentioned before. It is earthy. It has fleshly conceptions that never quite get the right concept. Man with all of his intelligence never quite puts the Word of God together correctly. He always misses it. The miss may be as good as a mile. The relationship with God never quite has a right basis. The proud meet with God more or less as equals and that is not a right basis.

Consider this. Paul said in Romans 7 that "in his flesh dwelt no good thing." How can godly faith be generated out of something in which there is no good thing? How can godly righteousness be generated out of something in which there is no good thing? How can anything that is godly that leads to salvation and can be taken through the resurrection into the Kingdom of God, come from a spirit that is not holy?

What do we have that we have not received? What then do we have to be proud about? There is in the humble person a right recognition and acceptance of the fact that he is totally dependent upon God for everything that can be taken through the resurrection. Did not Jesus

say in John 15, "without Me you can do nothing." What do we have that we have not received?

Things generated out of the spirit of man in relationship to God never have quite the right basis. The things of the Spirit of God have to do with things unseen—not with the eyes, ears, nose, mouth—heavenly things, spiritual things. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God. Our faith is in promises that have not yet materialized. It is faith in these promises that can make very great demands on us; demands that we would never submit to, never meet, but for the gifts of God's Spirit. God's Spirit gives direction to our lives, motivating us to live by standards that we would never otherwise live by.

I Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; [or as the King James Version says and also the margin says, be humble.]

I Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace [gifts] to the humble."

This commandment of Peter's flew in the face of the Greek culture because their culture, like ours, glorified self-assertion and aggressiveness. They worshipped bodily perfection and "wisdom," as they called it. They flaunted it before others as a basis on which any relationship would be conducted because feeling better than, or being seen as better than, others was very important to people in the Greek world.

Here we are called upon by God to be clothed with humility. In last week's sermon in defining pride, I stated that humility is pride's opposite, its antonym. We learn much about humility if we do the opposite of what the Bible teaches us about pride. Part of the key to understanding humility is in this short phrase "just do." Just do it. Why would God say such a thing? Because true humility is a choice. It is not something that comes naturally to some and not to others.

The phrase here in I Peter 5:5 says that one must "be clothed with." He says "and be clothed with." He is saying, "put it on like you put your clothes on." It is a choice. Put it on. Do you know what he is thinking of here? He is thinking of Christ at that last Passover. What did Christ do? He clothed Himself with an apron and knelt down before these men and washed their feet as an example of His mind, His attitude, toward them. So He girded himself and He did it. He had to put it on in order to do that.

But that was only one of the last occasions recorded in which He voluntarily chose to do the part of a servant.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Do you see that again? Let it be in you. It is a choice. We have the opportunity. It is not something that happens magically. We have to choose to be humble. Let it be in you. Do not resist it. Work on it.

Philippians 2:6-9 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but *made Himself* [Catch that?] of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man,

He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.

Jesus Christ chose to submit to the Father's purpose. He chose to do it, not thinking that what He already had was something to be grasped at. He had all of the power of the God Family there at his disposal. But He voluntarily chose to submit Himself to the Father's purpose. He made Himself of no reputation. We are seeing how the process works, how one can be clothed with humility.

He did not grasp at being God. He did not clutch at it like it was something that He wanted to hang on to forever and ever for Himself. So in practical experience, whether Jesus was in His character as God or in His humanity, He voluntarily considered all of His privileges which were His by right because He was God, and He just set them aside even to the point of an ignominious death as a common criminal. The result, then, was a gift of service and love that He could give to man—the forgiveness of sin. And of course there is more to it than that. And following on the heels of that was exaltation.

All of this was undergirded by faith. Why could the Son make such a mind-numbing choice as this? Because He implicitly believed in the Father's love, in His power, in His ability to do what He said He was going to do. And it is this same kind of trust that God is giving us and leading us in growing into.

We can learn something very valuable from this. The spirit in man runs diametrically opposite to the direction of the Spirit of God. Man's spirit tends to exalt itself; God's to humble itself. Man will proclaim his worth and independence; God's Spirit will abase itself and show its dependence. It is interesting in Psalm 119:18 the psalmist said, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." If God did not open our eyes we would never see it.

Let us go back to Luke 18. Can you imagine—and it is awfully hard to grasp—the humility in Christ that could resist all of the persuasive blandishments that the greatest carnal-minded salesman that ever walked the face of this earth could give? I am talking about Lucifer. You can read it right there in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Satan appealed to Christ's pride. "Oh, if you're the Son of God turn these stones into bread." Satan ran into a stone wall because the pride was not there. Christ's dependence was on God. So He humbly said back, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Two more times Satan appealed to His pride and two more times he was rebuffed by humble submission to God's will. Christ could have turned the stone into bread. He had the power to do it and Satan knew He did. But he could not find a place where pride could be appealed to in Christ. And though Christ had the power, He set it aside and said, "No, that is not a good use. God will feed me when He is good and ready." And God did. The angels showed up and fed Him.

Luke 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself [You see that? It is a choice. The person who humbles himself] will be exalted.

God Himself is lowly. Do you know how I know that? Because it says of Christ, (He said it

Himself) "If you've seen Me you've seen the Father." He abased Himself before man and before God. (By abased I mean He humbled Himself in obedience to God.) The result: He is exalted to the very highest rank under the Father. This is the promise: Those who humble themselves before God, He will exalt. Do you know why? Because we will be in His Kingdom. There can be no greater exaltation than to be born into the Family of God. We will be like Him, humble, lowly as He is. We will be in harmony with His nature. That is a promise.

In Matthew 5 Jesus began His ministry, at least it appears so here, by giving the foundation of the kind of people that He expected would be in His Kingdom. He says the very first thing in verse 3:

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Poor in spirit does not mean to conduct ones life without vitality. It does not mean that a person is weak. Would we ever accuse Jesus of being weak? Yet Jesus was the epitome of humility. People think of humility as being weak because they are judging carnally by man's spirit. They are judging by sight. But the Spirit of God, the faith of God, judges according to things not seen—the Kingdom's standards.

Here is a definition of poor in spirit that I gleaned from a commentary by Emmet Fox on the Sermon on the Mount.

To be poor in spirit means to have emptied yourself of all desire to exercise personal self-will and what is just as important to have renounced all preconceived opinions [prejudices] in the wholehearted search for God. It means to be willing to set aside your present habits of thought, your present views and prejudices, your present way of life, if necessary, to jettison in fact anything and everything that can stand in the way of your finding God.

When Jesus counseled us in Matthew 18:4 that unless we became as little children we would not even be in the kingdom of heaven, He was not holding up a child's innocence or purity as a model. He was not counseling us to become childish. He was counseling us to have a child's unconcern for social status and honor or anything that equates with those things. When we are carnal, pride is such a master that we have little choice but to follow it. It is plowing the way before us.

When we were pastoring in the Columbia, South Carolina church, a lady whose husband was an entrepreneur loaned my wife a book about entrepreneurs. She wanted my wife to understand what was going on in her marriage. This book was a psychological examination of what makes entrepreneurs tick. It is kind of interesting. Do you know why entrepreneurs go into business for themselves? These are not necessarily arranged in any order of importance.

1. They believe that they have a better product [Listen to the word "better" in here.] than what is offered or the company that they work for.
2. They believe they can do a better job than the company they work for.
3. Because of their attitudes towards superiors and fellow workers, they are almost constantly ruffling others feathers.

4. Because of the turmoil they themselves come under almost unbearable pressure to leave because they cannot control the situation and want to control it.

Do you see what is beginning to move them away?

5. When they have their own company, they become very defensive because they believe nobody else can do the job quite as well as they can and they strive to control all they can.

This last one was so important the author said; it is so powerful that the entrepreneur rarely ever teaches or passes on his skills to others because it tends to drive even his children from him. And he pointed out that one of the rare entrepreneurs who really succeeded in passing on his skills and whatever to others was Henry Ford, who passed it on to his children and made sure that they learned.

None of these things are intrinsically evil. I want you to understand that. It may be true that he could do a better job. But there was an awful lot of comparing associated with the process. It has all of the seeds to bring the entrepreneur into almost constant competition and conflict because the proud are driven to control. For them to trust others is very hard to come by. Remember the things that I said about pride and trust. The proud cannot live by faith.

Let us conclude this. God in His mercy has led us to where we are now able to choose to trust Him and to be humble.

I Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time

This is the choice that we are prepared to make in most cases. And what we are not prepared to make, God in His mercy will continue to work at preparing us to make the right choices.

One of the most tragic figures in the Bible is the rich young ruler of Matthew 19. He turned aside because he had a great love for his possessions. Remember what I said earlier that everywhere one looks in the Bible pride has its roots in a sense of security because of wealth. Christ's message was not received by the Pharisees, the scribes, or the Sadducees, or the young man. Do you know why? Because they had great possessions of rabbinical teaching, public honor. They had offices that they would have had to sacrifice in order to accept Christ's teaching.

We too have great possessions that need to be brought into or under scrutiny. Things like confidence in our own judgment and ideas, those things with which we are familiar growing up with, material attachments to institutions, organizations, or things, pride that is born of skill or academic achievement, fear of public ridicule, distinction of having been born into a certain family, race, or going to a certain school, serving in a certain branch of the military. The list is potentially endless.

Philippians 3 puts the right spin on things. Paul says (again remember all of this man's pedigree if we possibly can):

Philippians 3:3-4 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

And so he gives his pedigree.

Philippians 3:7-8, 14 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The only worthwhile things are the values and qualities we have received as gifts from God. So let us choose to turn our attention to recognizing these things and then using them in His service.