

Foundations Lesson #18

Pride & Humility, Part 1

In Matthew 23:12 Jesus said, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” From this we can see that someone will do the exalting and someone will do the humbling. If we do the exalting, God does the humbling. If we do the humbling, God does the exalting. We get to determine who does which.

For us to be exalting ourselves is one demonstration of the sin of pride. There are many other demonstrations of pride, but if we were truly humble people, even the thought of exalting ourselves would be repulsive to us. Jesus told us three times in Scripture that whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Each time the context is unique. So I want to start this lesson by taking a careful look at those three passages. The first one is in Matthew 23, starting in verse 8, where Jesus says:

Mt. 23:8-12 “But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. ***For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.***

In this passage, Jesus is addressing the issue of titles of respect. He calls us to examine our hearts to determine if we're lusting after honor from others by the way we want them to address us in conversation. If so, we're guilty of prideful self-exaltation, and the result will be that we get humbled. Fortunately, Jesus here also points out the solution to the problem when he says, “The greatest among you will be your servant,” showing us the importance of embracing the identity of a servant, which God considers to be true greatness. Training our minds to think and believe that the human beings we come in contact with are worthy of our serving them is an important aspect of life in the Kingdom of God. Reminding ourselves that those people bear the image and likeness of the Great King, the Creator of the universe, will help us live as servant-hearted people.

Then in Luke's gospel chapter 14, beginning with verse 8, Jesus says,

Lk. 14:8-11 “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ***For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.***”

Here again, the **context** of Jesus' statement on prideful self-exaltation verses humility is quite ordinary. It has to do with being invited to a meal. The question is, “How are we handling ourselves at that meal, proudly or humbly?” Jesus tells us to take the least important place. We shouldn't worry about trying to make an impression or be concerned about what someone might think or how we feel we compare with the other invited guests. Essentially, Jesus is encouraging us, “Don't even go there. Just be **content** and **comfortable** taking the very lowest place.” Then when your host sees you there – and the host in this parable represents God himself – **he** will move you to the place that's appropriate for you. You get to move up. That's a good day.

We need to appreciate the futility of trying to be honored by the humans around us. Every believer has already received the highest honor that anyone could ever receive. Let me explain what I mean. If the governor of the state or province or territory where you live sent you a message saying

that he'd like to be your close friend, you'd probably feel quite honored. But the truth is that One far greater than your governor, the very Sovereign and Creator of the universe, **he** has already let you know that he desires to be very close, very intimate with **you**. There's no greater honor than that. Since we've already received the highest honor possible, why on earth are we even trying to receive honor from men?? If you have a delicious, thick, juicy, masterfully cooked filet mignon in front of you, why would you want a slice of bologna instead? John's gospel alludes to this problem when it says, "for they loved praise from men more than praise from God" (John 12:43). Let's not waste our time by trying to get men to treat us with honor.

The third passage is found in Luke's gospel chapter 18, starting in verse 9. It says,

Lk. 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself; 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Once again, the context of this passage on pride and humility is an activity that's common and ordinary – talking to God. Granted, many Christians don't talk to God nearly as much as God would want them to, but in all three of the passages we've just read, Jesus is taking examples from everyday life to teach us about the dangers of pride and the benefits of humility. So let's realize that in the ordinary facets of everyday life we can be exalting ourselves or humbling ourselves. Life works much better if we choose the latter.

Apparently, the religious leader in the parable who went up to the temple to pray thought that he was hot stuff, that surely God should be impressed with his life. The truth is that that kind of pride is a stench in the nostrils of **God Almighty**.

Let's now take a look at Roman Numeral #1 on our outline, definitions. Pride is defined as: an attitude which believes that what is important in life is me me me me me. One author has said this about pride:

Pride

Pride believes that I am a humdinger. Pride's favorite topic of conversation is **me**. And pride loves to talk about how much better I'm doing than others, how much better I'm doing than I used to be doing, or my accomplishments, recognitions, or possessions. Pride is quick to interrupt people when they are talking, because, after all, what **I** have to say is so much more important than what others are saying. Pride will even occasionally put self down just to get attention, because what's important is **me**.

Ps. 10:4

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Pr. 13:10

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

Is. 16:6

We have heard of Moab's pride – her overweening pride and conceit, her pride and her insolence – but her boasts are empty.

You and I are commanded in Scripture not to be proud.

Ro. 12:16

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate

with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Then in First Corinthians 13, where love is described, it says this:

1Co. 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

Since we're all commanded to love one another, and since not being proud is part of being loving, we can safely conclude that here also we're commanded not to be proud.

So since we've defined and examined pride, let's now head on over from the dark side to the side full of light, which is humility. Humility has here been defined as: an attitude which gratefully acknowledges that I am and have **nothing** other than what God has given me, therefore life is all about **Him**. So when somebody says to you or me, "Hey, you did a nice job," we might outwardly thank them for their compliment, because they're being nice, but inwardly – if we were humble in heart – we'd be thinking "God gave me the ability and the strength to do that. He gave me the wisdom and knowledge to do that. So I'm grateful for how **He's** created me and for what **He's** done in and through me." Humility always acknowledges God; pride never does.

One author has said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." A lot of humility starts between the ears. It's the little gray cells that have to be trained to line up with the ways of God. In our pride, we love to think about self. But if, when we find ourselves doing that, we start training our minds to think instead about God first and foremost, and secondarily about others, we'll find ourselves growing in humility because our minds are being renewed.

True humility manifests itself in practical ways. Habits like assuming the posture of a listener, or freely admitting "I don't know," or welcoming honest feedback rather than feeling threatened by it give evidence of humility in the heart.

Hubert Lindsley used to go into violent communist protests in the late 1960s and preach Christ. Billy Graham once interviewed him and asked, "What's the largest demonstration that you've ever broken up?" Lindsley replied, "35,000 people." Billy Graham was amazed. "One man? Thirty-five thousand people?" to which Lindsley calmly replied, "Dr. Graham, Jesus was with me." Humility always gives credit where credit is due.

Andrew Murray has said, "Humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all. It is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God. Where God is all, self is nothing." I want to say that again: Where God is all, self is nothing.

There was a teacher at Valley Forge Christian College who one day was simply walking down the sidewalk. As he was going along, God asked him a question: "What can you do without me?" The teacher answered, "Well, Lord, I suppose I can't do anything without you." Immediately he fell to the ground in a heap, and God spoke again, "You can't even walk without me." He got up, kept on going, and the experience was repeated. Nobody at Valley Forge could teach or preach with quite the same power, clarity, or affect as that teacher could when it came to the subject of being dependent upon God. Why? Because he'd had an experience with **The Almighty**. Humility willingly, joyfully, and gratefully acknowledges that we have nothing and that we are absolutely nothing apart from the goodness of God.

Jn. 3:27 To this John [the Baptist] replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.

Dt. 8:17-18 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Jn. 15:5 [Jesus speaking] "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

In Scripture, we're commanded to be humble.

Eph. 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Pp. 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Col. 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Tit. 3:1-2 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

1Pt. 3:8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

So we're commanded to be humble. I'd also like to point out that from the standpoint of heaven, pride really is ridiculous. I hesitate to use the word ridiculous because so many people use that word with a bad attitude. But I believe it's quite accurate to call pride ridiculous from heaven's vantage point. Just think of the angels for a minute. They clearly understand that God is all in all. That's easy for them to see because they live in an environment where that's obvious. For them it's not a matter of faith, as it is for us, they see it by sight. They see that He's the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, the Great One. They worship him gladly; they see that on earth everything that lives and moves has its being in Him and because of Him. All that is unmistakably evident to them. And then they look down to earth, and there's this one little earthling, originally created from dust, graciously given the stature of being made in the image and likeness of **The Almighty** himself, who raises his puny little voice and says, "Look at **ME!**" I can just picture them nudging each other and saying, "These humans, don't they even know the score?" Pride really is ridiculous in heaven.

Humility, in essence, is simply agreement with the truth – the truth of how awesome God is and the truth of what we are without Him, which is nothing. Let's remember that everything we are, we are by the grace of God. All the abilities you and I have – the ability to walk, talk, think, communicate, feel, create, and much more – all these are gifts from God. We didn't earn any of them. Humility joyfully acknowledges that.

Foundations Lesson #18

Pride & Humility, Part 2

Going on to Roman Numeral number two on our outline, let's look at the outcomes that result from pride and humility. I invite you to follow along on the outline while I simply read the verses of Scripture listed there.

2Chr. 26:16 But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.

Pr. 18:12 Before his downfall a man's heart is proud,

- Pr. 11:2** When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
- Pr. 15:25** The LORD tears down the proud man's house
- Pr. 16:5** The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.
- Is. 10:12** When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes.
- Pr. 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. [worth memorizing]
- Zph. 2:9-10** Therefore, as surely as I live," declares the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, "surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah – a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. The remnant of my people will plunder them; the survivors of my nation will inherit their land." This is what they will get in return for their pride...
- Pr. 29:23** A man's pride brings him low,
- Is. 2:11** The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low;
- Is. 23:9** The LORD Almighty planned it, to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.
- Is. 2:12** The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled),
- Jer. 13:9** "This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.
- Jas. 4:6** But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- 1Pt. 5:5** Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

A pastor from the Midwest was ministering at a conference. He announced to the people that he was going to give them the name of the ruling spirit who was opposing God's people in their region. Just when he had them sitting on the edge of their chairs waiting to hear the name of what they assumed would be a demonic principality, he gave them the name, YHWH, which is the ancient Hebrew name for the Lord. Then, quoting the Scripture, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble," he called them to repent of their pride.

I'd rather have every demon in hell opposing me than to have God opposing me. And God says he's going to oppose me if I'm proud.

Take a look at this list: downfall, disgrace, house torn down, punishment, destruction, humbled, ruined, being opposed by God. Can you see that ***nothing good*** comes out of pride? ***Absolutely Nothing***. I say that because in our culture we don't think of pride as being a big problem, or maybe not even a problem at all. Sometimes it's even rewarded in society. Sometimes it's applauded. But pride is spiritually fatal. It will kill us if we don't get it dealt with.

There are times that I've watched God change the outcome of sports games just because of

pride. I won't go into detail, but God really does oversee everything, and the race is not always to the swift or the battle to the strong. Andrew Murray once wrote, "Let us admit that there is nothing so natural to man, yet nothing so insidious, so dangerous, as pride." The tendency to be prideful is part of our fallen nature, but we can, and we **must**, overcome it by the power of God. He and He alone can deliver us from the pride that's in our hearts. Let's cry out to Him and trust Him to do just that.

So with that in mind, let's examine some of the outcomes that result from humility. Again, I'll just be reading the Scripture verses, and I invite you to follow along on the outline.

2Sa. 22:28 You save the humble, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low.

Ps. 18:27 You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.

Ps. 25:9 He [the LORD] guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

Ps. 147:6 The LORD sustains the humble

Ps. 149:4 For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

Pr. 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Pr. 18:12 Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.

Mt. 18:4 [Jesus speaking] Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The highest rank in the Kingdom of God belongs to those soldiers who wear the cloak of humility and never take it off. The humble cannot be embarrassed. When we start to feel embarrassed, it's because we're operating in the realm of pride rather than in the realm of humility.

The next three verses were covered in detail at the beginning of this lesson. They remind us that whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Then,

Pr. 3:34 He [the LORD] mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.

Jas. 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1Pt. 5:5b-6 All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

If you go into an old basement that has an uneven floor, and you take a 5-gallon bucket of water and you pour it out on that floor, where's the water going to go? It'll flow to and settle in the lowest places on that floor. The grace of God is like that. It flows to and settles in the lowest places; the places where there's humility of heart and lowliness of spirit. The grace of God doesn't flow to the high and mighty, to the peaks of exaltation or the mountains of pride. No. A broken and contrite heart the LORD will not despise. The grace of God gravitates to genuine humility and, since **everything we have is by God's grace**, humility is of supreme importance.

So we see here that the outcomes that result from humility are quite extensive and very beneficial to us. Let's remember that everything we believe, do, or say today will shape our life tomorrow. I've never known anyone who didn't want the **benefits** of humility. So why are so very few people actually pursuing humility?

One reason is that humility is quite elusive. As soon as we think we've achieved genuine humility

of heart, we've already lost it. For us to say or believe that we are humble is, in and of itself, an act of pride. The story is told of a church committee that wanted to find the most humble person in the congregation and do something special for him or her. They found an old man who was a deacon and a Sunday school teacher, and they honored him by giving him a pin. The pin read "most humble person in the church." One month later they had to take the pin away from him. Why? Because he wore it. You see, anyone who advertises his humility isn't humble at all. They're drawing attention to themselves and making a display of their accomplishments, which is the opposite of humility. In the same way, as soon as we think we've arrived, as soon as we think we're humble people, we've already lost the humility we thought we gained. I have great confidence in God that **He** can yet make all of us into men and women of genuine humility. **He** is able.

Another reason that so few people are pursuing humility is that it's not easy to attain. In fact, it's very difficult. It requires dying to self, and self doesn't like to die. Romans 12 tells us that we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Dead sacrifices never move, but living sacrifices have a tendency to want to crawl off the altar. They don't want to die. Death to self is painful, but it's worth it! I want to encourage you – don't shrink back from the cleansing fire that will purify you from the inside out; let the flames consume your pride. You'll be glad you did.

I've read authors who believed that the way for us to become more humble is for us to focus on our sin. I disagree, because the very essence of pride is focusing on self. You can't cast out self by focusing on self, even if it's sinful self. That's not going to rid us of the monster. Let's get our eyes on **The Almighty**. Let's fix our gaze on the God who's forgiven us, who's redeemed us, who's treated us with incredible grace when we didn't deserve it. If we focus on His goodness, His holiness, His awesomeness, His perfection – in His presence our pride can be dealt with. The more we worship God in spirit and in truth, the more we focus on **Him**, the less likely we'll be to walk in pride.

Foundations Lesson #18

Pride & Humility, Part 3

Let's turn our outline over and go to Roman Numeral number three, humility modeled in the life of Jesus Christ. The concept can be difficult to grasp, but the One who's so powerful that entire galaxies started existing just because he spoke, the One who sustains all things by his word of power, that One, he is also extraordinarily humble. Maybe we have trouble picturing that or believing that because if we had that kind of power, we wouldn't be humble at all. But it's true that the all-powerful One is also the God who is supremely humble. In light of that truth, it shouldn't surprise us at all that we can see a life of great humility lived out in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so on our outline, the first demonstration of Jesus' humility has to do with his making himself nothing and coming to earth as a human being.

Pp. 2:5-8a

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...

This passage describes the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ in becoming a human. Let's try to put that into perspective. If you and I were standing by an ant hole, and we noticed that the ants were at war with one another, and that they were making a complete mess of their lives, and because of that we wanted to help them, and if we then decided that one of us could become an ant and live as an ant among the ants to show them how to live life, and if we then were able to carry out that plan,

the distance, the gap, that you or I would have to bridge in order to become an ant would be far, far, far, smaller than the distance that Jesus had to span in order to become fully human. Now if you could picture yourself becoming an ant with all the limitations of being an ant, you might be kind of frightened by that thought. But the gap between God and a human is **far** greater than the gap between one of us and an ant. At least we and the ant are part of the same created order. The difference between God and us is the difference between The Creator and part of his creation. That's huge. Yet Jesus submitted himself to that plan, and he did so willingly. His love was and is that great. But his willing submission is also a demonstration of his humility. There was never any attitude of, "I'm God. I'm not doing that!" So we see Jesus modeling humility first by becoming fully human.

Secondly, we see Jesus' humility by acknowledging his complete submission to the Father's will. Let me read you some snippets from John's gospel:

Jn. 5:19 "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself;

Jn. 5:30 By myself I can do nothing;

Jn. 5:41 "I do not accept praise from men,

Jn. 6:38 I have come down from heaven not to do my will...

Jn. 7:16 "My teaching is not my own...

Jn. 7:28 I am not here on my own...

Jn. 8:28 I do nothing on my own...

Jn. 8:42 I have not come on my own...

Jn. 8:50 I am not seeking glory for myself;

Jn. 14:24 These words you hear are not my own.

Are you getting the idea that Jesus depended on the Father for everything? Is it not the most humbling thing to see ourselves as utterly dependent? Jesus modeled that humility. Andrew Murray has written this about Jesus' humility:

QUOTE This life of entire self-abnegation, of absolute submission and dependence upon the Father's will, Christ found to be one of perfect peace and joy. He lost nothing by giving all to God.

This is the true self-denial to which our Savior calls us, the acknowledgment that self has nothing good in it, except as an empty vessel which God must fill, and that its claim to be or do **anything** may not for a moment be allowed.

So we see how Jesus modeled humility by acknowledging his complete submission to the Father. Next we see his humility in embracing the identity of a servant. Some people cringe at the idea of serving. In pride, they feel that they're above that. But we see that when the God of the universe took on human form, he lived to serve, not to be served. That's humility.

Mk. 10:42-45 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be

served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jn. 13:3-5 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

verses 12-17 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

I'm glad that Jesus showed us that there's a blessing in store for all who walk in servanthood. As he said, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” Oddly enough, just after Jesus had washed his disciples' feet, Luke's gospel tells us that a dispute broke out among his disciples as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus addressed them by saying,

Lk. 22:25-27 “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

So Jesus embraced becoming a servant to all. Pride wants to be served. Humility **delights in serving others**. Let me say that again. Pride wants to be served. Humility **delights in serving others**. There's nothing so divine or heavenly as being the servant and helper of all. One author has said this:

QUOTE Humility before God is nothing if not proven by humility before men. Our thoughts and feelings toward others are God's test of our humility toward Him.

1Jn. 4:20 If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

How we treat our brothers and sisters is an evidence, a litmus test, of how much or little we **actually** love God or, in this case, how humble we are towards Him.

Pp. 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

QUOTE The question is often asked, *How can we consider others better than ourselves, when we see that they are far below us in wisdom, in holiness, in natural gifts, or in grace received?*

The question proves at once how little we understand what true humility is. True humility comes when, in the light of God, we have seen ourselves to be nothing, have consented to part with and cast away self, to let God be all. The soul that has done this, and can say, “So have I lost myself in finding thee,” no longer compares itself with others. It has given up forever every thought of self in God's presence; it meets its fellow-men as one who is nothing, and seeks nothing for itself; who is a servant of God, and for his sake a servant of all. A faithful servant may be wiser than the master, and yet retain the true spirit and posture of the

servant. The humble man looks upon every – even the feeblest and most unworthy – child of God, and honors them and prefers them in honor as the son or daughter of a great King. The spirit of him who washed the disciples' feet, makes it a joy to us to be indeed the least, to be servants one of another.

I've put up a small poster in my office. It's just an 8½ by 11 piece of paper, that says "JOY for today" right across the top of it. The word, "JOY," is in all capital letters. Then the J, O, and Y, in acrostic form go down the left side of it and "J" stands for Jesus first; "O" stands for Others second; and "Y" stands for Yourself last. It's a daily reminder that I need to strive to put Jesus first, others second, and self last. I believe all of the Christian life is a matter of Jesus first, others second, and self last. May God help all of us live that way!

Then we see humility modeled in the life of Jesus by his laying down his life so that sinful humans could be rescued.

Mt. 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Pp. 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

When Jesus died a horrible death on the cross he did it willingly, without any attitude of "I'm God, I shouldn't have to suffer for those wretched humans." Jesus was deeply humble. By the Spirit of Jesus Christ in us, we can and must be deeply humble, too.

Foundations Lesson #18

Pride & Humility, Part 4

Roman Numeral number four on our outline deals with pride as seen in various biblical characters. I suppose there could be a long list of people in the Bible who exhibited pride, but I've selected just a few of the more obvious ones so that we can identify the pride, learn from it, and see some of its resulting consequences.

Ex. 10:3 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me.

Pharaoh proudly and stubbornly time and again refused to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt in order to worship the LORD. What eventually happened to Pharaoh? His lifeless body got washed up on the shore of the Red Sea after he and his army drowned. That's a vivid illustration of pride coming before destruction.

Ac. 12:21-23 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

A bunch of worms had a big, juicy lunch that day. The people were attributing to Herod

something that was not rightfully his. It seems like Herod would've been OK if he'd just let the people know that they were mistaken. Apparently, he loved their flattery too much to do that. The disaster that followed speaks for itself.

Then in the book of Daniel, chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar had an experience with God. I'd encourage you to read the whole chapter some time soon to get the context – it's a great story. But in verse 30, he says, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" I think all of us can feel the pride just oozing out of that statement. Immediately, his royal authority was taken away from him by God; he was driven away to live with the wild animals; he ate grass like cattle; his body was drenched with the dew of heaven; his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle; his nails grew like the claws of a bird; and he was given the mind of an animal. He was in that state for "seven times." Now we don't know how long a "time" was. Traditionally, it was one year, but that's unclear. So for perhaps seven years he was in that condition, and then God decided it was time to restore him. So, even though few details are given, Nebuchadnezzar resumed reigning on his throne after that period of absence. The last verse of the chapter, verse 37, shows us that King Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson well. He says, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. **And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.**" May we learn that lesson as well as Nebuchadnezzar learned it.

Pride takes credit for what God has done. Let me say that again. Pride takes credit for what God has done. And, generally, the more gifted you are, the more you'll have to fight pride in your heart. That's because in the areas that you're gifted, you can see that you're able to do things that other people can't do. God delights in giving good gifts. He's generous. He's kind. He loves to bless. But when we see areas of skill in our own lives that others don't have, we can't jump to the wicked conclusion that we're better than others, nor can we make the drastic mistake of failing to acknowledge the God who generously invested those talents into our lives. You or I may very well be able to do certain things better than most other people, but that's only because God has graciously given us that ability, and he's graciously given us the grace to work hard to develop that ability. Also, we have to remember that God's **purpose** in giving us that grace was **not** so that we could boast or look good before men or feel superior. No. It was mainly so that we could contribute to humanity; so that we could be a blessing to **others**. So let's be very careful not to take credit for what God's done. That's ugly, rotten, disgusting pride, which is spiritually fatal.

In the first nine verses of Acts chapter five, we have the story of a married couple named Ananias and Sapphira. Again, I want to encourage you to read that whole passage some time soon. The story tells us that they sold a piece of land. The previous chapter tells us that it was customary for people in that church to be selling lands or houses, bringing the money into the church meeting and laying it at the apostles' feet. So Ananias brought in money that he'd received from the sale of his land, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But he failed to mention that he'd received more from the sale than the amount of his offering. In other words, he kept part of the sales price for himself. We don't know how much, but he retained a portion. And, because he lied about it, he literally dropped dead. His wife came in three hours later, she lied about it too, and they had to bury her corpse right next to that of her husband. They both dropped dead in church for lying. Scripture doesn't tell us **why** they lied, but it probably had to do with the desire for a good reputation. I imagine they wanted to be seen as generous people who cared about their church family. If so, pride was certainly at the root of it all. May we never care about what other people think about us, but may we care passionately about what God thinks about us. By the way, his opinion is the only one that counts.

Then we see that even Jesus' disciples manifested pride. The first incident on our outline deals with their claiming that they would never disown him. Now that's not a real smart thing to do. I've heard people make all kinds of claims, like, "O, God, I'll never forsake you." I can understand that people feel loyal right then, but telling **The Almighty** what we are or are not going to do is not a good idea. He knows far, far better than we do what's going to happen and what we're capable of. He knows all things. He doesn't need our information. Besides that, our information is usually quite flawed.

Mt. 26:31-35 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

When we make statements like that, God in his love and goodness usually shows us how frail we really are – He withdraws his hand, leaves us to our own resources, and we fail miserably. And that's exactly what happened to Peter and the other disciples. I believe their confidence was in themselves to remain loyal to Jesus. They learned. It's not about me, me, me. We can't do anything without God's help.

Then in Luke's gospel chapter 10 starting in verse 17 it says,

Lk. 10:17-20 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

In other words, don't rejoice about how good you feel when you get to boss demons around. That's carnal. It's not about you. Rather, rejoice that God has given you grace unto salvation. Rejoice that you've been rescued from your sins and that your names are written in the Lamb's book of life. God has been incredibly kind to you. You can rejoice about that.

I think probably the epitome of pride manifested by the disciples came on the night Jesus was betrayed. Jesus had just done the job of the lowest slave in the house by washing all the disciples' feet, and he'd told them, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." By that, he let them know that it's all about servanthood – it's all about lowering yourself in order to elevate others. So what did the disciples do? Luke tells us that a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. We could scratch our heads and wonder, "Isn't that the exact opposite of what Jesus had just modeled?" And of course it is. But how often have we been just as dull or even more dull than the disciples were that night? Pride can be so much a part of our nature that we don't even have a clue as to what's happening when we're manifesting it. And, having received great teaching on humility, by word and/or by example is no guarantee that our hearts have been transformed. Only God can change us on the inside. He's our only hope to be free from pride.

Our last example of pride is perhaps the most obvious. It comes from the life of the devil himself. The church has, for over a thousand years, taken the passages in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 to represent the fall of Satan:

Is. 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star ["Lucifer" in the KJV], son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.

Lucifer's last "I will" is highly significant. It seems that after four "I wills" God was still being

patient. But you don't want to cross over the line of God's patience; the results are devastating. It's after Lucifer says, "I will make myself like the Most High" that he gets kicked out of heaven and hurled to the earth.

Ez. 28:17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

The ultimate in pride is saying or thinking that "I am like God, and I did it myself." Some time after Lucifer's fall from heaven, he tempted the woman in the garden with the same pride. He told her that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would be like God. And he's still perpetrating the same lie. How many religions do you know today where people are told that they can become like God? The truth is, we can become more like God, but He has to be the one changing us into the likeness of Christ. We're incapable of doing that on our own. One author has said this:

QUOTE "So much as you have of pride within you, you have of the fallen angel alive in you; so much as you have of true humility, so much you have of the Lamb of God within you."
"Evil can have no beginning but from pride, and no end but from humility. The truth is this: pride must die in you, or nothing of Heaven can live in you."

The final point on our outline, Roman Numeral number five, gives us some manifestations of pride. Prideful people are often easily offended, and the cause of their being offended isn't hard to understand. If what's truly important in life is me, me, me, me, me, and someone says something that *I* don't like, well then, I naturally feel that I have every right to be upset. I'll get vexed, chafed, and irked. I'll become irritated, upset, and angry because they shouldn't have said that to *me*.

Jn. 6:60-61 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?"

Pride gets easily offended. So when we find ourselves being offended, we usually need to repent of pride.

Pride also has a problem submitting to authority. Again, this follows logically because if life is all about *me*, then nobody should be telling *me* what to do. A minister of the gospel once said to a friend of mine, "I'm an apostle. No one tells me what to do!" That's the sin of pride, pure and simple.

1Pt. 2:13a Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men:

Then, pride fails to admit wrongdoing. Someone who has a proud spirit can get caught on camera with their hand in the cookie jar and say, "I haven't done anything wrong." "Who, me?"

1Sa. 15:20 "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.

Do you remember what Samuel said in reply? "What is this bleating of sheep in my ears?" Pride says that it doesn't matter if I'm actually innocent or guilty, because it's about me, me, me. I must be innocent. The evidence doesn't matter.

Pr. 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Ps. 36:2

For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.

Pride also loves to boast. After all, if life is all about **me**, then it's only fitting that I should tell everyone about my successes and my accomplishments.

Est. 5:11-12

Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow.

Those of you who know the rest of the story know that when Haman said these things he had less than 48 hours to live. The king hanged him on a gallows he'd built for someone who offended him. Pride really does go before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

When we have an attitude of pride, we'll also find it easy to leave God out. Why? Because pride tells us that we're self-sufficient, that we don't need or want any help.

Jsh. 9:14

The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD.

Dt. 8:14

then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Ps. 10:4

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Hos. 13:6

When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.

Before closing this lesson, I'd like to leave you with a suggestion I've found very helpful over the years. While we're in the body, we all have to deal with the pride that's still in our hearts. When we become particularly aware of the sin of pride that still resides within us, it's easy to become too inward focused. So here's what you can do: Find three people, not including yourself, who you feel have a pride problem. That shouldn't be hard to do because the more pride resides within us, the more it irritates us in other people. Then, set aside 10 minutes each day to pray just for the humility that's needed. The first nine minutes – three minutes apiece for each of the three other people – is to be spent crying out to God for them. When you do that, do **not** focus on the pride they've manifested. Focus on the God who is incredibly gracious and powerful to change them, and the great work of humility **he** will accomplish in their lives. Focus on the wonderful transformation God will bring about in answer to prayer. Then, for the last minute, simply tell God that you need humility every bit as desperately as your three acquaintances do, asking and trusting him to change you, too. This exercise has the power to accomplish much. First of all, it'll further the Kingdom of God far more powerfully and significantly than what you probably imagine. Second of all, it'll help you set your heart and mind on God first, others second, and self last. Thirdly, you'll experience the power of the truth Jesus taught when he said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38). We have to understand that when we give to others in prayer, God will give back to us the same blessing we've asked him to impart to those others. No one ever outgives God! Amen. God bless you all.