

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### **The Lowly Walk, Part 3**

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2

Code: 1921

1978

Ephesians chapter 4 is our study for this morning and we're really going to discuss one phrase. I don't know why it is that I get so slowed down in this particular portion of Ephesians but it is just so important. You know, a lot of times it isn't what I plan to do, you know. I always plan things to be done right and to get through everything and I never get there. And I don't know if it's my own stupidity or God but I choose to believe it's God, for obvious reasons. Anyway, we're looking at the fourth chapter of Ephesians and talking about the worthy walk. What does it mean for a Christian to walk worthy. And we've been suggesting to you that walking worthy means living a life that matches your position in Christ. First three chapters of this wonderful epistle deal with the position of the believer, the last three the practice. The first three the doctrine, the last three the duty. How do we really learn to live up to who we are. How do we walk worthy?

We said the word worthy, last week, has to do with balance. It's a word that's used of equalizing a scale. We are to equalize our behavior in accord with our identity. We are to live as who we are.

This is a basic principle of the Word of God. We are to live in accord with who we are. We are to live up to our position.

Now how do we do that? How do we really walk worthy? Well the answer comes in verses 2 and 3, let's look at it. "With all lowliness and meekness with long-suffering forbearing one another in love endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Now the way we walk worthy is in all lowliness and meekness and long-suffering and forbearing love and unity, those five things are the characteristics of the worthy walk. That's where it all begins.

Now humility is basically the overarching principle. It's as if the first word all lowliness really encompasses the remaining four.

They all sort of fit in and yet they are different. And there's a progression. Where there is all lowliness there will be meekness and there will be then long-suffering resulting in forbearing love with the end result of unity. So there is a...there is a sense in which they are tied together almost like synonyms, in a way, although there are shades of difference, and then there is also a sense of progression. But the key to the whole thing is this concept of humility.

Now humility is a very elusive thing. And we want to talk a lot about humility but sometimes we don't really understand it.

Just exactly what is humility? You know, it's that thing that when you finally gotten it you just lost it. It's very elusive. When you finally say - I am now humble - you just forfeited. So, maybe it's when you don't know you've got it that you've really got it.

But that isn't always true either because some of us know we haven't got it because we know we're proud. It's a very elusive reality and yet it is a very necessity - necessary thing. You can see here that it is at the heart of the worthy walk. If you are to walk worthy humility must be a reality in your life.

Now Jesus came into the world and as the high exalted King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He came exalted above any human being who had ever lived. And yet the apostle Paul says in Philippians chapter 2 that He humbled Himself, that He was found in fashion as a man.

That He took upon Him the form of a servant and humbled Himself. So even the Lord Jesus Christ was humble.

In Matthew 11:29 He said - "For I am meek and lowly in heart."

The exalted Lord Jesus Christ, meek and lowly and humble. He was born in a stable. He never had a place to lay His head. He possessed no property. He owned only the garments on His body. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. He was always a stranger, His only home was the Mount of Olives where He would retire in the evening in quietness with the father. He was humbled. The One who, as the song said, left the Ivory palaces and came into a world of woe. Humbled Himself.

And He set a standard for us because in 1 John 2:6 we saw last time, John says - He that sayeth he abideth in Him ought to walk even as He walked. So however He walked is how we're to walk. And if He walked in humility that's the way we are to walk.

But that's foreign to our world. Our world is not a world that accepts humility. Our world is a world that exalts pride. We don't hear great talks about humility. In fact, in our society as in all society that is generated by Satan, all of human nature throughout all of history has looked down on humility as weakness as infirmity as something to be despised, something ignoble. We think of the humble person as the proverbial Caspar Milquetoast who is afraid of his own shadow, whose sort of mealy-mouth, the inevitable Mr. Peepers complex. What is true humility? Is it that? We like to talk about the things we're proud of. You hear people say that constantly.

Well I'm very proud to say...you know, just go to a luncheon sometime and you'll hear it about 50 times. We're so proud of so- and-so.

Well, I'm proud of this, I'm certainly proud of...this is a part of our society. Ostentation, boasting, parading, demanding, exalting, we're forever and a day pinning awards on everybody and his uncle.

You know, I look at my kids and from the time my kids have been little enough to pick up a baseball bat or throw a ball they've been stacking up trophies to the point where it's almost absurd. They're so honored the only thing is, everybody gets one, you know? Just everybody. They pass them out like peanuts. I have a box in the garage with all the broken trophies that came off the shelf in the earthquake. My wife said it was the greatest day at our house. She's right. But, you know, we're like that. We're forever passing out awards. I was watching television last night, whenever I don't have any sermon illustrations I turn on a Christian television program.

And...not all of them, but some of them particularly, and they were telling all about the Dove Awards, the new Christian Dove Awards which are now given out to the outstanding Christian of this and the outstanding of that and so forth and so we're really hep on awards, folks. We're very proud by nature and even in Christianity we now have found a way to boast legitimately, we just award each other everything.

It's kind of sad. You know who the most famous man, the most popular man in the entire world is right now? By survey? Mohammed Ali, the most popular man in the world. You know what his famous line is?

"I'm the greatest." That's an exaltation of self. That's typical in our society. We say, - well, you know, boy we've got to think positively We hear a certain preacher on television say that all the time. We...you've got to realize that you can do anything, you're the greatest.

And my son who is not that astute says - Well, I certainly can't do everything, I can't get an A in mathematics. It doesn't always work that way. God has called us to humility but our world throws pride at us incessantly.

You know pride was the first sin ever committed. Do you know that? The very first sin ever committed was pride. And it was committed by an angel by the name of Lucifer who decided that he would exalt himself above God. Read it in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, the whole story is in both of those texts. I will, I will, I will, I will, I will he said five times and once God said - No you won't. Threw him out of heaven. Pride was the first sin. I will be exalted. I will lift myself.

And in Proverbs 11:2 the Bible says - "When pride cometh then cometh shame. But with the lowly is true wisdom." In Proverbs 16:5 it says - "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." In Proverbs 18:16, "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." In Proverbs 16:18 it says, "A high look (that's the external) a proud heart (that's the internal) is sin."

Humility is always the virtue of the righteous and pride is always the mentality of the unrighteous. And it's a grief to the soul of anybody who knows Jesus Christ or should be, to see Christians engaged in pride, to see ourselves engaged in it.

I'll never forget we had a meeting at my house one night and all the seminary students were there from Grace here, we were having a wonderful discussion as we do often at my house. I was sitting on the fireplace and sitting on the hearth and talking and they were asking questions. And one of the students, very serious, said to me - John, he said, how did you finally overcome pride? Isn't that great? Such naive...how did you finally overcome...well, it was two years ago when I finally licked it (laughter) yes, and it's never been a problem since then. So wonderful to be constantly humble, in fact it's just glorious. How did you finally overcome pride? Folks, I don't know how to tell you this, I have not finally overcome pride.

That's a battle every day, isn't it? Every day. Satan keeps that one at you all the time.

But just so you get God's perspective look with me back at Isaiah chapter 2. Verse 11 or we better go back to verse 10; "Enter into the rock and hide in the dust for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty." Listen, when you start comparing yourself with God you'd better get under a rock. You're a bug in comparison. You'd better crawl in the dirt somewhere when you see the majesty of God. When you're compared with the glory and majesty of God you'd better get under a rock. Watch. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled. The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Now, people, here is the crux of the whole issue. Pride is a sin because it is the sin of competing with God.

Pride lifts me up and steals from God His glory and God says - I will not give my glory to another. And so He says - You'll be bowed down and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. God alone is worthy of exaltation. God alone, I'll say it again, there's nothing you've ever done, there's nothing I've ever done, there's nothing we ever will do that's worthy of glory, that's worthy of honor, in comparison to God. We are a worm. We ought to get in the dirt and get under a rock. That's what he is saying. "For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon everyone," verse 12 says, "who is proud and lofty, upon everyone who is lifted up and he shall be brought low. And upon," and here he uses metaphors to speak of proud people, "Upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, all the oaks of Bashan, all the high mountains, all the hills that are lifted up, upon every high tower, upon every fortified wall, upon all the ships of Tarshish, and all the pleasant pictures, and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Now you see? He has...he is simply saying that God is going to judge pride, He's going to judge haughtiness, loftiness, setting an exaltation on man is going to be judged. And, you know, dear Isaiah the prophet confronted this in the nation Israel in a very, very evident way, the people paraded like we do in our society. You know, our society is so proud and we all can get engulfed in that, you know? We want to get the best clothes, the fanciest clothes, the fanciest car, the

fanciest house, the nicest stuff and we are to appeal all the time sensually to do that. And we exercise our pride and the reason we buy those things and the reason we have those things is so that we can be better than somebody else. So much of the time that's true.

Now there are things we need, there are things we need to accommodate our families and our needs and our travel and all of those kinds of things but there's a fine line between what we need and what we want that's better than something else for the sake of self-exaltation, self-creature comfort, and having it over somebody else. And, you know, as we begin to get things at a certain level, then we begin to despise the people beneath our level. And aspire to the ones above us constantly. This is pride, the wrong perspective.

It manifested itself in Isaiah's day in chapter 3 verse 16 in some very specific ways. And here he confronts the daughters of Zion, the women in Israel, he says they are haughty, they walk with stretched forth necks. Now that's more than good posture, that's just that cockiness, that lording it over people by your look. They walk with wanton eyes, and actually the Hebrew says with painted eyes. Now don't panic, ladies, that's right here in the Bible. It says they walk with stretched-forth necks and painted eyes, walking and mincing as they go.

It's just the idea that they strut, see. These women were so proud and boastful - look at me, strutting with my self all dolled up. And they even put bells on their feet, that's in case the sight wasn't enough to attract you, the noise would. And to find out what happens in verse 17, "The Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion and uncover their secret parts." God will drop a sword right down the middle of them. Pretty serious. "In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling anklets, their headbands, their crescents like the moon." Apparently they were wearing some crescents around their necks shaped like a half-moon. "The pendants, the bracelets, the veils, the head-dresses, the armllets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, the amulets, the finger rings."

Literally in Hebrew, "And the nose rings." Now I noticed that's even coming in our society. Now I see women with a ring through one of their nostrils. "The festival robes, the mantles, the cloaks, the handbags, the hand mirrors, the linen wrappers," that has to do with undergarments, special undergarments, "and the hats or turbans and the veils." Now you say - Oh, ahhhhh, I've got it, in verse 18, in verse...well, this is definitely a picture of an attitude not necessarily saying that anybody who has any of these things has that attitude but the people who have that attitude manifested in the overabundance of these kind of things. There's a loss of simplicity. There's a loss of propriety. There's a gaudiness, there's an overdone-ness, if that's a word. "And it shall come to pass," in verse 24, "That instead of sweet fragrance there shall be rottenness. Instead of a girdle, a rope.

Instead of well-set hair, baldness. Instead of a robe, a girding of sack cloth and branding instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword." They aren't without guilt either.

You see, here was a society that was a whole bunch of show-offs.

They were lording and exalting themselves and fixing themselves up to attract attention to themselves. When the fact of the matter is everyone in that society should have been simply an instrument to point to God, the God of Israel.

At the end of the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah talks of something of the same attitude in verse 31; "Behold I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts! for thy day is come the time that I will punish thee and the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up and I'll kindle a fire in his cities and it shall devour all around about him."

And the Old Testament closes with the little book of Malachi. A tremendously important book. The fourth chapter, the last chapter of the Old Testament begins this way - "For behold the day cometh that shall burn like an oven and all the proud, yea, and all they that do wickedly shall be stubble and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

When you come to the New Testament you hear James in chapter 4 verse 6 say - "God giveth grace to the humble but God resisteth the proud."

And you hear John say, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world and the world passes away in the lust thereof."

Pride - God is against. Humility - God is for. Humility is always, as I said, the virtue of the righteous. Throughout the Scripture, we don't even have time to begin to touch base with every scripture dealing with humility. But listen to a few.

Proverbs 15:33 says; "Before honor is humility.

Proverbs 22:4; "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor of life."

Proverbs 27:2; "Let another man praise thee and not thine own mouth.

That's pretty practical. And if you ever get the feeling that you're hot stuff, Isaiah 51:1 said to that same generation of people in Israel, "Look to the rock whence you are hewn and the hole of the pit from whence you were dug." Have you forgotten where you came from?

If you have any tendency to be proud go back to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 to 3 and read about yourself being dead in trespasses and sin.

Walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the sons of disobedience. Read that you there were guided by the lusts of the flesh and of the mind and of the desires of the flesh were the things that motivated you and you were by nature a child of wrath. Remind yourself of who you are, when you want to be proud.

Humility is a basic ingredient for all spiritual blessing. Before any honor is humility. The Proverbs are right. God will only bless the humble. You know. I think sometimes that we forget how important this is. Every sin, I don't care what it is, has as its root pride.

Because all sin is a defiance of God and His right to be God and to have holiness. All sin is pride. And I really think that sometimes we grapple on the peripheral and never deal with the issue. For example, there are families that have problems. Their kids are problems, they have problems, mom and dad, husband and wife have problems. And maybe a guy has problems at his work, and there are people with just a lot of problems and sometimes they'll come in and they'll want to...how do I do this, give me a better method to reach my family, or how do I construct a family devotion, or how do I do this, or how can I get my family fixed up when the real issue is just pride because they'll never be unity in the family, they'll never be honor in the family, they'll never be the grace of life in the family, they'll never be happiness in the family until there is humility in the person involved. I don't care what you've done for the Lord, I don't care if you founded churches, founded missions, had great ministries, gone to church all your life, read your Bible, prayed, if you've never walked in humility, you don't know what it is to walk a worthy walk. That's what God is saying to us. Because the worthy walk begins with all lowliness.

You can't even be saved without humility. In Matthew chapter 18 Jesus said, "Except you become as a little child, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven." And then He said - "You must humble yourself as this little child." You can't even be a Christian unless you come in humility. Until you come to God and say I am a sinner and I deserve nothing and I'm worthy of nothing, you can't be saved. You can't go into God's presence and say - God, it's me, you know, the one You've heard so much about. Would you...here's my press release. I have my Master's degree, my Doctor's degree and I have a benevolent merit award from the llllllllll. See. No. You approach God in humility as a sinner. That's the only way to be saved. There's no other way in to the family of God and there's no other way to walk once you're in there.

That's the only way. That's the only standard.

In Luke chapter 18 and I think its verse 13, I'll read it to you, don't need to look it up. "And the tax collector," remember?

The publican and the sinner in the temple? "Standing a far off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven but smote on his breast saying - God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, said Jesus, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone that exalted himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be," what? "Exalted." Humility is the standard of salvation.

Now let's go back to Ephesians and look at the text itself. We know now that the Bible emphasizes humility as over against pride.

And, people, it isn't easy in our society, really it isn't. You know, I see, and I see and I look at our society and I see the temptation in my own life, to just continually pile up stuff that exalts me that lifts me up. You know, having a better this and a better house or a better car or better clothes or more recognition or fancier stuff of one kind or another to sort of put me up. And then you get the mentality that starts looking down and despising people underneath you. So wrong. And you forfeit God's blessing. You don't walk worthy, you're not going to know His blessing.

So he calls us to the worthy walk in verse 1. He says - I beseech you, really. I, the prisoner of the Lord, that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you're called. That's the call to the worthy walk.

Now this morning I want to share with you the characteristics of the worthy walk, the characteristics of the worthy walk. And I can't get into all of them, there are five of them here. We're going to look at just one, this morning.

The characteristics of the worthy walk. Now I want you to realize something as we look at this verse 2 and 3. He says, now you're going to walk worthy. And all of us are saying - Ok, I want to walk worthy, how? He says, all right, here are five ways. Five keys; lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing love, and unity.

Those are the five characteristics of a worthy walk. And the goal of it all, verse 5, is the unity of the Spirit.

Now the most important thing Paul wants us to know is that God wants unity in the church. He wants unity in the church. The unity of the believers is critical. The first three chapters of Ephesians emphasized it. We are one new man, one body, one family, one household, one habitation of the Spirit. This tremendous emphasis that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ, we're all one, very important.

And it's important because of this; in John 17 verse 21 to 23 Jesus prayed to the Father. And He prayed a very explicit prayer, this is what He said; "Father, I pray that they all may be one as Thou, Father art in Me and I in Thee that they also may be one in Us."

Why? "In order that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Verse 23; "I in them, Thou in Me, that they be made perfect in one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." In other words, the whole concept that Christ is the Son of God is wrapped up in the unity of the church. Do you see it? That as we are one we manifest Christ to the world. You know, the world is all discord. The world is all disharmony. The world is all animosity and antagonism and bitterness and resentment and into rugged individualism, every guy for himself. And if in the midst of that there is an oasis of beautiful unity, there is an oasis of beautiful oneness, there is a harmony of peacefulness among a body of people, the world is going to look and say what's that? And that's when we can say this is what Jesus Christ can do. And they're going to say then He must be somebody from somewhere else than this world because nobody in this world could ever do that.

I'll never forget reading a history book, one time, it asked the question - Do you know many...how many peace treaties have been broken throughout history? And the answer was - All of them. All of them.

And the Bible says there is no peace to the wicked. Peace - peace and there is no peace. There's no one in the world that's ever been able to do it. That's why the world is going to grab on to the coat strings of the anti-Christ. He's going to come along and he's going to appear to be the greatest peace maker. But you see, we can manifest to the world that Jesus is the peace maker if we have a community of peaceful, loving, united people in one mind. Right? This is the heart of our testimony that the world may know that He is sent from God, He's not just another man. No man has ever been able to make that kind of peace. No man has ever been able to relate people to each other like that. He's got to be divine and that's the heart of it all.

So, the worthy walk has as its objective, first of all, unity in the church. That we would walk worthy, the church would be one. Now how do you get to that? Well I'll tell you one thing. If everybody's proud you'll never have unity. Right? If everybody's saying - Well, I'm going to get for me what I want, you get for you what you want, you'll never have unity. You get everybody doing that and we're in a lot of trouble. If everybody's worried about his own thing, well I'm not going to take that anymore...you can't do that to me...then we're not going to have unity. Now watch this; wherever you have humility you have unity. If you have everybody fighting for their own rights, you have terrible, terrible, terrible discord. From whence come wars, James says, they come because you want with your own lusts and you desire to have and you'll do anything to get it.

See. That's war.

On the other hand, where does peace come from? It comes from Ephesians...rather Philippians chapter 2 where Paul says - "Let each esteem others," what? "Better than themselves." You see, you

have peace and unity and oneness when we all look on the things of others and not on our own things. When we all esteem others better than ourselves. When we're all involved in meeting your needs, when everybody cares about everybody else instead of themselves then there's a harmony and a brotherhood and a peace and a unity that is inexplicable humanly. That's what God wants. So you say - All right, we're trying to get to the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace? That's right.

We're trying to see the one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God concept of verses 4, 5 and 6. We're trying to see that oneness really living. So the world will know that God sent Jesus, He's got to be supernatural because no man could do that.

But the world isn't going to know that unless we have that unity, we maintain that unity and we'll never maintain it without following these steps.

Let's look at one, the first step. "With all lowliness," with all lowliness. Boy, you know, it's such a hard thing to preach on somethings like this because you look at your own life and you have such a battle with these things. This is very convicting to me.

With all lowliness, the word *pasha*. In the Greek, means all, total.

And the word simply means total humility, I mean, nothing else. No exception, total humility. Not just lowliness but all lowliness, in everything. In every relationship, in every attitude, in every act, in every deed you always manifest lowliness. Now the Greek word comes from two words, the first one *tapnos* means low, it's just a word that means low as opposed to high. But it has a metaphorical use, it means...it's used sometimes to speak of poor. We talk about low-classes, well that's the way it's used, poor people, it's used to speak of unimportant.

If something is low priority, we mean it is unimportant. It's something ignoble or useless. It was even used by the Greeks to speak of something that was sort of a person who was cowardly, a low person.

And we use it today to speak of somebody who acts in a way that's just not consistent with what should have been done - that was a low thing to do. It means something base, something unimportant, something poor, something cowardly, ignoble.

Now the second part of the word is--*hrono*. which is a verb that means - to think or to judge. The combination, then, means to think of yourself as lowly, to think of yourself as unimportant, to think of yourself as base, to think of yourself as poor, to think of yourself as ignoble. Now you've got it. In everything you do think of yourself as low.

Paul said to the Romans - For goodness sake, a man should not think more highly of himself than he ought to think. And how ought he to think? Lowly. But you know, we're always told that we ought to

think of ourselves as something great. You know, that we ought to take care...we ought to really put it on. The commercials tell us that, man, if you're not rich and beautiful you can hardly stand to watch television. You can't...you can hardly stand it. It frustrates you. And, you know, we're constantly being told that we are to be proud. Well, that's not what the Bible says. You want to know something interesting? This word never appears in classical Greek because it was coined by Christians. Because the world didn't have this concept. John Wesley said, quote - "Neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility." They didn't have a word for it.

And the reason they didn't have a word for it was because they despised that attitude. They just used a derogatory word, this is a word that was given some character. They had words that meant poor and ignoble and cowardly and so forth. And, by the way, even this word when it was coined by the Christians came to mean poor, cowardly, unimportant and the pagans in the first two centuries every time we find this word in pagan writing used it in a derogatory way. Even when the Christians coined a word for a good kind of virtuous humility, they couldn't fit it into their lifestyle. They despised anybody like that. They looked down on anybody like that. They mocked anybody who was weak and cowardly and faint-hearted and had a servile mind and thought of himself poorly.

Well, you know, we need to be humble. And it grieves my heart, you know, to have people standing up and preaching as if it is the message of God that we've got to think we're great and think we're greater and we've got to parade ourselves and parade all of the things we've done and be honored for everything we've done. That's just not what the Bible teaches at all. Pagans have done that and they always do it.

And they always look on humility as a pitiable weakness. We're going to see more about it next week and really...I think it will change your thinking about this when we get into the concept of meekness a little bit. But in Christ humility became a beautiful virtue. And without it you can't walk worthy. There's just no way. Total humility, total humility, a basic essential.

Jesus knew it. Jesus...I mean, what did He have? What could He say He was proud of? He never said that. Paul said the only thing I ever boasted...I boast in the gospel of Jesus Christ, that's all. You say - But, Paul, you've a wonderful education. No, I'll just boast in Jesus Christ. Paul, you've traveled all over the world. No, just boast in Jesus Christ. Paul, your adventures are incredible, you ought to write a book. No, I'll just write a book about Jesus Christ. That's the right spirit. Jesus - what an example of humility. He was acquainted with grief, Matthew 26. He gave Himself, John 6. He was hate without a cause, John 15. He was homeless, Matthew 8. Persecuted, John 15.

Betrayed, Matthew 26. He was condemned, Matthew 20 tells us. Again it tells us He was delivered up. In Luke 18 it tells us He was despised.

In John 12 He was lifted on a cross. In Mark 10 it says He was mocked.

In Luke 22 He was numbered with the criminals. In Matthew 16 it says He was killed. He was humbled. And we must walk as He walked.

Even though He was God, and even though you're something in God's eyes and even though you all marvel of marvels by grace redemptively you still walk humble. Listen to this, Psalm 138:6, listen, this is great; "Though the Lord be high yet hath He respect unto the lowly."

Isn't that good? Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly. God make us humble. O, God, preserve me and you from ever exalting ourselves in our own mind thinking we've succeeded, we're big time. And everybody below us is to be looked down on.

Paul knew this kind of humility. He said in Acts 20:19 that we serve the Lord with all humility of mind, with all humility of mind, with many tears and trials by the plotting of the Jews. He says we serve the Lord with humility. Listen, if you don't have a servant's heart you'll never walk worthy. You're a servant as we've seen in I Cor. chapter 4 in our study, you're a third level galley-slave, a hupretes, nothing more than an underrower on a ship, you have no significance other than you make a contribution to the place you're going to. And as a Christian all you have is a contribution by virtue of your effort to make to the goal that God is attaining and that is His own glory.

Paul said - I am what I am by the grace of God. He said - I...I was a blasphemer and a persecutor but God counted me faithful in that He put me into the ministry, I, who am the chief of - what? Sinners. He knew what it was to suffer.

It is said that when the story of West India slavery was told to the Moravians, it was told that it was impossible to reach the slave population of the West Indies because they were separated from the ruling classes. And you just...they were just outcasts and you couldn't reach them. Well, a biographer said two Moravian missionaries offered themselves and said we will go and be slaves on the plantations. And we'll work as slaves, and we'll toil as slaves. If need be we'll take the lash to get beside the slaves and teach them Christ. And these two missionaries left their homes, went to the West Indies, went to work on the plantations as slaves, and by the side of other slaves they were close to the hearts of those slaves and the slaves heard them and their hearts were touched because they had received them humbled in their own condition. It was glorious. And yet, Christ's example was infinitely greater than that, wasn't it? He humbled Himself and became one of us. He encircled us in the embrace of His loving arms, He drew us into His own fellowship, who were slaves of sin.

You know, the Bible gives us some great examples of humility. I think of John the Baptist. You know what Jesus said about him in Matthew 11:11, he was the greatest man who ever lived. Among them that are born of women there hast not risen a greater than John the Baptist. The greatest man who

ever lived. Now certainly he should have been the recipient of some award, the greatest man who ever lived award. Maybe we could have it, the Matthew 11:11 award. Well, he said - He must increase, and I must - what? Decrease. He said, He is the Word, uhuh, I am just the voice. And the latchet of His shoe I'm not worthy to unloose.

Mary, how humble was Mary? The sister of Martha. We see her three times sitting at the feet of Jesus. And you get the picture that Martha was busy trying to put on a real hot deal, great meal. So everybody would say - Martha, you've done it again. Jesus says - Martha, Martha you've got the wrong priority. Pride can manifest itself in that way.

I think of the writers of the gospels. I was thinking about that this week in this regard. Have you ever noticed how the writers of gospel record could have said - And then, of course, I was there with Jesus and umm umm, and really play themselves up. But, you know, there's almost a beautiful hiding of themselves in their gospels. For example, Matthew. When Matthew introduces himself in his gospel, he's the only one that says - Matthew, the publican. He plays up the despised character that he was. And he makes no mention of himself having made a tremendous feast and invited all of his friends to meet Jesus. He put on a big evangelistic feast when he was going to follow Jesus but he never mentions it. Luke writes about that. Matthew never writes about that. Matthew isn't going to say anything about the things he's done.

And then Mark. Mark wrote, no doubt, under the tutelage of Peter.

Mark reflects Peter's perspective. And it's always been interesting to me that Mark does not include two of the greatest things that ever happened to Peter. Number one, the walking on the water, and number two, the incident about "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God, and I give unto you the keys to the kingdom," and all of this, those are absent from Mark. But you know what's present in Mark? Peter's rebuke, Peter's fall. See.

And I think of John. John who writes a 21 chapter gospel and never one single time mentions his name. Humility, humility.

Guthrie has written, "The grandest edifices, the tallest towers, the loftiest spires rest on deep foundations. The very safety of eminent gifts and pre-eminent graces lies in their association with deep humility.

They were dangerous without it. Great men do need to be good men. Look . he says, "A leviathan into the sea. with her towering at the mighty ship, masts and carrying a cloud of canvas, how she steadies herself on the waves and walks erect on the rolling waters like a thing of inherent self-regulating life. When the corn is waving and trees are bending and foaming billows roll before the blast and break in thunders on the beach. Why is she not flung on her beam's end, sent down

foundering into the deep? Why? Because unseen beneath the surface a vast well-ballast hull gives her balance and takes hold of the water, keeps her steady under a press of sail and on the bosom of a swelling sea. Even so," he says, "to preserve the saint upright to preserve the saint erect and safe from falling God gives him balance and ballast bestowing on the man to whom He has given lofty endowments, the attendant grace of a proportionate humility." End quote.

It's right. And what is humility? Let me close with this. What is it? You say - I know it's right, John, and...what is it? I'm going to give you three things; first of all - self-awareness. First of all, humility begins with self-awareness. It's so important. Bernard said quote, "The virtue by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness." Humility starts with really looking at yourself honestly. You know what I believe that involves, people? Daily, now mark it, daily every day of your life an open honest confession of sin before God.

You can mask who you really are. You can play games and convince yourself that you're something wonderful. And never be honest with yourself. But we are the ones, I John 1:g says, that are constantly confessing our sins. We are like Paul who says - I am the chief of sinners. We who never attain but press toward the mark, but never get there must realize it. Whenever you're tempted to be proud remember who you are. You haven't arrived. Don't kid yourself. You're not there. You haven't done it all. You haven't fulfilled it. Proper self-awareness. And you know what the problem gets to be every time? You know when we get all fouled up about who we really are, when we compare ourselves with other people. Because we can always find people worse than us. You know that? Well - I'm not so bad, look at him.

I use to use that on my mom. She was always concerned about my grades in school. I'd come home with a C and she'd say - Johnny, you should not get a C, you did not put out your best effort, why did you get a C. Well, mom, 10 kids got a D. See. That's typical. You see, there's always a lower standard. You can always find one you know. And it goes on in the home, too. Your wife's giving you...you know, nagging you a little bit about something and you say - Well, you know, if you don't like it go marry the drunk next door, see how you like that. You can always find something worse than you. You know, you can think you're the greatest pianist until you have to play a concert with Rubenstein. Or you can think you're a great golfer until you're asked to Tee-off with Jack Nicholas. Or you've done a great job in painting, isn't it wonderful how well you painted the living room until you stand beside Rembrandt. I mean, you can always find somebody to make you look good. And that's the problem.

You know what you've got to do? You've got to deal with yourself honestly before God.

II Corinthians 10 gives you the principle in verse 12. Paul says, listen; "We dare not," listen now, "We dare not make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves." Say, Boy, aren't we wonderful, you know. boy, they commend themselves.

They are the number that commend themselves. And you know how they do it? They measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves. You See? They use their own self-made criteria to evaluate what they are and they're never really honest. Humility is taking off the rose-colored glasses of self-love and seeing that you're nothing but an unworthy sinner. That's humility, that's where it starts.

And these false apostles in II Corinthians 10, these false apostles were coming into town and saying - We've got the greatest truth, we're the new breed. Listen to us, we're the big heroes. They were even apparently calling themselves - super- apostles. They were the big shots. And Paul says - Well, they compare themselves with themselves, that's why they think they're so great. They've got the wrong standard.

So, to begin with true humility springs from self-awareness. People, you've got to be honest with who you are. You're never going to know humility...by the way, I'm talking about a worthy walk. If you want to walk worthy and be blessed by God in your life then you're going to have to walk in humility. And if you're going to walk in humility you're going to have to be honest with who you really are.

You've got to see your faults and confess your sins and deal with those things, daily.

There's a second thing. Not only self-awareness but let's call it Christ awareness. If you're not the standard, who is? Well, it's Christ. It's Jesus Christ. It's when we compare ourselves with ourselves that we get proud. It's when we compare ourselves with ourselves that we feel like we're all right. But we are to compare ourselves with Jesus Christ, I John 2:6; "He that says he abides in Him ought even to walk as He walked." That's the standard. Now when you can stand up and say I'm happy to announce, everyone, that I know walk as Jesus walked. Then you have a right to be proud. You're not going to get anybody to believe you.

You know, people often ask me this, what is the most humiliating experience you've ever had? And you know, you always think about some ...something that was embarrassing, you know like the time I was preaching and my pants ripped and the choir was all giggling at me. You think about things like that, you know. And...or other silly things that you did and you kind of had egg on your face. But when I think about something - the most humiliating experience I ever had, it's very easy for me to answer that. It took two years, and it was the two years that I taught here at Grace Church, gospel of John, about 96 sermons about 100 hours or more of preaching, somewhere between 2 and 3 thousand hours of study that I did. And you know what? As you study the gospel of John, over two years, week after week after week, every paragraph presents the deity of Jesus Christ. And, you know, you live with the deity of Christ day after day after day after day. And you know something? When you compare yourself constantly with Jesus Christ, that's the healthiest thing you could ever do. Because you see who you really aren't. See. You're nothing.

There's a third thing. Self-awareness, Christ awareness, and ultimately God awareness. As you begin to see Jesus Christ you see Him in His humanness. You say - He was a perfect man. I mean, He met everybody, gave all the right answers. And you feel so inadequate.

I give so many dumb answers. He said just the perfect word for the perfect time. I don't do that. He had the perfect attitude for every single situation, every single person He ever met. I don't make it on that. He knew exactly how to help everybody who needed help and just the way they needed the help. I can't do that. You know what a standard He is, just to be aware of Him. But then, you know, you go beyond that and all of a sudden you see His deity and you begin to realize that this is God. And when you compare yourself with God, I mean, it's just...you know. Staggering how puny pusillanimous you really are. How absolute zilch, zero, nothing.

Listen to this one, Isaiah, he compared himself with God one day.

This is what it says. Isaiah 6; "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Isaiah said - Hey, one day I saw God, I saw God. "And above it stood the seraphim and each one had six wings with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord." That's a trinitarian recognition. "The whole earth is full of His glory and the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him who cried and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Where did you ever discover that Isaiah?

How did you get that awareness, Isaiah? How did you come to that humility, Isaiah? "For mine eyes have seen the King." You see? That's the perspective. When the apostle Paul looked at himself he said - You're the chief of sinners. Self-awareness. When Peter looked at Jesus he said - Depart from me, O, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Christ awareness. And when God saw, or when Isaiah saw God he said, "Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips." See.

That's the heart of it all. When you see God you say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visiteth him?" Who am I? Humility.

Well, this is the perspective. And this is such a beautiful perspective. Let me tell you something, beloved. If all of us functioned in humility it would be incredible the testimony we would have on the world. Next week we're going to see that humility is not weakness. It is power under control. And that's what meekness means.

We'll see that next time. Let's pray.

Lord God, it is so hard to grapple everyday with the problem of pride and humility. Help us to remember that first of all, You give grace to the humble, You honor the humble, You reward the humble, You bless the humble, You give life to the humble, You give Your Kingdom to the humble, and only judgment to the proud. May that motivate us to desire to be humble. And then, Father, how to be. To honestly look at ourselves and everyday confess our sin, every single day face our indulgence, our greed. And, Father, that it's Christ-awareness every day, Father, every day may we see something of Jesus Christ in His word. It's God- awareness, may we everyday praise You, may we lift praise to God for who He is and what He's done. Give us those things, Father, that can draw us to humility so that in our humility we keep the unity of the Spirit, we walk the worthy walk that the world may know that this Christ is no mere man but that He is sent of God.

To this end we pray for Your glory alone. Amen.

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