

The Lowly Walk, Part 4

Ephesians 4:2

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Take your Bible, if you will, and let's look at Ephesians chapter 4. We're studying the book of Ephesians together and we're really kind of taking our time as we embark upon the fourth chapter.

Let me read you the first three verses again as the setting for what we'll say this morning. Ephesians 4, beginning at verse 1:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation to which you're called 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, as I've been saying to you, we are examining what it means to walk worthy. That is the heart of this entire second section of Ephesians. As we went verse by verse through the first part, the foundation was laid. As we go verse by verse through the second part, we find the practical injunctions based on that foundation. And it all begins here in these first three verses; the worthy walk. And Paul is calling on us to walk worthy of the vocation to which we are called. If God indeed has called us, we are to walk worthy of such a calling.

Let's share together in a word of prayer as we begin our study this morning.

Father, as we come to the Word of God it is with a sense of sacredness that we do so. It is with a sense of awe that we hold in our hands the very revelation of your own self. We feel as if we should remove our shoes for we stand on holy ground. Father, speak to us through the simplicity of the thought that You would bring to our minds this morning. Make it so we can understand it. Use the Spirit of God's power to penetrate and convict us to change things that need to be changed, to reinforce things that need to be reinforced so that we might live to Your glory and Your praise and walk worthy of that to which You have called us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Martin Lloyd Jones, the great English expositor and pastor, said, I quote; "I do not think it is a harsh judgment to say that the most obvious feature of the life of the Christian church today is, alas, its superficiality." He said further, "The one main cause is our attitude to the Bible, our failure to take it seriously, our failure to take it as it is and allow it to speak to us." End quote. And I would add, our failure to obey it. I think Jones is right.

It is true that the basic characteristic of the church today is its superficiality. I think it's changing from what it was ten years ago, which was even more superficial. But I think there is a mass of Christianity

that doesn't know the meaning of real commitment. There is a tremendous amount of half-commitment, of superficiality, of indifference, of complacency, of an indolent attitude that keeps people from; one, understanding the Bible; two, making application of it; and three, obeying it. And yet this is the heart of everything. What a tremendous sin it is for those who name the name of Jesus Christ to be indifferent about the principles of the Christian faith and yet that's very true. Many, many Christians are half-committed, or less. Superficial, complacent and indifferent.

To study the Bible, for example, without letting it say what it really means is a serious sin. Peter speaks of that in II Peter chapter 3 and verse 16. And he's talking about Paul's epistles and he says this; "As also in all Paul's epistles speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to be understood," watch, "Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest," w-r-e-s-t. "as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction."

Now the word wrest is the word you key on in this verse. The Greek word means "to torture" or to put on the rack. Now when somebody tortures somebody they have a goal in mind. The tormentor takes the victim, puts them on the rack, stretches his limbs to get the person to say what he wants him to say. Right? That's exactly what Peter is saying. There are some people who take the scripture and put it on the rack and twist it out of shape to make it say what they want it to say. That's a serious sin, to twist the Scripture, to not let it say what it really means. And that goes on in Christianity all the time. Twisting the Scripture to somebody's bias. Twisting the Scripture because you are unlearned and don't have the tools to do it right. Twisting the Scripture because you're unstable and you do not have a solid commitment to a theological principle of truth, twisting the Scripture because you know no better because you're not taught. There are many people who have taken the scriptures and forced them into meanings that are improper and, of course, under the umbrella of Christianity you have the cults and isms and chisms and spasms and everything else all doing this. There are people, then, who torture the Scripture on the rack to force it to say what they want it to say, to make it accommodate their own bias or justify their own behavior.

It is also a sin to study the Bible and even let it say what it means but then use it for your own ill-conceived end. In II Cor. chapter 2 and verse 17 Paul says; "We are not as those who corrupt the Word of God." He uses the word kapeelos which means a huckster or a con-man or a charlatan, or a phony or a fraud who takes something and pawns it off for his own ends. There are people who take the Word of God, even though it is rightly interpreted, they may even proclaim it but they use it as a way to get their own ends met. There are people who, believe it or not, are getting fat rich off the Word of God.

So there is that area of sin where you study the Bible and don't let it say what it really means and then there is that area where you let it say what it means but you use it to gain personal ends.

Thirdly, it is also possible to study the Bible, let it say what it means, even make the right application and then refuse to obey it.

And that's the worst of all. James 1, or James 4 rather, verse 17 says: "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is," what? "Sin." There is the sin, then, of twisting Scripture. There is the sin, then, of taking Scripture and using it for your own ends. And there is the sin, then, of not even obeying it. We cannot do that with the Scripture. We cannot torture the Scripture to make it say what we want it to say to fit our own thing. We cannot use it in a corrupt manner, not really sincerely trying to glorify God but to gain our own ends. And we dare not ignore it and not obey. Beloved, I

submit to you that we must not be the half-committed, we must not be the superficial, we must not be the indifferent, the unconcerned who do less than let it say what it means. Let it be applied to what it must be applied to and obey it with all our hearts. Only that is to walk worthy, nothing less.

And Paul says here that we are to walk worthy of the vocation to which we are called...it means we take the word of God at its face value and we allow it to say what it means. to be applied where it must and to respond in obedience.

Now as we come to this section of Ephesians 4, Paul is hitting on that bottom line. This is where commitment begins. If we're going to do that with the Word of God this is where we start. Now you're going to either take these verses for what they say or you're not. You're either going to apply them where they need to be applied or you're not. You're either going to obey them or you're not. And it's a question of the level of your commitment. Paul is at the bottom line right here. He's saying this is where it all begins.

If you're to walk worthy what do you do? You say, "Well, I think the first thing you ought to do is join the church." That isn't what Paul says. Well, I think the first thing you ought to do is read your Bible one hour a day. That isn't what Paul says. No, he's talking about something completely different than external things.

Well, the first thing you ought to do is...is witness. No, that isn't what Paul says. Well, the first thing you ought to do is make sure you say your prayers every day, if you're really going to live the life, walk the worthy walk. That isn't what he says.

Look what he says, "All lowliness, meekness, long-suffering. forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Listen, he's talking about the cultivation of basic attitudes. The worthy walk is predicated on the right attitudes. And Paul here is talking about you cultivating the right attitudes in the heart. If we are the children of God, if we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, if we were chosen before the world began, if we have been redeemed, forgiven, made wise, given an eternal inheritance, been placed in the body of Christ, made alive from the dead, raised to sit in the heavenlies, if we have been granted an inheritance and given the earnest of the Spirit, if we have been designed by God unto good works, if we've been made fellow citizens with all the saints, if we are the habitation of the Spirit, if we are partakers in the promise of Christ, if we're all these things then we ought to live like it. And living like it means we start with the five characteristics of the worthy walk in verses 2 and 3.

Now we've already seen the call to the worthy walk in verse 1.

We went through that verse by verse, word by word, really in that verse. And now we're into the second verse and we're looking at the characteristics of the worthy walk and there are five of them in verses 2 and 3. Five characteristics. I think that you know that if you've been with us for a couple of weeks. The first one, the first thing that characterizes a Christian who is committed, the first thing that characterizes a Christian who is not superficial, somebody who is really there, really dealing with it as it ought to be dealt with, somebody who's letting the Word of God say what it means and mean what it says and who is obeying it is characterized by, number one, verse 2, all lowliness. And we talked about it, didn't we? All that exaltation, we're so high and heavenly and holy and exalted and lifted up and made to sit in the heavenlies and one in Christ, the incredible position of the believer, and all of a

sudden we descend right to the very bottom with the first characteristic. We who are so exalted must live so low. All lowliness. And I told you last time the two words mean total-total humility, total humility.

Five keys to a worthy walk. Five necessary keys and they're progressive. You go from humility to meekness and then meekness produces long-suffering. And then long-suffering produces a forbearing love and where there is forbearing love there is the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. There is a beautiful logical progression.

Now we're still at point one - all lowliness. And you know something? I planned to go through the second one, the third one, the fourth one and the fifth one this morning and I didn't get off the first one again. And I wound up preaching the message I didn't prepare but saying what was in my heart to say.

Let's go back to the concept of humility and look at that word. All lowliness. Beloved, it is so hard, isn't it? To be humble? It's so hard. It's just something you fight through day after day after day. But you know what I've noticed in my Christian life? Uhm...I'm not humble enough but I'm humble more often than I used to be, but nearly enough. But I've seen as my life has grown, I've seen that I've learned to gain the victory over pride. Not all the time but more times than I used to be able to. And I guess it's because I've begun to concentrate in that area. One of the prayers of my heart constantly is, "God, teach me true humility, teach me true humility."

Somebody says to me, "Doesn't all that stuff going on at Grace Church go to your head? Don't you get to thinking - Boy, you're really something?" Oh, I've had that thought. Then my wife says to me, "You never take out the garbage." And I realize that I'm not so hot. You know, all you have to do is examine the reality about yourself and you're not kidding anybody. All loneliness...what...lowliness, what does it mean? Let me show you something. When Jesus our Lord came into the world He had a message to give. His first message was repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Come on in the kingdom. Get converted. And as soon as He had gathered about Him a little band of believers, as soon as He had some children of the King, as soon as He had some subjects of the kingdom, He knew He had to tell them the basics of how to live. You know what the first thing He told them was? Look at Matthew chapter 5 and let's find out the bottom line on living like a King's child. The bottom line on being in His kingdom.

Matthew 5 verse 1; "And seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain and when He was seated His disciples came unto Him and He opened His mouth and taught them saying," now He's got them there and He's going to teach them. What's He going to teach them? They're the...they're the ones who have entered the kingdom. They're the ones who've become fellow-heirs. They're the ones who are part of what He is doing in the world. They're the children of the King of Kings. What's He going to say? What is the basic principle? What is the basic stance that they must have? Well notice in verse 3; "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets who were

before you."

Listen, beloved, did you ever see such a pitiful bunch in your life? As that bunch? Blessed are the poor in spirit. And, by the way, Luke says, "Blessed are the poor" period. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who know they don't have anything so they hunger after and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers, not the ones who stand up for their rights but the ones who are concerned that everybody get a fair share. Blessed are they who are persecuted and reviled and accused. Boy, that is a pitiful bunch. But those are the humble, you see? And that's where it all begins. Boy, I'm telling you, people, we live in the day when it's all fouled up. We're so busy in the Christian world exalting people and making superstars out of them and patting them on the back and handing them awards and degrees and notoriety and fame and making something out of them that we have got the whole thing completely reversed. "These are the people." Jesus said, "These are the people that belong in My kingdom. These are the children of the King."

And there we are at Ephesians 4 with the same thing, who is it that walks worthy? It's the lowly and the meek and those who suffer long and those who endure with love. Those are the ones. It isn't the great and the famous and the loud and the boisterous and the prominent and the talented and the rich and the super- duper ones. And yet in Christianity there is so much of that going on. This is the child of the King.

Peter put it this way in I Peter 5:5, and you see, he was writing there to people who are in the pastorate, to those who would be the shepherds, to those who would stand out, those who would be the leaders of the flock, those who would get the recognition and get the honor and the love and the attention and the affection and he says to them this; "Be clothed with humility for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." Keep your perspective, he said. Be clothed with humility. He used a Greek word that was used to speak of the over garment or the apron that a worker put on to keep that which he wore from getting soiled. And when you take all of your graces and all of that which is true about you, you deck it all over in humility, Peter says.

But it's an elusive thing, isn't it? We suggested to you last time there are three...three keys to humility; one is self-awareness, seeing yourself for who you really are, a sinner and nothing more and worthy of nothing other than judgment. Honesty, dealing with your own sin. Honesty, dealing with your own weakness. Honesty dealing with your own stupidity, dealing with your own inadequacies. "We are not sufficient, II Cor. 5:5 says Paul, to think anything of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God." An honest self-awareness.

Secondly we said Christ awareness. Listen, if you follow II Cor. 3 again through to the 18th verse he says; "You'd better gaze on the glory of the Lord." And as you focus on the majesty of Jesus Christ you get a true picture of yourself in relation to Him.

Finally, God awareness and we read it, didn't we, in Psalm 8; "When I consider Thy works, the moon and the stars which Thou hast made, what is man that Thou art mindful of Him." When I am really honest to see myself in my sinfulness, in my inadequacy, when I really see the majesty of Jesus Christ as I gaze at His glory, when I know what God is like I come out humble. Those are the perspectives that drive the heart to humility. You're not going to get humble by sitting in a corner wishing you were. You'll gain humility by sitting in that same corner and reciting before God your sins and your failures and your inadequacies. And you'll gain humility by opening the pages of the Word

of God and seeing Jesus Christ and God and all His majesty.

And, by the way, God may shove you along a little bit if you're not doing too well. God has some things He uses to help us get humble. II Cor. chapter 12 Paul said that he had so many visions and so many revelations that the Lord had to give him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. The Lord may give you that. The Lord may put something in your life that just constantly bugs you. It's just a hurdle you just never get over. It's just a reality you constantly face that makes you see yourself for who you really are. It's somebody you can't handle or you can't conquer, it's a problem you can't solve, it's something about you that you just can't seem to get over and it's there just to keep you in the place where you understand who you really are. Humility, total humility is the bottom line in the worthy walk.

Now let me talk about it for a minute and this is where I just digressed this morning and never got any further. I was trying to look at my own heart and say - John, what is it that tempts you in areas of pride? What are the areas that you see people being tempted? I just want to be practical. This is kind of a word study on the concept of lowliness. Where does...where do we fight to really be humble? Where does Satan really hit us? And I just listed some things, let me share them with you, they're just practical. Where are we tempted to be proud? First of all, I would have to say there's a sense in which we are constantly being tempted to be proud about what we do, ability pride, let's call it. Let's call it and I just thought of that one, I didn't have that on my list. This is going to turn out to be a good sermon when I get done with it. Ability pride. You know, you're always tempted at the point of your strength, you know, to get pushed over into pride, always. I'm...I've never been tempted to be proud about my fantastic mathematical ability. I can't do it.

I...ah, I don't want to tell you what I got in algebra but it wasn't good. I can't handle that kind of stuff. I am not tempted in that.

I have never been tempted to boast about my tremendous musical expertise. The best I can do is sing the melody line. But you know something; you know where I get tempted? I...I can preach because God has given me a gift. And so Satan says to me, "Boy, you know, you're really a great preacher." And I say, "Yeah, that's probably true. I mean they all come there and listen...see." That's how I get it, that's what I get. And then I go in my office on Monday and there's a letter, "I was in your church Sunday and I want you to know I violently disagree with everything you said. I brought my neighbor so-and-so and you offended her...I'm never coming back again." Well, Lord, thanks for helping me keep the perspective.

Or else somebody will come up, this is funny, somebody said to me once, "We came here once to hear you but we like our pastor better." I love that, see? That's great. Right there. Thank you Lord. If I probably went to hear him, I'd like him better too, you know?

We're tempted to exalt ourselves in our own abilities. Let me give you an illustration of that just thought of one. I Cor. 2.

You know Paul was a well-educated man. He had so much going for him. Man, he'd been....he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, he was trained in the Rabbinic traditions, he knew the Old Testament. I mean, he had so much that he could really rely on. He could have...and philosophical, he had a mind, a philosophical mind like a steel trap. He could go right to the moment and capture the prey.

Tremendous. Look what he says, I love this, I Cor. 2; "And I, brethren, when I came to you came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determine not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Oh, I like that. He says, "I didn't lay any of that philosophical stuff on you, I didn't come with any of that logical wisdom from the human realm." And you know something else about Paul? He not only didn't use that but you know he had a lot of personal pizzazz. The guy was a dynamo. We know that cause before he was a preacher he was a Christian killer. I mean, the guy was an intense, fiery guy and he had tremendous courage. I mean, you've got to have a lot of courage to be chasing around capturing the Christians. I mean, you've got to have a lot of boldness. He was sort of like a spiritual bounty hunter. I mean, this guy was a tough customer. Well, he could of...he could have come through his ministry like a bulldog, but I love it, what it says in verse 3; "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling."

You know, and then he could have preached all this philosophy of these big long words and he could have come on so grandiose, but no, in verse 4; "And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Here was a dear man who avoided the temptation to have his strengths turned into sins. See? To get pushed over the edge with his power of personality or with his ability to communicate or with his logic and his knowledge of philosophy, he backed off. And later on, you know, as I mentioned earlier, in II Cor. chapter 12 he says to these same people, he says, ah, "Oh, I really rejoice in my infirmities because when I am weak then I am" ...what? "Strong." You know, we're all tempted like that. We're tempted where we have some strength to abuse it. We're tempted where we have some ability to want to flaunt it, to want to make a big thing out of it. You know, if we can...if we can do something well we want everybody to know we do it well. We want to, sort of, parade that thing. That's a....that's an area of temptation. Let's call it ability pride. It's kind of hard to stay humble about that. I guess the key is to remember that whatever you do you do it because God gave you the ability to start with. Right? Any gift, any talent useful to God is a gift of the Holy Spirit who divideth to every man severally as He will. There's nothing to be proud about. It's all a gift of God.

Let's go to another area. Economic pride. You know, especially in our society, I couldn't preach this message in some places in the world, places where I've been. I couldn't talk about economic pride; they wouldn't even know what I was talking about. I...I've stood in some places of the world on a mud floor with mud walls and a mud roof with sticks and this wouldn't even relate. But in America this is a problem, economic pride. This is the boasting and the bragging and the parading and the throwing around of our riches, displaying them, trusting in them, exalting ourselves and our accomplishment by parading what we've gained. That's pride. This is the pride that says, "Look what I have! I must be somebody to have what it takes to have this." See? Now we all get in that game.

Let's look at Deuteronomy chapter 8 for a minute and see an illustration of this. Deuteronomy 8 verse 11, very vivid one, "Beware," Moses talking to the people of Israel' "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I command thee this day." Now watch, "Lest when thou hast eaten are art full and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply and thy silver and thy gold are multiplied and all that thou hast is multiplied then thine heart be lifted up." Now stop there for a minute. Moses says you're going to go in...You're going to inherit all these wonderful things in the Promised Land. God's going to give you so much. You're going to have goodly houses, you're going to have herds and flocks and silver and gold and you know what's going to be the tendency? You're

going to forget where you got it. See? And you're going to think you did it with your ability. You're going to think you're the self-made man. See? You did it. And your heart will be lifted up...and the next line...and you will forget the Lord your God who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water, who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint, who fed thee in the wilderness with manna which thy fathers knew not that He might humble thee that He might test thee to do thee good at thy latter end. You see, God had all this good stuff in mind but did...but you'll forget, he says, the day will come when you'll forget what He took you out of and you'll think you did this. And you'll forget what you went through and you'll forget how for 40 years God made you absolutely dependent on Him and showed you that every good thing you ever had was from Him, every meal you ever ate was from Him. Every drop of water you ever drank was from Him. But the day will come you'll get your goodly house and you'll get your fancy clothes and you'll have your gold and you'll have your silver and you'll forget the source of it all. And the point is you'll get indulgent and it will be hard to remember God and you'll be lifted up and proud and you'll want to parade those things and say, "Look what I have done." And it will be out of perspective. And the sin comes, first of all, in the boastfulness, second of all in the thought that you did it, and third of all in the wastefulness that parades riches rather than investing them in God's Kingdom. Now that's pretty practical stuff.

"And thou say in thy heart," verse 17, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." Look what all I've done.

Check out what I've got and you'll know I'm successful. Look what I've done. The parade is on. But, verse 18, "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto thy fathers as it is this day. And it shall be if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God and walk after other gods and serve them and worship them I testify against you this day that you shall utterly perish as the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God." Everything we have God gave us. Have we forgotten that? Are we parading it as if we got it? Are we parading it as if we created ourselves with the ability to gain it? If we created ourselves in this country where we could earn it rather than some place in the world where no matter how smart you were, no matter how clever you were, no matter how creative you were, the best you could do would be to have a two-room mud hut. Are you kidding yourself about who is the source of it all? Are you parading it as if you are? We all get tempted in that way. It's so difficult to resist it.

In Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 8 we read this; "Woe unto them who join house to house, who lay field to field, till there is no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth." In other words, woe unto the person who just buys more and more and more until he is crowded people so far out of his life that there's nobody around. He's just adding it to himself for his own ends. I guess it isn't stretching the point to say it was this kind of people who existed in the church at Laodicea because this is what our Lord said to them in Revelation 3:17; "Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." You've got it all backwards.

So there is the pride that comes to us in our abilities. There is the pride that comes to us because of our economics. Thirdly, there's a temptation to pride in the verbal area, we call it verbal pride. Ability pride, economic pride, verbal pride. You know what this is? This is just bragging. The Greeks had a word for it; it was the Greek word *alazonae*. And *alazonae* is the word used for the guy; in fact this is

an illustration from classical Greek. The guy's standing on the shore looking out at the fleet of ships in the harbor in Greece. And a fellow walks up and he says, "Those are lovely ships, who do they belong to?" "Oh, those are my ships and I own those ships and we've sailed the seven seas and I've been here and there. We've carried the greatest cargo ...and he goes on and on with this big long deal about his fleet." And the man is overawed at what he possesses and finally the alazonae walks away and the stranger is still awe-struck and he says to a person standing by, "Did you know that all that belongs to him?" And he looks and he says, "Oh, no," he says, "that's...that's the town fool, it all belongs to Mr. so-and-so." See. That's the word alazonae. The guy who shoots off his mouth about the stuff he doesn't even own or do, a big mouth braggart. That's verbal pride.

You know, we can...we get to the place where we say things about ourselves that aren't even true. Do you know that? You know, it's amazing how great we are the further we get away from the actual event. Have you noticed that? How the story gets better and better, year after year? Every time you tell it there's a new little wrinkle, see, that just sort of umphs, see. You know, remember that conversation when you really stood up to your boss? The first time you told it, "Well, you know, I did hold my own." The second time you told it, "Boy, I held my own." Third time, "Did I ever tell that guy a thing or two." See. There's that progressive ummmmmm, verbal pride, boasting words, bragging words, words of arrogance, making sure you tell everybody what you...what you want them to hear. And it comes in two areas, we brag about what we have done. We brag about what we have done. This is something that is just tendency and human nature to tell people what we've done. Boy, I fight that. Everybody will...you know, you get into a conversation...well, let me tell you what I did. Well you did that, can I tell you what I did...can I....it's can you top this? I Samuel 2:3, listen to Hannah, she says, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth for the Lord is a God of knowledge and by His actions are weighed." You'd better keep your mouth shut, God's the One who knows what you really did.

In fact, we saw last time in Proverbs the statement, "Don't you talk about you, leave that for somebody else." Remember that? We want to talk about what we've done. I'll give you a little test sometime. Try to go a whole week and never once talk about what you've done. Try it. Try to go a whole afternoon for a starter. Don't ever talk....with people around you, I don't mean sitting in a room all alone. Go a whole week without talking once about what you have done. You know, I notice that by its absence in people. If I'm with somebody I notice people who don't talk about what they've done, the very absence of that says volumes.

We have verbal pride in what we've done. Secondly, we have verbal pride in what we're going to do. We do a lot of that. Ahmmm we boast about, well, "I'll tell you if I was there I'll tell you what I'll do. Boy, when I see that guy am I ever going to tell him a thing or two. Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do, I'm going to build the biggest business there is. I'm going to make a million bucks. I'll tell you what I'm going to do, boy, when I get done with this thing, there won't be anything like it in this world." We...we do that, you see. We...boy, I'm going to do a number on this one.

Listen to I Kings, this is good; "And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him this, let not him that girds on his armor boast himself as he that puts it off." Isn't that good? Don't tell the tale, folks, when you're getting the armor on, tell it when you're getting it off. When the battle is over you might have something to say. But we are so tempted to....ah, about what we're going to do and about what we have done, to brag and to boast.

Psalms 12:3 says; "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and of the tongue that speaks proud things."

Imagine what a vivid...cut off. I'll never forget, I read in the L.A. Times some years back, this is a horrible thing but I just thought of it. A guy picked up a girl, he wanted to seduce her, she was a rough girl from down in Los Angeles. I'll never forget reading this. In fact, I kept the clipping. And he was flattering her, trying to get her to go to a motel with him and he tried to kiss her and she had a razor blade in her teeth and cut off his lips. I'll never forget it. And I've never thought of Psalm 12:3 without thinking of that. What a vivid thing. God will cut off the flattering lips. There's no reason for us to brag about what we've done or what we will do. No reason for us to have verbal pride.

There's another area I want to mention, fourth area, I don't know what to call this but let's call it class pride. By that I don't mean the freshman class of 1978, I mean this idea of a strata.

You know the tendency is to look down on people at another level.

You know, we get to a certain place in our society; we get to a certain level of society we just look down on people. We think of them as sort of a lower class, you know, we don't want them in the neighborhood, we don't want to get them over for dinner, we have a certain echelon that we've gone to. And we all fall into this.

And you know, we don't want to bring those people over they might soil, you know, the place or something, you might have to sweep up after they leave. You know, they have mud on their shoes or...there's, we just sort of...we just sort of get into those little pigeon holes at all the levels. And when we have a feast or a dinner or something it's only a certain strata who are allowed to fellowship with us. Maybe they just don't come up to our economics or our social standing or whatever...maybe they're just not real good conversationalists, you know. I think that's a....that's a very common thing. We look down on people at another level. That's a sin. That's pride. That's pride.

You've forgotten something very important and that is that God loves poor people. You know that? He made so many of them. He must love them. And when Jesus came into the world He was one of them. Wasn't He? And that's the way it is. James says, he says, "Look when a man comes into your church with a gold ring and fine clothes and behind him comes a man in filthy clothes, vile raiment and you say to the man in fine clothes - Hey, sit down here in the front seat, man, and make yourself at home. And you say to the man in the vile raiments, sit under my feet here and stay out of the way. You are a respecter of persons, have you forgotten," he says, James says, "that it is the rich people that oppress you? Have you forgotten that it's the rich people that abuse you? Have you forgotten the royal law of love?" Listen, there is to be a recognition of equality among men, Jesus said - He was no respecter of persons' nor are we to be.

In the tenth Psalm and the second verse, it says; "The wicked in his pride does persecute the poor." And it's true. And we may not say, "Oh, I wouldn't persecute a poor man." You may do it by the fact that you don't let him in your world, you don't love him, you don't embrace him, you don't take the much that you have and meet his need with it. Lots of way to persecute the poor, class pride, looking down on people at another social level from us.

There's another kind of pride, I call it appearance pride. Now I think people ought to dress nice, I'm not saying that. We don't want you to look like Wanda Wallflower, we don't want you to go around, you know, like one guy said, "Every old barn needs paint now and then." So, you know, we realize that there's got to be...you want to take care of yourself and there's a sense in which in the Song of

Solomon you have a beautiful adorning of the woman there to please the one she loves. There's a sense of propriety. In fact, you know, if you look too crummy you call attention to yourself in a bad way. In fact that's what the Pharisees used to do. Whenever they wanted to be really pious, they put on old torn, shredded stuff and they'd dump ashes on their head and they'd go around looking so rotten everybody would say, "Oh, they must be holy, they have no thought for the things of the world." See. Now that's piosity, that's sickening hypocrisy. There's a balance.

But on the other hand, we are always tempted and particularly in our culture today, to dress to call attention to ourselves. We are stupid cattle led to slaughter by Madison Avenue. To buy all the junk that keeps selling us wastefully investing ourselves in needless things, so that we may appear, we may parade ourselves, show ourselves off, want to be better than others. You know, in I Timothy the Apostle Paul confronted that thing. In those days when women wanted to get all dressed up, you know, you just basically wore fancy things all the way to the ground and so if you were going to put on any real riches you stuck them in your hair. And so a woman let her hair grow real long and then she'd wind her hair all over the place and wind up everything she owned in it. So it would be full of gold combs and tortoise shell combs and stick pins and pearl things wrapped all the way through it, and she'd literally have a fortune on her head. And that was the way she showed off. And so when you went to a party, you know, it wasn't a matter of comparing whether you got this dress at this place or that dress at this...you just looked at each other's head and you knew who was the queen of the whole deal. That's why in I Timothy 2:9 Paul says that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel. And it doesn't mean only modest in terms of the way it fits, it means terms of modest in the way it cost, modest. And not with...he says...not with braided, it means plaited hair, this flopped all over with everything in it hair, that's free translation, gold, pearls, costly array, but let this woman be adorned with good works.

I don't want to pick on the women, it's the same for men too. Men, we really have to be careful about this. I don't know about you but I want to be God's man and I know you want to be God's men and God's women. This is one practical way. It's so easy for us, you know, Lucifer was the most beautiful creature God ever made and his beauty was his downfall. God has made some of you very lovely people, lovely to look at. And that can be the greatest device that Satan can use.

Very few people can handle that. The appearance pride where we become haughty, boastful, indulgent, and we want to show ourselves off as better than other people. It's an evil thing. Read again the 30...or rather the 3rd chapter of Isaiah and read verses 16 to 26, it's all there.

And then there's another kind of pride. I call it power pride. Just a couple more. Power pride. This is the pride that comes from position. This is the temptation that comes and says, "Look who you are, you deserve better treatment than that." You know, everybody's got some position and everybody's tempted to use it.

Yesterday at our house, Mark said to Melinda - he said, "Melinda, do this...take that over there." He was trying to get her to pick up something and take it out of the room. And she looked at him and she says, "You're not my boss." And Mark said, "Listen, Melinda, it's like this"...Mark's 10, Melinda's 5..."Dad is the boss of Mom, Mom is the boss of Matt, Matt is the boss of Marcy, Marcy is the boss of me and I am the boss of you." And Melinda picked it up and took it out. It shows you what she knows. Melinda has decided that she is the boss of the dog. And the dog is the boss of nobody. You see, that's the way it is, isn't it? Whatever we are in the world we can find somebody that we can oppress.

You know the Old Testament; we don't have time this morning. The Old Testament says a lot about oppressing people. You know, when God gives you a position of leadership, whether it's in your home or whether it's in your job or whether it's just sort of a natural recognition of leadership in a group of peers, you know, sometimes among women they'll be five or six women that are good friends and it's obvious that they'll look to one or two for leadership. You know, in any of those kinds of situations whether it's the business or the home, in a social group, at school, wherever it is, you can always be tempted to oppress people with an over-exaggerated sense of your own importance. Pride power, ruling and dominating and oppressing saying, "I deserve better than this, you do this, you do that, do this"...treating people as if they were machines to serve you.

You know, an illustration of this that's somewhat apt comes in the 18th chapter of Revelation where you have Babylon, this ultimate system and it says of Babylon; "How much she hath glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so much torment and sorrow give her as luxuriously as she lived...as she has lived. As much as she has glorified herself, that's how much torment she gets for she said in her heart, I sit a queen, I am no widow, I shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine and she shall utterly be burned with fire for strong is the Lord God who judges her." Here is the system that sits and says, "I am the queen" and God says, "That's all." Herod who stands up in Acts 12 on Herod Day and he gives a speech about himself and the people say "Oh, he is a god." And he eats it up and he loves it.

And the Bible says, "And he was smitten by an angel of God and eaten by worms on the spot." Nebuchadnezzar in the fourth chapter of Daniel says, "Look at the power of my might, look at the strength of my majesty, look at the kingdom that I have built." And God says, "That's all for you, Nebuchadnezzar, and, God says, you're going out into the grass and you're going to be turned into an animal." And he was, a raving maniac, his fingernails grew like the claws of a bird, and his hair like the hair of an animal, and he was wet with the dew living like a beast. And finally in the 37th verse he says; "I will arise and give testimony to this, you must honor God, extol God, and anyone who is proud God has the power to humble." He got the message. We're tempted to use the position we have to lord it over people.

Ability pride, economic pride, verbal pride, class pride, appearance pride, power pride, can I give you some closing ones? Social pride, and this is kind of like class pride, just a little different. It's demanding a certain kind of treatment. You know, I mean, how are you going to go back to the Motel 6 when you've been to the Holiday Inn, right? As we move up in life we move to one strata to the next. And once you get up the ladder you just, you know, well, I've reached a certain point in life, you expect a certain kind of treatment. And if your waiter's a minute late – "What does he think he's doing? Does he think he's just treating some ordinary person?" You just come up the ladder and you...you...the world of people who are supposed to serve you gets bigger and bigger...you want the chief seat, you want the best place, the nicest room, the best this, the best...it's a matter of ...a little bit of a wrong view of what you are worthy of, so often. Nothing wrong with the nice things that God may provide, it's your perspective.

In Luke chapter 14 we find that Pharisees always wanted the chief seats. They always wanted the best places. They always wanted to sit in front. They always wanted to lord it over everybody else and have everybody recognize who they were. So Jesus said, "Let me tell you a little story...when you go into a wedding and you're invited to come, don't take the chief seat because if somebody more honored comes they'll move you out and you'll be embarrassed. So take the worst seat in the

place and wait for the guy to come and say hey, you deserve a better seat, come with me. And then you'll be all right."

And Jesus, in Matthew 23, says about the Pharisees, "They seek the chief seats and the chief places and they expect everybody to call them Rabbi and Father and Master and Teacher and they love the pronouncements of men." Social pride, the desire to be lifted up, the desire to attain some worldly honor and some worldly glamour. It's a temptation to be somebody in society, to really be somebody, famous, lifted up, exalted, front seat, most important.

And then there's spiritual pride. And I...I just, you know, that above all this is the worst one. Jesus just literally blistered the Pharisees in the 23rd chapter of Matthew for their horrible hypocrisy, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites," He said, "you hypocrites, you love the upper most places at the feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplace and you want to be called rabbi, rabbi, and you want to be called master and father and yet you are inside rotten," you are the biggest spiritual phonies there are. Jesus said, all throughout the gospels He condemned the sin and loved the sinner but in this case of hypocrites He condemned the sin and the sinner together, the only time. He literally blasted them because they sought to be intellectual...rather spiritual when they weren't.

You know, you can do that. You can come to Grace Church and you can look real spiritual, all you have to do is carry a notebook and a New American Standard Bible with tabs and nobody will ever know. That's right. Take a few notes, that will just anchor it. And we...we all have our games that we can play...Now that isn't wrong but what's the attitude of the heart is the issue. Don't be spiritually proud. That is the worst kind. As if you've arrived spiritually. As if you've got it.

Well, there's one other one, intellectual pride. I love that verse, Job says in chapter 12 after listening to all the stupid advice of his friends, he says; "Well, you are the people and wisdom will die with you." Isn't that great? "Well, it's too bad when you die we'll all be ignorant forever. You are the people and wisdom will die with you." Oh, it's so easy to be intellectually smug and think, well, I've got all my theology, I've got all the answers, I know everything.

Listen, I've been studying the Bible ten years. I've been studying the Bible all week long as I've ministered here for ten years. And you know what I found? The more I know about the Bible the more I know less about what there is to know.

I'm like the little kid who went down to the ocean and scooped out one bucket full and said, "This is what I know, isn't it amazing?" No. Not in comparison with the uncharted ocean that lies at my feet. I don't know much. I know very little. And I'm still learning.

Listen, beloved, Satan is going to tempt you to be proud in your abilities, your economics, your words that you say, your class, your strata of society, your appearance, the position you hold, your social desires, your spiritual life, your intellectual knowledge and all of these things are going to tear right out of your hands humility.

And when you lose humility you've lost ingredient number one in a worthy walk. Listen, walk worthy and it all begins with humility.

Let's pray.

Father, I'm reminded of the words of Jeremiah when he said; "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord."

Father, we have nothing to glory in but that we know Thee and Thou art the Lord, the God of the universe. We have nothing to boast in but in Thee. Humble us, Father. Do what must be done to break us of ourselves that we may, with all lowliness, walk worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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