



PRIDE

VERSUS

HUMILITY



DEREK PRINCE

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PRIDE  
VERSUS  
HUMILITY

DEREK PRINCE



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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Spirit that occur in the Scripture quotations from the New International Version have been capitalized.

## Pride Versus Humility

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“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever  
humbles himself will be exalted.”

—Matthew 23:12

## Foreword

Could there be any root problem more basic in all our lives than our battle with pride? Most of us would welcome any help we might receive to gain victory in this common challenge. And that's where this book comes to the rescue—with enlightening instruction and practical application from the teaching legacy of Derek Prince.

If you struggle daily to overcome the influence of pride in your life, you are in good company. Pride is a pervasive problem, affecting every person alive. That is one reason why we are so excited to bring you Derek Prince's profound yet practical biblical encouragement in *Pride Versus Humility*.

This book brings each of us some very encouraging news: for this universal problem, a universal spiritual solution is available to us. We see this solution in the following quote from chapter 6, "The Essence of Pride":

The eternal law that applies to this matter of the choice between pride and humility was stated by Jesus as, "*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*" (Matthew 23:12). "Pride versus humility" is truly a vast theme. It spans the whole universe—from eternity, through time, and on into eternity again—from heaven to earth and even to

hell. Although this concept is vast beyond measure, it also applies specifically to the personal lives of each one of us.

Some people may assume they have the issue of pride under control in their lives. They may even insist that they are consistently walking in a high degree of humility. Some of us may actually be *proud of our humility*—and that’s a problem in itself. That type of pride is dealt with forthrightly in this book, as is revealed in the following quote from chapter 8, “Humbling Ourselves to Come to God”:

Paul talked about three categories of people who find it particularly hard to get into God’s kingdom: the wise, the powerful, and the noble. Is there anything wrong with wisdom or power or nobility? Does God have anything against these attributes? Not at all. The issue is that these are the three main sources of pride in human nature. People are proud because of their wisdom, education, and cleverness; their power and influence; their noble birth and social position. But here is the problem: *the proud cannot get into the kingdom of God.*

With candor and biblical force, the systematic teaching in this book confronts important issues concerning pride and

humility. As always, what Derek Prince shares is not only insightful but also immensely useful to our everyday lives. Ranging from the vital role of humility for each of us as we draw closer to God, to the absolute necessity of humility for people in any position of leadership, to the indispensable role of humility in our relationships with others, this book can have a life-changing impact upon you.

Every aspect of this teaching is geared toward helping you to grow stronger in your relationship with Jesus, spurring you onward to accomplish all that He has called you to achieve. As Derek Prince says, such maturity won't happen in our lives without the vital component of *humility*.

How do we make the necessary adjustments that will allow us to be useful to the Lord? One more quote from Derek may help us to understand the answer to this question. It comes from chapter 9, "Humbling Ourselves for Spiritual Progress," and it flies in the face of any personal ambition we might be tempted to harbor in our hearts. Although the context of this passage is the topic of maturing into leadership, its application is much broader, fixing our gaze on one of the core principles of this book:

It is an absolute requirement: if you want to be great, you have to become a servant. If you want to be first—greater still—you have to go even lower. You have to become a slave.

In this foreword, we have given you just a taste of the content in the pages to follow. It is our hope that you will be inspired and encouraged by this book. The theme is challenging, the problem universal. But the biblical solutions concerning pride versus humility that Derek Prince systematically presents will undoubtedly provide a helpful, useful guide for the way you conduct the remainder of your life.

—*The International Editorial Team  
of Derek Prince Ministries*

## Part I

# **The Law of Pride and Humility**

## Chapter 1



## A Universal Law

Behind the topic of this book, pride versus humility, lies a law that operates throughout the universe. It is a law that affects every one of us—a statute that impacts every area of our lives.

Probably all of us recognize that there are various kinds of laws that operate throughout the universe. We know there are physical laws, but there are also spiritual laws. Many of us are acquainted to some degree with the physical laws that govern our lives and that govern the universe—for instance, the law of gravity. No normal person today would step out of a fourth-floor window into nothing but air and expect not to fall. We easily recognize the physical law of gravity that dictates the results of such an action. You and I certainly would not expect to break such a law with impunity.

As a matter of fact, we really do not “break” God’s laws—whether they are physical or spiritual. If we go against them, they actually break us. This is true regarding our discussion about the law of gravity. The person who steps out of that fourth-floor window into nothing does not break the law of gravity. The law of gravity breaks him.

### *A Universal Spiritual Law*

This same principle holds true in the spiritual realm, even though many people do not recognize or acknowledge that reality. There are spiritual laws that govern what happens to us

—what happens in our individual lives and what happens in the universe at large. It is one of those universal spiritual laws that we will be exploring throughout this book. The precept is stated for the first time in the New Testament by Jesus Himself: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12).

This same statute is repeated twice more in the Gospels—in Luke 14:11 and again in Luke 18:14. In each of these verses, the law comes to us from the lips of Jesus. As such, we see that this is a principle to which Jesus attached particular importance; He laid special emphasis upon it.

Jesus continually reminded His hearers that there is a law at work in our lives—one that also governs the entire universe. It is the law that relates to humility and pride. Here is the way Jesus outlines this statute: Whoever exhibits pride will be humbled; whoever exhibits humility will be exalted.

Once more, this precept of which Jesus speaks is universal. It applies anywhere, to any person, at any time, and in any situation. Often, when I have been teaching on this theme, I have summed up the precept by saying, “The way up is down; the way down is up.” If we want to go up, we must start by going down; but if we start by going up, we will end by going down. *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

### *Humility Is Our Responsibility*

At this point, it is good for us to note that it is *our* mandate

to humble ourselves. Jesus always says, “He who humbles *himself...*” He places the responsibility on the person concerned.

Humility is not a “nice, religious emotion.” As a matter of fact, it really does not operate primarily in the area of the emotions. Sometimes we try to “feel” humble, and we check ourselves to see if we are really feeling humble enough. That is a mistake. Rather than being in the area of the emotions, humility is in the area of the will. Furthermore, it is expressed in action. We can and we must humble ourselves by a decision of our wills. No one else can do this for us—we must do it for ourselves.

This universal statute of which Jesus spoke is stated elsewhere in the New Testament, as well. For example, we read in the book of James, “*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up*” (James 4:10). In this verse, we see that the same law is at work: The way up is down. If we start by going down, we will end by going up. Please note that James 4:10 also says, “*Humble yourselves.*” You and I cannot ask somebody else to do this for us. It is our mandate and our responsibility alone.

We see a similar treatment of this universal axiom in the writings of Peter:

*All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows*

*favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5–6)*

Again, we see the same emphasis: “*Humble yourselves.*” We have to do it ourselves. In this passage, we also see the same guarantee that was given elsewhere in Scripture: if we will be willing to humble ourselves, God will lift us up.

In dealing with this principle of humility, Peter used a metaphor of putting on clothes: “*Clothe yourselves with humility.*” That is a vivid metaphor because it expresses one self-evident fact: normally, a person clothes himself; he does not expect somebody else to do it for him. So, Peter makes it clear that we are required to clothe ourselves with humility.

The J. B. Phillips translation of 1 Peter 5:5 brings out another very important point. It says, “*Wear the ‘overall’ of humility in serving each other.*” The word translated as “*clothe yourselves,*” or “*wear the ‘overall,’*” refers to a particular garment—a particular type of apron. In New Testament times, this apron or “overall” was a distinctive garment worn only by slaves. So, in essence, Peter was encouraging us to put on a garment that indicates we are slaves. Putting on the “overall” indicates we are here to serve. That is the way we clothe ourselves with humility. And, once again, we see that this decision of our will is always expressed in the way we behave.

### *The Right Response*

Often, God will create certain circumstances in order to help us to humble ourselves. However, we alone can make the right response. Notice what is said in Deuteronomy 8:2–3 about the way God dealt with Israel in the wilderness after He had brought His people out of Egypt.

*Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*

God needed to deal with pride in the Israelites after they had been redeemed out of Egypt, so He created a special situation. He put them in the wilderness, where they were dependent upon Him in the most obvious way—for the water they drank and for the food they ate. In that setting, He showed them their total dependence upon Him. In this sense, He humbled them. He created a situation in which the reasonable response for them would have been to humble themselves—to acknowledge their total dependence upon God.

But here is an interesting historical fact: the majority of the

Israelites never really learned that lesson. Although God humbled them, they did not humble themselves. That is a potential danger we all need to acknowledge. God can create the situation and the circumstances. God can even help us in those circumstances. But only we can really humble ourselves. It rests with a decision of our wills.

### *The Appropriate Action*

We see, then, that humility is a decision of the will. And this decision, having been made, must be expressed in the appropriate action. Jesus gave a vivid example of this truth in Luke 14:7–11, where He spoke about the conduct of people invited to a wedding feast. Each person who received an invitation had two alternatives—two different ways they could act.

*When [Jesus] noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, He told them this parable: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor; for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow*

*guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*  
(Luke 14:7–11)

At the end of the parable, Jesus expressed the law we are studying: *“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12). He illustrated this precept with the example of the guests at a wedding feast. At such a feast, there are certain places of honor and there are other places of lesser honor. When we enter this feast to which we have been invited, we should not seek out the most honorable place. Rather, we should seek out a humble place and sit there. Humility is expressed in the appropriate action. The appropriate action is to take a low place. We must not promote ourselves. We must wait to be promoted.

### *Applying the Law of Humility*

The principle we have been examining applies in our world today. It applies in your life and mine, and it can be the key to our promotion. How do you and I get promoted? By humbling ourselves. What is the way up? The way up is the way down.

This truth applies to all situations in our lives. For example, if you work in an office, you may choose to act as if you were the manager or the boss. Or you can make the better choice to assume a very humble position. You can choose to be lowly. If you are lowly, you will be exalted.

Similarly, in your family relationships, do not be arrogant; do not be proud. Do not be self-seeking. Be willing to serve. Put on that “overall” of humility—the garment of the slave. God will see to it that you are exalted. And there are countless other situations to which this principle applies.

### *God Guides the Humble*

Let us now summarize what we have learned so far. There is a law that affects every one of us. It is a universal spiritual principle, one that Jesus Himself stated: “*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*” This valuable principle will be the foundation of our entire study in this book. We may sum up this law in the following manner: “The way up is down; the way down is up.” If we want to go up, we must start by going down. But if we start by going up, we will end by going down.

Additionally, we learned that it is our own responsibility to humble ourselves. In serving one another, we must wear the “overall” of humility—a word that describes a distinctive garment worn only by slaves. That is the garment we must put on—it is the way we are to clothe ourselves with humility. God will often create certain circumstances in order to help us to humble ourselves. But only we can make the right response to humble ourselves as an act of our wills, followed by the appropriate action. Humility is a decision expressed by action.

I close this chapter by quoting from a little poem by John Bunyan that I love:



He that is down need fear no fall,

He that is low no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.<sup>1</sup>

In the next chapter, we will learn more about this universal law—the principle that whoever humbles himself will be exalted, and whoever exalts himself will be humbled, abased, or humiliated. As a foundation for our further study, we will examine the first occasion in the history of the universe when we see this law at work. To do so, we must go back in human history to a time when man had not yet been created—to the instance in eternity when the very first sin occurred.

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1. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part Two (1684).

## Chapter 2

## The First Sin in the Universe

In the previous chapter, we learned that there are two kinds of laws that operate in the universe: physical laws and spiritual laws. All of us have some concept or understanding of most of the physical laws—for instance, the law of gravity. As I pointed out, in such cases, we do not really “break” these laws—they break us. No one ever breaks the law of gravity. Rather, the person who ignores that law will be broken by it.

I also pointed out that there are spiritual principles that are equally universal. These apply in every area of the universe, in every situation, and in every one of our lives. In particular, I focused on one specific spiritual precept that operates in the universe at large, as well as in the life of each one of us. This law was stated by Jesus Himself in Matthew 23:12: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

### *Before Human History*

In this chapter, we are going to study the first occasion in the history of the universe in which we see this law at work. We are going to go back before human history to a time when, I believe, man had not yet been created. The heavens had been created, along with all their heavenly hosts, but the human race as we know it had not yet come upon the scene of history.

To go back to the time when the first sin occurred, we will

examine the record of the prophet Ezekiel. In studying his words, we need to bear in mind a truth regarding the ministry of prophets. Not merely do the words of a prophet reveal events in the *future* that we could not otherwise know, but they also reveal occurrences in the *past* that we could not otherwise know. In this particular case, we will look at events in the distant past, revealed through prophetic ministry, which could not be known to us in any other way.

### *Two Basic Premises About the First Sin*

To begin our study, I first want to state two basic facts about the nature of the first sin:

*Number one:* the first sin in the universe was pride. It was not drunkenness or immorality—or even murder. It was the sin of pride—and that pride led quickly to rebellion against God. We see in this fact that the inner comes before the outer. One of the important features of the Bible may be seen in relation to this: the Word of God does not reveal merely outer actions; it always lays bare the inner causes. Pride was the inner cause that led to the outer act of rebellion against God.

*Number two:* the first sin took place in heaven, not on earth. It was committed by an angel, not a human being. Ironically, the pride that caused this sin arose from the wisdom and the beauty that had been imparted to this angel by the Creator Himself.

### *The Root of Rebellion*

The situation regarding the first sin is described in Ezekiel 28:11–17. This passage speaks of two persons in succession. The first is the prince, or ruler, of the city of Tyre; the second is the king of Tyre. The first person is clearly revealed to be a human being. Even though this person claims to be a god, Scripture emphasizes that he is a man. But the second person—the king of Tyre—is not a human being; he is clearly an angelic being, a cherub. And in fact, he is a fallen angel.

I want you to take special note of what Ezekiel said about this second person, the king of Tyre. As you read the words that follow, I want you to pick out the clear indications that we are dealing here with a fallen angel:

*The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper; sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were*

*filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.””” (Ezekiel 28:11–17)*

### *Significant Characteristics of the Proud Cherub*

Let me make several points about what these verses reveal concerning this particular unique being, this cherub. Verse 12 states that he excelled in wisdom and beauty—perhaps he may have been the wisest and the most beautiful of all God’s creatures. Verse 13 states that he was in Eden, the garden of God. He had a special position of honor in heaven, directly in God’s presence. Verse 14 states that he was a guardian cherub. Verse 15 emphasizes that although he was so wise and beautiful, he was nevertheless a created being; he was not a god. And then, remarkably, verse 16 says, in effect, “Widespread trade led to violence.”

The Hebrew word for “*trade*” in this verse is a very interesting term, and we need to understand it clearly. Literally, it means “going to and fro.” This word came to be used for trade because traders go to and fro. However, it is directly related to another term used several times in the Old Testament—one that is translated “*slanderer*” or “*talebearer*.” Here are two examples: “*You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people*” (Leviticus 19:16 nasb), and “*He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets*” (Proverbs 11:13 nasb). The root

idea is somebody who goes about gossiping, carrying tales, making slanderous statements.

When we go back to the scene in heaven pictured in Ezekiel 28, we get a vivid picture of what must have taken place. The following is my own personal understanding of this passage. Scripture indicates that this cherub, whose name at that time was Lucifer—"the bright one," "the shining one," "the light-bringer," "the morning star"—was in charge of one-third of God's created angels.

Although he was so wise and beautiful, he was not content with his position of subordination to God Himself. He felt he had a right to equality with God. So what action did this cherub take? He began to promote rebellion. He began going to and fro among the angels in his charge. As he went among them, he must have said something like this: "Listen, God doesn't really appreciate your wisdom or your strength. You could have a higher position. God doesn't appreciate my wisdom or beauty either. I'm worthy of a higher position. I'll tell you what: if you'll follow me, I'll establish myself in equality with God."

It was in this fashion that Lucifer promoted rebellion against God. The Scriptures reveal clearly that both he and all the angels who followed him were driven out from the presence of God due to their rebellion. Notice that the root of rebellion was pride. It was Lucifer's beauty and wisdom that caused his pride. His pride then caused his rebellion. And the result when he exalted himself was that he was cast down.

### *A Parallel Description of Lucifer's Rebellion*

Please retain in your thinking this portion of Scripture from Ezekiel as we look at a parallel description, one that is also found in the books of the prophets. The prophet Isaiah described the same situation—this scene in heaven that occurred before the human race came into being, involving this same created, angelic being who exalted himself in rebellion against God.

In the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, we find the following prophetic revelation, which lays bare the inner motivation of this cherub—the angel who fell:

*You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God: I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. (Isaiah 14:13–15)*

Notice again the principle that *"whoever exalts himself will be humbled"* (Matthew 23:12). Do you see how the passage from Isaiah lays bare the motivation of this cherub? It is particularly noticeable in the one phrase that occurs five times: *"I will."* Let us examine each of those five declarations in full: (1) *"I will ascend to heaven."* (2) *"I will raise my throne above*



*the stars of God.” (3) “I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly.” (4) “I will ascend above the tops of the clouds.” (5) “I will make myself like the Most High.”*

It is the will of the creature set in opposition to the Creator that is the essence and root of the whole problem. The *motivation* is pride; the *action* is rebellion. What was the ultimate aim? That goal is expressed in the fifth “*I will*” statement: “*I will make myself like the Most High.*” The creature wanted equality with the Creator, so he exalted himself. And as a result, he fell.

Today, we do not know this creature as “Lucifer”—the bright and shining one, the glorious one, the one whose responsibility and special privilege it was to herald the dawn. We know him now as “Satan”—the adversary, the resister, the opponent of both God and man, the one who resists God’s purposes and God’s people everywhere in the earth. We have come to know this Satan as the one who is incurable in his rebellion, the one who is in total, irreconcilable opposition to almighty God.

### *A Fearful Lesson*

What is the lesson for us from our examination of Lucifer’s attitude and actions in the above passages? Without a doubt, it is a fearful lesson. It is an illustration that pride and rebellion can turn the most magnificent into the most evil.

Here we have the chilling reminder that this being began as the wisest and most beautiful of God’s creatures. But when his

heart was filled with pride, and he turned against God in rebellion, he fell. Remember the universal principle: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

### *The Will of the Creature in Opposition to the Creator*

Thankfully, despite the stark reality of the fall of Lucifer, God had an alternative plan—and that plan is what we will examine in our next chapter. But before we go on, let us review what we have learned so far.

We studied the first occasion in the history of the universe when we see this immutable principle at work—the law that whoever humbles himself will be exalted, but whoever exalts himself will be humbled, abased, or humiliated.

We went back in history to a time when man had not yet been created—to the occasion of the very first sin. We first looked at the account from the prophet Ezekiel, noting that the first sin in the universe was pride—and that pride ultimately led to rebellion against God.

This first sin took place in heaven, not on earth. It was committed by an angel, not by a human being. Ezekiel clearly described this angel, Lucifer, saying that he excelled in wisdom and beauty. This wise cherub had been given great authority, yet he was not content. Instead, he felt he had a right to equality with God. As a result of that ambition, he began to promote rebellion among the other angels. One-third of the angels followed after him; consequently, all were driven out

from the presence of God because of their rebellion.

From our study of this event in both Ezekiel and Isaiah, we saw that the will of the creature set in opposition to the Creator is the essence and root of the whole problem of sin. The *motivation* is pride; the *action* is rebellion. The fearful lesson for us is that pride and rebellion can turn the most magnificent into the most evil. When Lucifer exalted himself, he was cast down. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled.

We see from Lucifer's fall that the law regarding pride and humility operates not merely in our own human lives but also throughout the entire universe. It affects every created being that is capable of responding with either pride or humility.

Let us turn now to the next chapter, where we will examine the alternate plan God graciously provided for all the people of the earth after mankind also fell due to pride.

## Chapter 3

## God's Alternative

We continue our study of the universal, eternal, spiritual law regarding pride and humility. The battle between these two competing forces is something you and I continually face in our lives, isn't it?

The spiritual law we are exploring was summed up by Jesus in Matthew 23:12: *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."* In the previous chapter, we hearkened back to the first occasion in the history of the universe when we see the negative side of this law at work. In our examination of Ezekiel 28, we looked at the record of the rampant pride and rebellion of the magnificent cherub named Lucifer. In his attempt to foment rebellion among his fellow angels, he became an accuser of God and went around as a slanderer, ultimately persuading the angels under his command to join him in his revolt.

This was the point at which the outworking of the universal law took place. By exalting himself, Lucifer was humbled. He was cast down from the presence of God, and his angels were cast down with him. His name from that point on was no longer Lucifer, meaning "light-bringer." Now he became known as Satan, meaning "adversary."

### *A Very Special Creation*

In this chapter, we are going to explore the plan God devised

to counteract the effects of Lucifer's rebellion. Pride had clearly been the root of his revolt, so God's response was to make a different kind of creature. This creature would ultimately be destined to take Lucifer's place—with the potential to maintain an attitude of humility. The new creature God devised for this purpose was “man”—or, as *man* is called in the Hebrew language, “Adam.” (Bear in mind that *Adam* is a proper name as well as the name of our race.)

It is important for us to note right from the beginning that God created Adam in a different way from any other creature. There was a special aspect to Adam's mode of creation that was designed in the mind of the Creator to militate against pride.

Specifically, Adam came from a different source than any other created being. Within him, he combined the lowest and the highest. He came from that which was the very lowest, the very humblest. And yet, he also had in him the very highest. Here is the description of the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7: *“The Lord God formed the man [Adam] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”*

I don't know if you have the same reaction to reading about the creation of Adam that I do, but with me, it is such a vivid picture. I believe it took place just the way it is described. I see the great Creator—the One through whom, as the New Testament reveals, all things were formed. (See, for example, Colossians 1:15–17.) I see the eternal Son of God—the Word of God—the second person of the Godhead. I see Him stooping

down in that garden, with His divine fingers molding a perfect form of clay. In the end, it is important for us to realize that even though what God formed was so perfect, it was still just clay at that point.

Then the Creator stooped yet lower. He placed His divine lips against those lips of clay, His divine nostrils against those nostrils of clay, and He breathed into Adam the breath of life. The Hebrew word translated “*breathed*” in Genesis 2:7 is a very emphatic word—*vai-yip-pach*. The syllable *pach* indicates a strong, forceful, ongoing breath. The sound represents the action. That infused breath—the Spirit of almighty God—instantly transformed that body of clay into a living, human being with all the marvels of human personality.

### *Five Unique Aspects of Man's Creation*

What a marvelous description of the way man was created! Again, one aspect of the means by which God created Adam was to undercut the tendency toward pride in the creature, which we will see clearly in a moment. To begin with, however, let me point out five vital facts about the creation of man, or Adam, as revealed in the above passage.

1. *God's intent was a Person-to-person relationship with man.* For the first time in the record of Scripture, personal names are introduced. Genesis 2:7 said, “*The Lord God formed the man [Adam].*” “*The Lord*” is the sacred, personal name of the true God. We usually use the word *Jehovah* for this term—and often, modern scholars say it as *Yahweh*, the Hebrew form. But the important fact to remember is that this record

introduces God by a personal name. Likewise, then, is the introduction of man by use of a personal name. What conclusion do we draw from this? A personal God created a personal man for a Person-to-person relationship between them. This indicates that the great intent of the Creator was to have fellowship with His creature—Person to person.

2. *God stooped to create man.* First He bent in the dust and formed the body. Then He stooped right down and put His lips against those lips of clay and breathed His divine breath into that body. God had to stoop to create man.

3. *God imparted Himself to man.* Again, He breathed His very own divine breath into that body of clay.

4. *Man has a combined nature of the highest and the lowest.* The result of God's action is a combination in man of the highest and the lowest. The highest, which is directly from God Himself—and the lowest, which is from the earth, the dust. Can you understand something about yourself when you think about this amazing creation process? Does it make you feel as I feel? Does it cause you to realize that in you and me there is something very high and something very low? Doesn't it explain to us why a large part of our total life experience represents the conflict between the high and the low?

I believe this record of creation explains much of what we see going on around us today. It explains me to myself in a way that nothing else has ever succeeded in accomplishing. I was a professional philosopher for years—studying various other theories about the origin of man and the universe. However,



none of them satisfied me. None of them gave an answer that explained me to myself like this account does.

5. *Man potentially has a dual relationship.* The final fact of these five aspects of the creation of man as revealed in Genesis 2:7 is that man now potentially has a dual relationship. Through man's spirit—the part that came from God—man can relate to God. But through man's body, the part that came from the earth, man relates to the world. Once again, we see eternal truths that correspond to our own experience. There is something in us that is designed to relate to God. There is an aspect of our nature that was made for God—and for fellowship with Him. We were made for a Person-to-person relationship. At the same time, there is an aspect of our nature that is very earthy and that relates to this world.

So, thus far, we have learned that as a result of the fall of a created cherub, God designed an alternate plan to create another kind of being from a different source—from the earth. But He breathed into that being His own divine life, with one great intent—to undercut the tendency to pride.

### *The Two Main Responsibilities of Man*

With the above five facts regarding the uniqueness of created man established in our thinking, we will now look at the two main responsibilities of man, or Adam, as God created him. These responsibilities, or purposes, are stated in the first chapter of Genesis, right where God's initial decision to create man is announced.

*Then God said, “Let Us make man in our image, in our likeness....” (Genesis 1:26)*

Please notice the plurality of this statement. “*God said, ‘Let Us....’*” This was the great, eternal Godhead—the Trinity—at work. The verse continues:

*“...and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air; over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

Please notice God’s intentions. He said that not just Adam but the whole human race would rule over the earth.

In the above passage, then, we see two primary purposes of God—two functions that man was expected to fulfill. Let us now explore these responsibilities.

## 1. To Visibly Represent God

First, man was to visibly represent God to the rest of creation. There was a special way in which the very likeness of God Himself was imprinted upon man, Adam. The impact of the

inbreathed Spirit of God upon that body of clay, fashioned by the divine hands of the Creator, was to bring forth an entity that, in certain special respects, visibly represented the Creator to the remainder of creation.

## 2. To Exercise Authority on God's Behalf

Second, God's purpose for man was that he would exercise authority on behalf of God. Man was to rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the livestock, over the creatures that move along the ground, and in fact over all the earth. Clearly, man was created to exercise tremendous authority. This is a destiny that man has never totally forgotten in his inner personality. There is always that desire to reach out for authority. However, in fallen man today, this desire does not have a sound base.

### *Two Main Features of Man's Relationship with God*

In this significant passage of Scripture from Genesis 1, we also see two main features of man's relationship to God. According to this description of creation, these features are (1) fellowship and (2) dependence. First and foremost, the primary desire of God for His creature, Adam, was to have fellowship with Him. He is a personal God—Jehovah, or Yahweh—who created a personal man—Adam—for personal fellowship between them. In reality, man never finds his true fulfillment outside of personal fellowship with his Creator.

Second, man was created to be dependent on God. As long

as he remained dependent, this created being was to exercise God's authority on His behalf. While he maintained this relationship of dependence, he was both infallible and unassailable. Here is the primary thought of this second feature of created man: the key to human happiness is dependence on God.

### *Responding to God's Purposes*

Perhaps the Holy Spirit is quickening something within you right now. He may be reminding you of areas within your own life where you have sought fulfillment outside of personal fellowship with your Creator. Perhaps you have seen the negative results of that decision—that rebellion. If you are sensing that this is true about you, I would like us to pray about it together.

First, as the basis of our prayer, let us take a moment to review what we have learned in this chapter. We began by looking at God's alternative plan—the plan He devised to counteract the effects of Lucifer's rebellion. (Remember, pride was the root of the rebellion of this beautiful creature whom God had imbued with beauty, purpose, and authority.) God's response to Lucifer's failure was to make a different kind of creature who would ultimately be destined to take Lucifer's place. That new creature was man, or as he is called in the Hebrew, "Adam."

God created Adam in a different way from any other creature—a way that was designed in the mind of the Creator to militate against pride. God created him from clay—a very humble

substance. Yet God Himself stooped down and breathed into him His very own breath. By that action on God's part, we see that man combines in himself the highest and the lowest. Through man's spirit—the part that came from God—man relates to God. But through man's body—the part that came from the earth—man relates to the world.

Please take a moment to meditate upon those last two statements. They may help you to understand why you sometimes feel something in yourself that is very high while, at the same time, you feel something in yourself that is very low. The result inside us is a conflict. We must remember that while there is something in us that is very earthy that relates to this world, at the same time there is something in us that was made for God. In fact, we were made for fellowship with Him, and that purpose is what I want us to pray about right now. Will you please join me in this prayer?

Lord, I am so grateful that You devised an alternative plan to create a being—man—who would be able to live in humbleness toward You. You created me to have fellowship with You, and You gave me a spirit to enable me to do so. This is the relationship that I was made for. This is the fellowship that I desire.

I confess to You the areas of my life in which I have opposed Your purpose for me. These are the areas the Holy Spirit has quickened to me as I have read this chapter. [You may want to specifically name them now.]

Your Word says in Romans 2:4 that it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance, and I thank You for Your kindness toward me. I choose to align myself with You and Your kingdom. I choose to follow after You. I choose to receive Your grace that will enable me to make decisions that please You, decisions that will result in my following after You for the rest of my life—ever and ever closer to You. Amen.

## Chapter 4

## The Fall of Man

Previously, we looked back at the first occasion in the history of the universe when the operation of the universal law concerning pride versus humility—“*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*”—was demonstrated. That event was the fall of Lucifer. We looked at the biblical account of this incident recorded in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. Those passages depicted the remarkably wise and beautiful cherub—Lucifer—the one who held a special place of honor in heaven. We saw how he became proud due to his wisdom and beauty, which had actually been imparted to him by the Creator. His pride in his own magnificence led to his rebellion, and he also fomented rebellion among the angels that were under his personal charge. Ultimately, Lucifer persuaded all of them—one-third of the heavenly host—to unite with him in rebellion against God. What was his primary motive? To exalt himself and to make himself equal with almighty God.

### *The Outworking of Lucifer's Rebellion*

In the outworking of this dramatic and unfortunate outburst of rebellion, we witnessed the first demonstration of the negative side of the eternal, immutable law we have been studying: “*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled.*” When Lucifer reached up to exalt himself, he slipped and fell. In addition, all his angels fell with him. By that act, he went from



being Lucifer—the bright, shining, glorious one—to being Satan, the adversary, the resister, the enemy of God and of man.

Then we saw the alternate plan God had designed—to create a being of more humble origins. I pointed out certain unique features that marked the creature who was destined by God to take Lucifer’s place. This creature was man, or Adam. Very intentionally, God created man in such a way that the mode of his creation would undercut the tendency toward pride in the creature.

We explored five unique features that single out man from all other creatures. First, man was designed for a Person-to-person relationship with a personal God. Second, in creating man, God had to stoop. He stooped to mold Adam’s body of clay, and then He stooped still lower to breathe into man’s lips and nostrils of clay. Third, God imparted Himself to man. He breathed into man His own divine eternal breath, His Spirit. Fourth, in God’s creation of man is combined both the highest and the lowest. The highest is the breath that came from God, and the lowest is the clay, or dust, from which man was made. Fifth, man has a dual relationship. Through his spirit, he relates to God. Through his body, he relates to the world—the world of dust from which he was taken.

### *Tragedy Repeated*

In this chapter, we are going to look at the great tragedy of human history: the fall of man. Satan, the already-fallen angel, had made himself the enemy of both God and man. But Satan had special enmity against man, for two reasons: First of all, he

made it his aim to attack God's image in man, because man visibly represented God in a special way to the rest of creation. Satan could not touch God Himself, so he made war against the very image of God in man. His intention and delight was to defile that image—to humiliate it and to destroy it. He worked aggressively to that end. The second reason why the enemy had special enmity against man was that he knew man was destined to take his place of dominion. Consequently, from the moment of man's creation, Satan regarded man as his rival—the one whom he needed to eliminate.

I want to begin with an observation that is laden with irony: Satan eventually procured man's downfall through the same motivation that caused his own downfall. The entire episode is described in detail in Genesis chapter 3. In the form of a serpent, Satan came into the garden where God had placed Adam with Eve, his wife. There, the enemy tempted them into disobedience and rebellion. This is what the record of Scripture tells us:

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the*

woman. *“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:1–5)

Alas, we are very familiar with the above account and with what followed next. We know that Eve was persuaded by the temptation of the serpent, Satan. When he enticed her, she reached out her hand and took the fruit. Then she proceeded to persuade her husband to join her in disobedience. (See Genesis 3:6.)

### *Three Phases of Temptation*

I want to point out three specific phases of temptation, unveiling the way Satan came against Adam and Eve to persuade them to rebel.

## 1. Satan Sought to Discredit God’s Word

Satan directed his initial attack against God’s Word as He had communicated it to Adam and Eve. The Lord had said to Adam, *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”* (Genesis 2:17 kjv). So, Satan’s first approach was to question God’s Word. He said to Eve, *“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”* (Genesis 3:1). Clearly, the enemy was too subtle to begin with a direct, head-on denial. So how did he begin? He

started off with a question, his motive being to discredit God's Word.

## 2. Satan Sought to Discredit God's Character

Second, when Eve entertained the question, Satan proceeded to discredit God Himself. "*You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'*" (Genesis 3:4-5).

Can you see the thrust of this statement? The implication was that God was an arbitrary tyrant who, after creating Adam and Eve, was keeping them in a position much lower than what they deserved. Satan inferred that Adam and Eve had potential and ability to become something much higher—yet God was holding them back in arbitrary and unreasonable subjection. In other words, having discredited God's Word, Satan then proceeded to discredit God's character. His avenue of attack was to give them a false picture of their loving and gracious Creator. He wanted to portray the Lord as some kind of oppressive despot. So, Satan's seductive method was first to discredit the Word of God and then to besmirch the very character of God Himself.

## 3. Satan Offered "Equality with God"

Third, Satan proposed to Adam and Eve the very same motivation and objective that had caused his own fall. He

offered them the prospect of equality with God, saying, “*When you eat of [the fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:5). What the enemy was saying in so many words was this: “You won’t need to depend on God any longer. You’ll have enough knowledge in yourself that you will be equal with Him.” Again, in this offer to Adam and Eve, we see exactly the same temptation that had impelled Lucifer’s fall. Do you remember what Lucifer said in the Isaiah account? “*I will make myself like the Most High*” (Isaiah 14:14). Here, Satan said to Adam and Eve, “*You will be like God.*” What was he telling them? Their present position of subjection and dependence was not worthy of them; they were capable of something much higher. “Reach up,” he was saying. “Reach out for the knowledge that will set you free from your slavish dependence on your Creator.” They bought the lie, and they fell.

### *Seven Results of the Fall of Man*

Next, I want to point out seven results of man’s fall.

1. *Man’s direct fellowship with God was broken.* Do you remember the primary purpose for which God created man? He was created for fellowship with the Creator. But when rebellion and sin came in, that fellowship was broken.

2. *Man’s life source was cut off.* Human beings had now become like a battery that could no longer be recharged. The initial inbreathing of divine life had kept Adam alive for many hundreds of years. But because he was now cut off from the Source of recharging, he ultimately had to die.

3. *Man became subject to what the Bible calls “corruption.”* He fell prey to such ills as pain, sickness, disease, wrinkles, old age—and death.

4. *Man became subject to satanic harassment—to the activity of demons.* Up to the time of the fall, Adam and Eve had lived in a world that virtually no satanic influence could penetrate. But from that time onward, the whole human race was subject to the harassment of satanic, demonic influences.

5. *Man became a slave instead of a king.* Human beings had been created to rule. The Lord’s intention was that they would rule the whole earth on His behalf. But when they forfeited their position of dependence on God, they no longer ruled. Instead, they became oppressed slaves—slaves to sin, slaves to Satan, and slaves to corruption, sickness, and death.

6. *Man’s whole realm became subject to vanity and futility.* Because of man’s fall, there was a change in the entire realm of creation over which God had placed Adam. (See Romans 8:19–22.) It affected all that had been under his authority. Just as the fall of Lucifer had affected all the angels under him, so the fall of Adam affected the whole creation under him. All of creation became subject to vanity, to futility, to decay. Things that had never before suffered, things that had never before died, things that had never before rotted began to suffer, to die, and to decay. It happened to everything, including the animal creation and the vegetative creation. As a result of Adam’s fall, his realm became subject to vanity and degradation.

7. *Man became identified with Satan in the guilt of*

*rebellion*. Satan had made a convert. The enemy had long been a rebel, but now there was another rebel band to join him—the Adamic race.

We can see very clearly that human beings repeated Satan's error. They had been created on a level that was blessed, appointed, and ordained of God. But falling prey to pride, they reached up for equality with God. And in reaching up, they fell.

Let's remember once again the first part of the universal law we are exploring: "*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled.*" But that is not the end of the story. In the chapter to come, we will see how God responded to man's fall.

## Chapter 5



## God Stooped Lower Still

Over the last few chapters, we have been exploring the outworking of the eternal, universal law stated by Jesus in Matthew 23:12: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

First, we saw this statute demonstrated in biblical accounts of Lucifer’s downfall and humiliation. We then saw the law demonstrated in the account of Adam and Eve, who succumbed to Satan’s temptation to exalt themselves as God’s equal, leading to their own downfall and humiliation.

In the case of both Lucifer and Adam, the cause of the fall was the same: self-exalting pride. In fact, in order to bring about the fall of man, Satan served up the same motivation that had caused his own fall. After convincing himself, *“I will make myself like the Most High”* (Isaiah 14:14), he then came to Adam and Eve with the same temptation, saying, in effect, “If you eat of this fruit, you will be like God Himself.” It was the same motivation in both cases: the creature reaching up for equality with the Creator.

### *God’s Amazing Response*

What was God’s response to Adam’s fall? Earlier, He had responded to the fall of Satan by creating Adam. In so doing, He Himself had stooped to the dust. How would God now respond to the fall of Adam? The answer to that question is the

title of this chapter: “God Stooped Lower Still.” You see, God’s answer to pride is always humility. The more God encountered pride, the more He displayed humility. Let me sum it up this way: God’s response is the transition from creation to redemption—His next great act was redemption.

Man had fallen. He was alienated from God, an absolute rebel. Even so, God did not abandon him. (We can thank God for that!) In the person of Christ, God stooped to the lowest possible point. In Christ, God identified Himself completely with the fallen human race—and He expiated the guilt of the entire race. Then, to crown it all, He exalted these fallen but redeemed creatures to the highest place in the universe. It was the consummate demonstration of the principle of humility that we have been studying in this book—one that we will explore further in future chapters as we affirm that “the way up is down.”

### *Christ Identified with Us*

Let us begin by looking at some Scriptures that speak about how Christ identified Himself with the human race and expiated its guilt. The first is from the book of Hebrews.

*Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14–15)*

Remember the truth I pointed out earlier—that when man rebelled, he became a slave instead of being a king? Due to the fall, man was no longer free. Far different from what he expected, he became a slave of Satan, a slave of death, and a slave of corruption.

In order to deliver man from this slavery, Jesus took upon Himself the Adamic nature, the form of humanity. Our Savior shared fully in our humanity. He took upon Himself the same flesh and blood that you and I have. Why? So that by His death, He might destroy the devil—the one who holds the power of death. Through death as a human, Jesus brought us freedom from death—we who all our lives had been held in slavery by our fear of death. It was a total identification. Jesus fully took upon Himself the nature of man, the fallen creature.

This truth is also stated in 1 Peter 2:24: *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.”* This verse describes Jesus’ total identification with man. On the cross, He became totally identified with our sin and our guilt. He Himself became the last great guilt offering, which took away the accumulated sin and guilt of the human race. He bore our sin. He bore our punishment. Our wounds became His wounds, and He died our death. As our Representative, *“the last Adam”* (1 Corinthians 15:45), Jesus expiated our guilt of rebellion by hanging on the cross, shedding His lifeblood, and giving Himself totally to redeem us.

We see this truth reiterated in the simple statement of 1 Peter 3:18: “*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*” Once again, this is a picture of total identification. The righteous took the place of the unrighteous. The obedient Servant took the place of the rebel, the one who had turned against God. Jesus died the death that was our due, to deliver us from the fear of death and to bring us back to God. He did it all to reconcile us to God.

### *We Can Be Identified with Christ*

It is abundantly clear from Scripture that Jesus totally identified with us. However, as we look beyond the identification of Christ with us, we discover an amazing truth: through faith and repentance, we can be identified with Christ. Not only identified in His death, but also in His subsequent exaltation. This is the great mystery of identification: first, Christ with us; then we, through faith, with Christ.

*But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4–6)*

Do you see the significance of this point? It is so important

for us to recognize the opposite side of identification, the other side of the coin. Jesus first identified Himself with us, the fallen race. He took our place. He paid our penalty. He died our death. He expiated our guilt.

But there is more. Recognizing Jesus' identification with us, we can in turn identify ourselves with Him in faith. By doing so, we identify with Him in all that follows His death.

When we examine the above passage from Ephesians 2, we discover the three great steps of our identification with Jesus: (1) God made us alive with Christ. (2) God resurrected us with Christ. (And it does not stop there.) (3) God seated us with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realms.

Christ is seated on a throne. God has seated us with Him. That means He has enthroned us in Christ. With this enthroning step, God completed the process of total redemption for each of us.

Please remember those three upward steps of our identification with Jesus: (1) made alive with Him, (2) resurrected with Him, and (3) enthroned with Him. It is the same principle we have seen throughout this entire study: The way up is down. It is from the lowest that we go to the highest.

### *We the Redeemed*

Finally, by this enthroning step, God will make these redeemed creatures—who once were fallen but are now raised up—His eternal demonstration. It is His declaration to the whole universe that God exalts the lowest to the highest. I want

you to see the principle that runs through all of what has been stated in these early chapters. It is not just a matter of history. It is a matter of the outworking of a universal law: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12).

Please note what God says about the function of the redeemed throughout the rest of the history of the universe: they have a special place; they have a special function. We see this truth very clearly from three passages in the epistle to the Ephesians. Here is the first one:

*In Him [Christ] we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him [God] who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.* (Ephesians 1:11–12)

In a special way, we—the fallen but redeemed, lifted from the lowest to the highest—are to be the demonstration that will be for the praise of God’s glory.

Let us look at Ephesians 2:6–7 as our second excerpt from the epistle to the Ephesians. Earlier, we saw that verses 5 and 6 speak of our identification with Christ—that we were made alive with Him, resurrected with Him, and enthroned with Him. We will now discover His purpose in performing those three

actions:

*God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6–7)*

Here is God's purpose for enthroning us with Christ: *"In order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus."* Please notice again that these fallen but redeemed creatures are to be the eternal demonstration of the principle we have been studying—that God takes the lowest and lifts it to the highest.

We will examine one final passage from the letter to the Ephesians to illustrate this same point:

*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 3:10)*

Through us, God is going to demonstrate His manifold

wisdom to the entire creation. To all the heavenly and earthly realms, for all remaining ages, God's wisdom will be continually demonstrated in this principle: that God exalts the lowest.

### *The Truth of Redemption*

As we close this chapter in which we have examined the redemptive activity of the living God, I want to give you three brief statements. I believe these statements bring out the very heart of the truth of redemption that we have been exploring: (1) The farthest became the nearest. (2) The lowest became the highest. (3) What was disgraced was transformed to glory.

What is God's ultimate purpose in all of His redemptive activity on our behalf? It is to leave no room for pride in any created being.

Before you turn the page to the next chapter, I encourage you to spend some time meditating on the foundational truths we have uncovered in this chapter. What does it mean to you personally that the Creator God has made you alive with Christ? That He stooped down to raise you up—that He resurrected you with Christ? As you reflect on these questions, please remember that it does not stop there.

God has seated you with Himself in the heavenly realms—not tomorrow, not after you have died and gone to heaven, but right now. Meditate on that and even picture it.

What does it mean to you that God has enthroned you in Christ? How does it affect you to know that the Lord has made you—a redeemed creature, once fallen but now raised up—His



object lesson to the universe?

Can you grasp the magnitude of the truth that God has made you His eternal demonstration to the whole universe that He exalts the lowest to the highest?

## Part II

## **Prime Examples of Pride and Humility**

## Chapter 6

## The Essence of Pride

The eternal law that applies to this matter of the choice between pride and humility has been stated by Jesus as, “*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*” (Matthew 23:12). “Pride versus humility” is truly a vast theme. It spans the whole universe—from eternity, through time, and on into eternity again—from heaven to earth and even to hell. Although this concept is vast beyond measure, it also applies specifically to the personal lives of each one of us. I sincerely hope that your meditation at the end of the previous chapter gave you revelation and understanding of how God has applied this universal principle to you personally.

### *Five Stages of Pride and Humility*

Let us begin this chapter by categorizing into five main stages what we have previously studied:

*Stage One: The first sin of pride.* The first sin in the universe was the sin of pride committed by an angel, not a man. It was committed in heaven, not on earth. The name of that angel was Lucifer, the bright and shining and glorious one. Though he was a magnificent cherub, his sin of pride and the subsequent rebellion it spawned caused him to be cast out from God’s presence. It was then that his name was changed to Satan: the adversary, the resister.

*Stage Two: Creation.* God responded to this first sin of pride by making a creature from the dust—man, or “Adam.” God stooped right down into the dust to make this creature. He wanted to eliminate any basis for pride from man and from the whole of creation.

*Stage Three: Man’s fall.* Alas, man was enticed by Satan, the adversary, into the same sin of pride that Satan himself had committed. Now, being guilty of pride, man likewise fell.

*Stage Four: Incarnation.* God had a plan of redemption for fallen man, and in this plan He stooped lower still. In Christ, He stooped to the very level of fallen humanity. He became one with the human race to lift man up again from his fallen condition to a place of fellowship with God throughout eternity.

*Stage Five: Redemption.* God made it so that these redeemed creatures—the redeemed members of Adam’s race—would reign with Him throughout eternity in the brightness of heaven’s glory. They would be a demonstration to the universe that God reserves the highest place for the lowest.

Running through the entire record of God’s dealings with His creatures, we see this principle: God abases the proud and exalts the lowly. The one who promotes himself will be abased, but the one who humbles himself will be promoted.

### *The Crux of the Matter*

We must always keep in mind that the essential nature of the sin into which Adam fell—into which he was actually enticed

by Satan—was the same as Satan’s own sin. It was the sin of pride, leading to rebellion against God. In Genesis 3, Satan presented his ultimate temptation to Adam and Eve, which was to disobey God by eating the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden—the fruit that God had forbidden to them. We saw that Satan, in the form of a serpent, said to them, “*For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:5).

The motivation that prompted Satan’s own rebellion in heaven is summed up in his declaration, “*I will make myself like the Most High*” (Isaiah 14:14). That statement is the epitome of self-exaltation. Subsequently, Satan’s ultimate temptation of Adam and Eve was phrased in virtually the same words: “If you eat of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will be like God—equal to God.” Satan proposed the same motivation, producing the same disastrous consequences: pride that led to a fall.

What, therefore, is the intrinsic nature of pride? It is extremely important that we understand this. I can sum up the nature of pride in one simple sentence: Pride is seeking to be independent of God. In their pride, Adam and Eve did not deny God’s sovereignty in the universe. They simply made a personal decision that they could do without Him, that they did not need Him. If they could acquire the knowledge of good and evil, then they would no longer have to depend upon God. Again, in his temptation, Satan had implied that Adam and Eve were in a position of slavish dependence on God—a position that was not worthy of their potential. According to the

tempter, they would be much better off without depending on Him.

The essence of this temptation is summed up in one word: *independence*. It is the desire to be independent of God. That, in its essence, is pride. It is satanic pride—the very pride that caused Lucifer’s fall. Clearly, there is a consequence for this kind of attitude. Any life that is not lived out in willing dependence on God is motivated by pride.

This is a very subtle deception. Many people who would not consider themselves prideful are in fact seeking to live their lives without willing dependence on God. But the motivation behind that way of life is pride, and the results of pride are always the same—rebellion and disaster.

### *A Foolish Desire*

In Luke 12, Jesus related the parable of a man who was guilty of just this kind of wrong attitude toward God—a type of independence that is really pride. Unless we are aware of the nature of pride as we read this story, we might miss the real mistake this rich man made.

*And [Jesus] told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will*



*store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'" (Luke 12:16–19)*

Have you ever heard people in our contemporary world speak like that? What this rich man said really portrays a very common attitude in society today. Now, let us complete the parable:

*"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' [Here, then, is the commentary of Jesus:] This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:20–21)*

God called that rich man a fool—yet he only did what millions of people in our contemporary civilization are doing: he took care of himself. In a certain sense, he was prudent. He was a good manager. He had the commendable ability to bring forth a good harvest from his field. When he knew he needed larger storehouses, he had the foresight and capability to build them.

Most people would regard him as a rather respectable, sensible type of man. Frankly, he could easily be a churchgoer,

accepted in many of our contemporary churches. This very same attitude is found in millions of professing Christians and churchgoers today.

So, what was the problem? Why was he called a fool? What was the essence of his sin? Here is my answer: he acted as if he were independent of God. He did not acknowledge the fact that he depended upon God for the very breath he breathed; that he depended upon God for his seed to mature and to bring forth a harvest; that he depended upon God for health and strength. For everything in his life, he was ultimately dependent upon God, yet he failed to see or to acknowledge that dependence. He tried to live as if it were not so. The root of that attitude is pride. In its essence, the desire to be independent of God is pride.

### *Boastful Pride*

The New Testament diagnoses this problem of pride very clearly. For instance, let us read this passage from the book of James:

*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and*

*brag. All such boasting is evil. (James 4:13–16)*

The boastfulness talked about in these verses is pride—the desire to be independent of God, to act as if God had no real authority over our lives. This is summed up well in the following verse from 1 John:

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father; but is from the world. (1 John 2:16 nasb)*

“*The boastful pride of life*” is living as though God did not really matter, living as though God had no claims or authority. Do you recall our one-sentence summary of the intrinsic nature of pride? Pride is seeking to be independent of God. It is not a denial of God’s sovereignty in the universe. It is simply a personal decision that we can do without Him.

### *Responding to Boastful Pride*

As we close this chapter, you may be realizing that you yourself have been overtaken by this subtle deception of boastful pride. If you are sensing any conviction in that area right now, why not respond by offering the following simple prayer to God?

Lord, I realize that I have tended toward the independence described in this chapter. Before I go one step further, I want to settle this issue with You.

I repent, and I ask Your forgiveness for having this *“boastful pride of life”*—this tendency to seek independence from You and Your plans for me. I want to reverse that now.

Lord, I make this declaration to You: By Your grace, I will live from now on in willing dependence upon You. Amen.

## Chapter 7

## The Perfect Pattern of Humility

In our in-depth exploration of the eternal, universal law regarding pride versus humility, we have looked primarily at the negative side of this precept. In this chapter, we will focus on the positive aspect, which is stated in the words “*Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*”

The greatest and most perfect demonstration of this positive aspect was provided by Jesus Himself. In fact, the contrast between Satan (Lucifer) and Jesus is exact and complete. Look at it in this way: Lucifer, now Satan, sought to exalt himself and was cast down. Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself and was exalted.

*An Amazing Picture of Self-Humbling A picture of the self-humbling of Jesus is beautifully described for us by the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5–11. I think it is significant that Paul wrote the epistle to the Philippians in a prison cell. He was applying lessons he'd had to learn in his own life, and he saw the perfect pattern of these lessons already worked out in the life of Jesus. In this passage, Paul described two realities:*

## *the self-humbling of Jesus, and Jesus' resulting exaltation by God the Father.*

In the description of the self-humbling of Jesus in verses 5–8, we can identify seven successive downward steps that He took—from His place of equality with God to the place of dying a criminal's death on a cross. In Scripture, the number seven often represents that which is perfect or complete. So, in these seven downward steps, we see the perfect self-humbling of our Lord Jesus.

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5–8 nasb)*

The beginning words, “*Have this attitude,*” point out that everything starts with the attitude, not with the act. It was Lucifer's *attitude of pride* that prompted his act of rebellion. It was Jesus' *attitude of humility* that led Him to His subsequent downward course of self-humbling. Let's look briefly at these seven downward steps.

*Seven Downward Steps of Humility Step one: Jesus*

*“emptied Himself.” In one of his hymns, Charles Wesley wrote that Jesus “emptied Himself of all but love.”<sup>2</sup> He laid aside all His attributes as a divine Person.*

*Step two:* He took *“the form of a bond-servant.”* In the Greek, the word *“bond-servant”* is literally *“a slave.”* In one way, Jesus could have been a servant of God and still remained on the level of the angels—for angels are all God’s servants. But instead, Jesus deliberately chose a lower position of servitude.

*Step three:* He was *“made in the likeness of men.”* This took Him further down. Jesus placed Himself on the same level with the Adamic race, the descendants of Adam. Bear in mind, He could have come to earth in the form of human perfection—in every aspect, physical and otherwise, that Adam had before the fall. But instead, Jesus chose to become a normal human being as the descendants of Adam experienced it—though without sin. (See Hebrews 4:15.) *Step four:* He was *“found in appearance as a man.”* Jesus was physically just like the men of His time. He mingled with them on the streets of Nazareth, and no one noticed any physical difference. As confirmation of this point, let’s remember an incident when Peter identified Jesus by answering, *“You are the Messiah, the Son of God.”* At that time, Jesus told Peter, *“Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”* (See Matthew 16:16–17.) In other words, Jesus’ true identity could not be seen with the normal eyes of the flesh. In His physical



attributes, He was just like all the other men in His village and region. Only the Holy Spirit could reveal the true divinity of Jesus beneath His veil of flesh, because He was “*found in appearance as a man.*”

*Step five: “He humbled Himself”* to be a mere man. Have you ever thought about that? Jesus was not a ruler, a military commander, or even a priest. It is true that He came from the lineage, or house, of David, but it was a house that was in decay and humiliation at that time. It had lost its pristine kingly glory.

*Step six: As a man,* He endured the eventual fate of all men, that is, “*death.*” He saw it through to the end.

*Step seven, the ultimate step:* He died “*on a cross.*” He did not die on a sickbed with His relatives around Him; He did not die in the comfort of His own home; rather, He died a criminal’s death in agony and shame, naked on a Roman gibbet. That was the total self-humbling of Jesus.

*Seven Upward Steps to Exaltation Having reviewed the seven downward steps, let us now pay special attention to the result of the self-humbling of Jesus. We get a hint of that result in the very first words of Philippians 2:9 (nasb): “For this reason also”—or, as it says in certain Bible translations, “Therefore....” (See, for example,*

*niv, nkjv.) Jesus did not pretend to renounce His position as God—He really did renounce it. And in order to return to it, He had to earn the right. And earn it He did, by His self-humbling. Paul attested to this in Philippians 2:9–11 (nasb):*

*[Therefore] God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Notice that Jesus now took seven upward steps: *Step one: “God highly exalted Him.”*

*Step two: God gave Him “the name which is above every name.”*

*Step three: God ordained that “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow.”* At this precise point, three areas are specified—encompassing every area of creation—where every knee will bow. I note these areas in steps four through six.

*Step four: “Those who are in heaven” will bow to Him.*

*Step five: “Those who are...on earth” will bow to Him.*

*Step six: “Those who are...under the earth” will bow to Him.*

*Step seven, the final one: “Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”*

Bear in mind the word *therefore* in its connotation as the result of what went before. Jesus earned this exaltation by His self-humbling. He was the perfect example of the principle “*Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*”

### *The Outworking of Humility*

Continuing now with the next verses from Philippians 2, I want you to notice that the first word in verse 12 is also “*Therefore....*” We have seen the outworking of this principle of self-humbling in the life of Jesus. Now we will see how it applies to our own lives:

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe. (Philippians 2:12–15)*

Again, immediately after the record of Jesus’ self-humbling and His subsequent exaltation, we see another appearance of the word *therefore*. What is it “there for”? It is a result-oriented word—indicating an application of that principle to our lives.

Just as Jesus humbled Himself, so it should be with us. If we are to live the Christian life successfully and follow His pattern, we too must humble ourselves. Self-humbling is the essential condition for leading the Christian life as the New Testament pictures it. The same principle that worked in Jesus must also be worked out in us.

In the above passage of Scripture, Paul stated three results of humbling ourselves. Let us review each one.

## We Obey God

The first result is obedience—we obey God. Paul said, in effect, “Don’t obey only in my presence, but much more in my absence.” A proud person cannot be obedient. Pride and rebellion can never go together with obedience. We cannot obey God or those set over us by God as long as there is pride and rebellion in our hearts. We have to humble ourselves in order to obey.

## We Enable God to Work in Us

The second result of self-humbling is that God is able to work in us. Paul said, “*It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose*” (Philippians 2:13). Pride is a barrier to God working in us. God can work His will only in those who humble themselves. As long as we remain proud, arrogant, and self-sufficient—seeking to maintain our independence from God—there is no way God can work in us.

## We Shine as God's Lights in the World

The third result of humbling ourselves is very beautiful. Humility causes us to “*shine like stars in the universe*” (Philippians 2:15). It makes God's people totally different from the people of this world. God's people stand out not by their high attainments or their intellectual ability but by their humility. Humility is a quality the world sees very little of today. It certainly makes God's people distinct when they practice it.

The world is getting darker all around us. Many “lights” that we regarded as secure are being taken from us. But the beautiful fact of the night sky is that the darker the night gets, the brighter the stars shine. That is how God wants it to be with us. And self-humbling is the key to our shining like lights in the world.

*The Greatest Demonstration of Humility I hope you are enjoying and benefitting from our study of pride versus humility, and the application of the universal law we have been discussing. I also hope the Lord is speaking to you and encouraging you in your walk with Him through what we are covering.*

As we have seen, Jesus is the greatest and most perfect demonstration of the humility we are all seeking after. He has

given us a pattern to follow. Self-humbling must be an essential part of our lives if we want to live the Christian life successfully. The result, God promises, is that we will “*shine like stars in the universe.*” As believers, walking in the pattern Jesus set for us is the most effective way to point our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family members to God Himself.

Remember that although our world is growing continually darker, darkness is the setting in which the Light shines brightest. If you want God to use you during these dark days, the key is self-humbling. In the next chapter, we will study specific ways we can take action to make self-humbling a reality in our lives.

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2. Charles Wesley, “And Can It Be That I Should Gain” (1738).

## Part III

# **Humility and Exaltation**



## Chapter 8

## Humbling Ourselves to Come to God

In the previous chapter, I pointed to the perfect pattern of self-humbling provided by Jesus Himself. Laying aside heaven's glory and His place of equality with God, Jesus took seven downward steps of humility, which are described in Philippians 2:5–8: (1) He emptied Himself; (2) He took the form of a slave; (3) He came to us in the likeness of men—as a normal human being; (4) He assumed the physical appearance of the men of His time; (5) He humbled Himself to be a mere man, with no special office or position; (6) He endured death—the common fate of all men; and (7) He died on a *cross*—a criminal's death by crucifixion in agony and shame.

Because Jesus humbled Himself so completely in these seven ways, God in turn exalted Him to the highest place in the universe. God gave Him the name that is above every name and ordained that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him as Lord.

### *Three Areas of Application*

Although the law of self-humbling was thus perfectly demonstrated in Jesus, this law operates just as accurately and just as universally to you and me. We need to be aware that there are three main phases in which we must apply this principle of self-humbling to our own lives. The first phase is when we come to God initially. In this situation, self-humbling leads us to Him. The second phase is after we have come to

God and are moving forward in the Christian life. In this phase, self-humbling helps us to make progress in the spiritual life. The third phase comes as we interact with others, including our fellow Christians. In phase three, self-humbling leads us to relate properly to those around us.

We will devote a full chapter to each of these phases of applying humility to our everyday lives. The first practical application of the principle of self-humbling—coming to God initially—is what we will examine in this chapter.

### *Humbleness in Coming to God*

#### “Become as Little Children”

How do we humble ourselves in order to come to God initially? In Matthew 18, Jesus gave us the pattern of a child as an example of how to come to God:

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:1–4 nkjv)*

When Jesus spoke these words, some of the disciples were assuming that they were already in the kingdom of heaven. But Jesus was saying, in essence, “You have not even entered! And the reason you have not entered is that you have not met the condition.” What was the condition? In His answer, Jesus used the very phrase *“humbles himself.”* He said, *“Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Certainly, the people of Jesus’ day would not have expected that kind of an answer. Instead, they might have expected Him to point to some ruler, some learned rabbi, or some person of wealth as an example of greatness. Quite to the contrary, Jesus selected the most conspicuous example of weakness and humility—a child—and said, “If you ever want to get into the kingdom of heaven, you have to change and become like this little child.”

Every parent knows that little children are not perfect. Children sometimes lose their tempers. They are sometimes very difficult to deal with. But there is one feature of children that is almost universally true: children are teachable. They don’t have prejudices and preconceptions that shut their minds off from what is true. They receive the truth without having to prove themselves right or demonstrate their cleverness. And so, Jesus chose a child as an example of how to come to God and enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus was telling us exactly how best to humble ourselves—like a little child. We have to become just like the little child Jesus selected as the best example of the type of humility He

expects from us.

## “That No Man May Boast”

Continuing our examination of the importance of humility in coming to God, let us read what Paul said in 1 Corinthians about the people whom God chooses. (Frankly, it is an unlikely group of people!)

*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. (1 Corinthians 1:26–29 nasb)*

Paul named three categories of people who find it particularly hard to get into God’s kingdom: the wise, the powerful, and the noble. Is there anything wrong with wisdom or power or nobility? Does God have anything against these attributes? Not at all. The issue is that those are the three main sources of pride in human nature. People are proud because of their wisdom, education, or cleverness; their power or influence;

their noble birth or social position. But here is the problem: *the proud cannot get into the kingdom of God.*

## The Eye of the Needle

In Luke 18, there is a remarkable interview between Jesus and a certain rich ruler. The ruler asked Jesus a very earnest question: *“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* (verse 18). Let’s see how Jesus responded:

*“You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” [the ruler] said. When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:20–25)*

In this passage, Jesus used a very remarkable phrase, speaking about a camel going through the eye of a needle. Have you found that concept somewhat difficult to

understand? Let me offer you an explanation.

My experience living in the land of Israel for several years broadened my understanding of Jesus' comment to this rich young ruler. I have heard from firsthand sources about the physical configuration of the entrance in the wall of the old city at the Jaffa Gate that existed even as recently as the beginning of the twentieth century.

In those early days of the Jaffa Gate, there was a very large iron gate that was closed every night at sunset and kept closed until sunrise the next day. On no account was that large gate to be opened during the hours of darkness. However, it would sometimes happen that a traveler on a camel would arrive at the gate after dark, seeking to be admitted into the city. When this occurred, a small gate inside the main iron gate was opened. The person seeking entrance would dismount from his camel, strip the camel of everything on its back—all the baggage it was carrying—and coax the animal to its knees. Then, with great difficulty, the camel, without any of its baggage, could just barely squeeze through this small opening in the Jaffa Gate. What was the name of that small gate? It was known as “the Eye of the Needle.”

In His response to the rich young ruler, Jesus was describing how it is when a rich man comes to the kingdom of God. He has to lay aside all his baggage—all his pretension, pride, arrogance, independence—and get down on his knees in order to just barely squeeze through. However, a poor man who carries nothing in his hand but a staff can get through much more easily. All he has to do is stoop and pass through, and he

is on the inside.

The same gate is for all, whether rich or poor. But so often it is harder for the rich to get through than it is for the poor.

## Laying Everything Aside

Let us look at one more pattern for coming to God in humility. It is in the Old Testament account of a man named Naaman who tried to come to God in a big way but found that it did not work. His story is related in chapter 5 of the book of 2 Kings.

Naaman had a very distinguished background. He was highly regarded as a valiant soldier, and he was the commander of the Syrian army. But he had a problem: he was a leper. How many people are like that? They seem to have everything—but there is a problem.

One of Naaman's maidservants, a little Israelite girl who had been taken captive, told him that if he could make his way to the prophet Elisha in Samaria, he could be healed of his leprosy. So Naaman got permission from the king of Syria and set out with ten talents (seven hundred fifty pounds) of silver, six thousand shekels (one hundred fifty pounds) of gold, and ten sets of clothing. You see, Naaman was going to come to God in a big way! And when this great leader arrived in Israel, the prophet Elisha said, in effect, "Send him to me, and he will be healed." (See 2 Kings 5:8.) But here is the rest of the story:

*So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and*



*stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. (2 Kings 5:9–14)*

Naaman had arrived in dramatic fashion, expecting personal attention and an appropriately dramatic response in ministry from the great prophet. But what an insult! Elisha had not even come to the door! The prophet had simply sent his messenger to tell Naaman what to do.

Do you see the pattern? Do you see its significance? To be healed, Naaman had to lay aside everything—especially his pride—just like the camel squeezing through that tiny gate.

Naaman had to lay aside his rank, his wealth, his position, his prestige, and even his uniform. He had to take off his clothes and expose that leprous skin of his. He had to bathe in what he considered to be a dirty river. (Anyone who has ever seen the Jordan River would certainly attest that it is a muddy river. I can fully understand Naaman's adverse reaction as he compared the Jordan to the clear, snow-fed streams of his own country.)

But when Naaman was willing to humble himself—when he fully obeyed and dipped into that river seven times—that was when he received his reward. What a beautiful picture of a man who tried to come to God in a big way but learned to humble himself and receive what God had promised to him.

### *A Simple Act*

As we close this chapter, let me ask you a direct question: Is there any issue of pride standing in the way of your fully coming to God?

If so, I would strongly recommend that in a simple act of contrition, you bow your knee to the Lord and humble yourself as Naaman did, stripping off anything that might hinder your relationship with Him. I urge you to come to Him in humility.

The best news of all is that if you will meet the condition of coming to the Lord in childlike humility, He is eagerly waiting to accept you and to receive you. Will you take that step toward Him right now? Let's use the thoughts from the above paragraph in the form of a simple prayer.

Lord, I acknowledge that in a very similar way to Naaman, I have an issue of pride working in me. I lay it aside now.

I bow before You, humbling myself in Your presence, stripping off anything that stands between You and me in our relationship.

I come to You now in full humility, and I give myself completely to You. Amen.

## Chapter 9

## Humbling Ourselves for Spiritual Progress

In each of the chapters of this book, we have been building our teaching on the universal law that operates in every situation where there is a conflict between pride and humility. In the last few chapters, we have uncovered the reality that the nature of our struggle with pride is a desire for self-exaltation and independence from God. We now recognize that this is a very common attitude in the world today, yet one that leads to rebellion and destruction. The antidote to this prevailing attitude is the universal principle stated by Jesus in Matthew 23:12: *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

We also examined the results that follow from self-exaltation in contrast to the results that come from self-humbling. In Lucifer, we saw the example of self-exaltation and its consequences. In Jesus, we saw the example of self-humbling and its consequences.

In the previous chapter, we saw clearly that self-humbling is an essential requirement for each one of us to come to God initially—to step into a living relationship with the Lord for the first time. This brings us to our current chapter, in which we will see how humility is required for us to move forward into maturity in the Christian life. For each of us, our spiritual progress will be in direct proportion to the degree to which we continue to humble ourselves.

## *The Path to Leadership*

### **An Ambitious Request**

First of all, I want to focus on the path to leadership in the body of Christ—among God’s people, the followers of Jesus. We will look at what Jesus said about that path to leadership in connection with an incident that took place near the close of His earthly ministry. This event is recorded in Matthew chapter 20, where the mother of two of Jesus’ disciples—James and John, the sons of Zebedee—came to Jesus with a special request on behalf of her sons. Let us give our full attention to both the request and the response Jesus gave to it.

*Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. “What is it you want?” He asked. She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom.” “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. (Matthew 20:20–22)*

Notice that Jesus spoke “to them”—to the sons, not to the mother. Jesus placed the responsibility not on the mother who had actually made the request but on her sons. They were, to a degree, hiding behind their mother’s apron. But Jesus brought them right out into the open and exposed their own wrong

motives.

*“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from My cup, but to sit at My right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by My Father.” When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. (Matthew 20:22–24)*

Why were the other disciples indignant? There was only one reason why they should have been indignant. They themselves were also aspiring to those two places of top honor at the right and at the left of Jesus. A lot of motives were laid bare in this simple incident.

### The Condition for Promotion

*Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave....” (Matthew 20:25–27)*

That word “*slave*” is an ugly word, isn’t it? And yet it is an absolute requirement: if you want to be great, you have to become a servant. If you want to be first—greater still—you have to go even lower. You have to become a slave.

*“...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*  
(Matthew 20:28)

We see a very clear principle in the above account. It is the foundation of the condition for promotion in God’s kingdom. It is part of the same precept regarding pride versus humility that we have been looking at all the way through this book: The way up is the way down. If you want to go higher, stoop lower. If you want to be a ruler—if you want to be a leader—become a servant. If you want to be the chief, become the slave.

Once again, I want to emphasize that this principle operates in every life, in every area of the universe. There are no exceptions to this law. Just as we would normally say that in the physical world there are no exceptions to the law of gravity, so in the spiritual world there are no exceptions to the eternal, universal law that “*whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*” There is no other legitimate route to promotion in the kingdom of God—to becoming a leader—but through self-humbling.

Let me suggest to you that we often ignore this law in our



practice of promotion in the church. We choose people because they have been to seminary, because of their education, or because of their preaching gift. Many times, such choices turn out to be disastrous because we have ignored this great basic principle: anyone who has not learned to humble himself is not fit to be a leader of God's people.

### *Humility in the Apostle Paul*

I next want to show you this same principle worked out in the personal experience of the apostle Paul. Let us read Paul's own testimony about himself and his experience from 2 Corinthians 12. Prior to these verses, Paul had been speaking about the tremendous, unique revelations concerning the gospel and the church that he had received from the Lord. Then he explained how God had to deal with him because of these revelations.

*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.*  
(2 Corinthians 12:7)

Let me just point out that this is not the way we normally expect things to happen. We would think that if we had received tremendous revelations, everything would go smoothly for us. Life would be that much easier. Yet, often the

contrary is true. The person with the great revelation is the one who suffers the most. Paul continued,

*Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. (2 Corinthians 12:8)*

When we pray, we need to remember this fact: “No” is an answer just as much as “Yes.” In this case, Paul prayed three times—and each time he got the same answer: “No.” We see the explanation for the Lord’s answer, as well as Paul’s response, in the next two verses:

*But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)*

When Paul wrote “*Therefore...*” it was the outworking of his affirmation of the same principles we have been studying. “*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.*” I wonder

if you could say what Paul said? In fact, I ask myself, “Can I say that?”

How many people could say, “*I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties*”? Do you recognize that the reason why Paul delighted in those adversities is that he had learned the same principles we are learning here?

Everything that pushes me lower, everything that strips me of the last vestige of pride or arrogance or self-reliance—that is the pathway to my exaltation. The lower I go, the higher God lifts me. The less I have in myself, the more I can receive from God. When I am weak, then I am strong. Why? Because God’s power is made perfect in our weaknesses.

As long as we have so much of our own, we don’t need much from God. But when we have been stripped of our own, then we need all that God has for us—and it is freely available.

### *Humility in John the Baptist*

Now I want you to see the same principle illustrated in the life of John the Baptist—the man who came as the forerunner of Jesus. John the Baptist was the man who had a unique ministry to prepare the way of the Messiah. At a certain point in John’s ministry, the people following him told him that the Man whose way John had come to prepare, the One whom he had declared to be the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth—was making more converts and seeing more people baptized than John himself. (See John 3:23–26.)

I suppose the people who told John the Baptist this news expected him to react in a negative way—to be disappointed. They may have thought that his pride would be wounded and that his feelings would be hurt. They may have supposed John would not want to see his Cousin—who was younger than he and for whom he had actually opened the door to ministry—succeeding in this way. They may have assumed John would not want to see Jesus promoted above him. We can thank God that was not the reaction of John the Baptist. His comment on the situation was this: “*He [Jesus] must become greater; I must become less*” (John 3:30).

What a secret there is in that statement! Do you want more of Jesus? Then there must be less of yourself. Do you want more of God’s power? Then you must see your own weaknesses. Do you want God’s anointing? Then you must strip yourself of all confidence in your own fleshly ability. As you become less, Jesus in you becomes greater. His power is made perfect in you and me in the midst of our weaknesses.

### *Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus*

This amazing principle regarding humility and vulnerability brings to mind a quote by the late evangelist Dwight L. Moody:

I used to think that God’s gifts were on shelves one above the other, and that the taller we grow in Christian character, the easier we could reach them. I now find that

God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts.<sup>3</sup>

In the struggle between pride and humility in our lives, the real secret is to keep our eyes on Jesus Himself. We must remember that He is the Pattern—the One in whom the principle was perfectly worked out. Hebrews 12:2 says,

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Remember, not only did Jesus get us started in the faith, but He is also the One who will see us through. Why do we fix our eyes on Him? Because of His example. Jesus showed us the principle that has been illustrated throughout this book: The way up is down. Just as it was for Jesus, so it is for us. The way to the throne is via the cross.

Our job is to willingly receive the death of all our arrogance, all our self-confidence, all our carnal pretensions, and all our claims to be something. As we let all of that self-centeredness die on the cross that God provides, the way is open for us to

the throne. So, *“let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”*

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3. This quote is traditionally attributed to F. B. Meyer, whose life and evangelical ministry were profoundly impacted by D. L. Moody.

## Chapter 10

## Humbling Ourselves Before Others

We have reached the final chapter in our study together of the outworking of the eternal universal law that says, *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”* In our last two chapters, we have explored the ways in which this principle applies in our personal relationship to God. Self-humbling is an essential requirement—not only for coming to God initially but also for all subsequent spiritual progress in the Christian life. Jesus is our Pattern for that process and progress. The Bible continually says, “Humble yourselves....” In other words, it is something we must do. As we have seen, humility originates in the will and is expressed in appropriate action.

Let us now take this principle one step further, discovering how it applies in our relationship to others. You see, our true attitude toward God is often revealed by our attitude toward other people. This is especially the case in the matter of humility. It must be expressed not only toward God but also toward others.

We often tend to deceive ourselves in matters like this. We claim to have the right attitude toward God, but in our dealings with our fellow men, we demonstrate a completely different, incorrect attitude. The truth of the matter is that if we really have the right attitude toward God, it will be demonstrated in our attitudes and dealings with our fellow men. If, however, a wrong attitude toward others manifests in our lives, it can be



an indication that some aspect of our attitude toward God is not right. (See, for example, 1 John 4:20.)

### *Three Enlightening Passages*

Self-humbling toward others is mandated in various places in the New Testament. Let's look at three examples, beginning with Philippians 2:3: *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."* Notice that humility is manifested in considering other people better than ourselves. It is the opposite of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Next, we read a short but very important statement in Ephesians 5:21 (nasb): *"Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."* The implication is very clear. If we really fear and reverence Christ, it will be manifested in our attitudes toward one another. We will not merely be subject to Christ, but we will also be subject to one another. If we claim to be subject to Christ but are not subject to one another, then our claim of subjection to Christ is not valid.

Our third scriptural example is 1 Peter 5:5: *"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"* I like to quote the J. B. Phillips translation of that particular verse (as I did earlier in this book). It says, *"Indeed all of you should defer to one another and wear the 'overall' of humility in serving each other."* In the Greek, the word that is translated *"clothe yourselves"* or *"wear the overall"* specifically means to put on a certain type of apron that was worn only by slaves. In other

words, Peter was saying, “Wear the attitude of a slave toward others.” That is the true expression of humility.

Let’s now look at examples of the outworking of this principle in the lives of two people from the Old Testament. The first is Abram, or Abraham; the second is Jacob.

### *Abram’s Astounding Humility*

We will start with the example from the life of Abraham, which describes his relationship and dealings with his nephew Lot. The record is found in Genesis 13:5–17. It is a rather lengthy passage, but it will be helpful to read all of it.

*Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram’s herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers.” (Genesis 13:5–8)*

There is a significant implication to the statement “*We are brothers.*” The Scripture notes that there were other people living in the land (Canaanites and Perizzites) who were

potential enemies of both Abram and Lot. So Abram reminded his nephew, “As brothers, we can’t afford to quarrel.” What was the reason they had to get along? They had enemies who would exploit any division between them. (How true that is of God’s people in the world today!)

Let’s continue with the story to see how Abram behaved toward Lot.

*[Abram said,] “Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.” Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord. (Genesis 13:9–13)*

## Abram Gave Lot First Choice

In the above passages, we see Abram’s astounding humility. (I will shortly point out some profound implications of that humility.) Here was Abram, the senior man; the man of God’s choice; the man with the special calling; the man to whom the

inheritance belonged. His nephew Lot was just “along for the ride”—following, as it were, in Abram’s train. However, when the time came for them to separate, Abram didn’t take an arrogant position. He didn’t insist upon his own way, saying, “I’m the senior person here, so I’ll take first choice. This is what I want.” Instead, he took a step that really astonishes me. Abram freely gave Lot the first choice. He said, “Whatever you choose will be yours. I’ll take whatever is left.” Is that not humility?

## The Reward of Humility

In the closing verses of the passage, we see the reward of humility:

*The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” (Genesis 13:14–17)*

Please notice that it was only after the act of self-humbling that Abraham saw his inheritance. Up to that time, he had been standing right in the midst of it, but God had not really revealed

it to him. God chose to reveal it to Abraham only after he had humbled himself before his young nephew Lot.

What a picture of the reward of self-humbling! You see, God watches our actions, He sees our motives, and He is always working out this principle: the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

### *Jacob's Lesson of Humility*

The second example of self-humbling is taken from the life of Jacob. I want to show you how Jacob could not get back into his inheritance until he humbled himself—not merely before the Lord but also before his brother, Esau.

Initially, Jacob had usurped the birthright from Esau by a rather shabby trick. Then, he had been deliberately deceptive in order to get his father's blessing—and that tactic had gotten him exactly nowhere. As a result of those two underhanded and cruel actions, Jacob was forced to run from his inheritance as a fugitive with nothing but a staff in his hand. His next twenty years were spent in exile, working as a servant for his uncle Laban. But in Jacob's exile and in his service, God blessed him—giving him both a large family and great possessions. At a given point, the Lord spoke to Jacob and said, in essence, “Now it is time for you to go back to the land that I promised to give you.” (See Genesis 25:19–34; 27:1–29:30; 30:25–31:55.)

Jacob Walked with a Limp

Gathering up his wives, his children, and his flocks, Jacob turned his face westward and headed back home. When he reached the border of the land he had been promised, he had a remarkable experience. Scripture tells us that one night when Jacob was alone, an angel wrestled with him—actually wrestled with him all night. Yet Jacob was so strong in himself that the angel could not prevail against him. Eventually, the angel just extended his finger and touched Jacob’s thigh, putting it out of joint—and making Jacob helpless. As a result, he clung to the angel and pleaded for the blessing, which the angel granted to him. But from that point onward, Jacob walked with a limp. (See Genesis 32.)

What does that limp represent as an example to us? It signifies the end of our own strength and our own confidence. It is our acknowledgment that we cannot progress except by depending on the Lord.

## Jacob Bowed

After this encounter with the angel, Jacob still had to meet his brother, Esau, who was just on the other side of the ford. He had heard that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred armed men, and he was terrified. Jacob thought it would be the end of himself, his family, and everything he owned. (See Genesis 32:1–21.) But note what actually happened:

*Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.*  
(Genesis 33:1–4)

## Jacob Learned the Lesson

Do you see this beautiful picture? Here is Jacob, the man to whom belonged the birthright, the blessing, the entire inheritance. He was the one who had wrestled with the angel and encountered the Lord. He was the man of God's choice. On the other hand, coming to meet him was Esau—the carnal man, the man who had despised his blessing, the man whom God could not accept because of his wrong attitude toward spiritual matters. Yet when they met, Jacob, the spiritual man, bowed seven times before his offended brother.

What does that number seven signify? It speaks of the Holy Spirit; it speaks of humility worked by the Holy Spirit. Jacob had learned the lesson: he had discovered that pride would get him nowhere. He had humbled himself before the angel, but that was not sufficient. Now Jacob humbled himself before his brother. His self-humbling brought reconciliation with Esau and opened the way for Jacob to enter safely into the inheritance

that God had promised him. We see that although God had clearly promised the inheritance, Jacob could not receive it until he had humbled himself—not only before God but also before his brother.

### *A Step You Should Take?*

Let me close this chapter—and this book—with a question and a challenge: Is there a step the Lord wants you to take in response to what you have just read? Maybe, like Abraham, the Lord is directing you to respond with humility in order to receive a greater part of His inheritance for you. Or maybe, like Jacob, there is a matter of reconciliation with someone that is awaiting a step of humility on your part.

Whichever it is, I encourage you to ask the Lord what response He wants you to make. Then—by all means—take the step He directs you to take.

Jesus taught us humility as a principle for life by modeling it for us Himself. We are to follow His pattern and humble ourselves. As we do so, we can learn obedience, allowing the Lord to work through us. Ultimately, as the result of His work in us, we will have His view of the world and live in it differently, as Jesus did, according to God's kingdom.

Remember, the darker the night gets, the brighter the stars shine. Let the light of God shine through you! Humility is the key. *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*



## **For Further Study and for Information about Derek Prince Ministries**

**Further Study** For further study on the subject of “pride versus humility,” we recommend these Derek Prince Ministries resources: *Relationship with God’s People Being a Servant Caleb: Lessons from a Dog’s Life* You may find these resources on our website,

www.derekprince.org, or by contacting us in the following ways: Derek Prince Ministries

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## About the Author

**D**erek Prince (1915–2003) was born in India of British parents. He was educated as a scholar of Greek and Latin at Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, in England. Upon graduation, he held a fellowship (equivalent to a professorship) in Ancient and Modern Philosophy at King's College. Prince also studied Hebrew, Aramaic, and modern languages at Cambridge and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As a student, he was a philosopher and a self-proclaimed agnostic.

While serving in the British Medical Corps during World War II, Prince began to study the Bible as a philosophical work. Converted through a powerful encounter with Jesus Christ, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit a few days later. Out of this encounter, he formed two conclusions: first, that Jesus Christ is alive; second, that the Bible is a true, relevant, up-to-date book. These conclusions altered the whole course of his life, which he then devoted to studying and teaching the Bible as the Word of God.

Discharged from the army in Jerusalem in 1945, he married Lydia Christensen, founder of a children's home there. Upon their marriage, he immediately became father to Lydia's eight adopted daughters—six Jewish, one Palestinian Arab, and one English. Together, the family saw the rebirth of the state of Israel in 1948. In the late 1950s, they adopted another daughter while Prince was serving as principal of a teachers' training college in Kenya.

In 1963, the Princes immigrated to the United States and pastored a church in Seattle. In 1973, Prince became one of the founders of Intercessors for America. His book *Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting* has awakened Christians around the world to their responsibility to pray for their governments. Many consider underground translations of the book as instrumental in the fall of communist regimes in the USSR, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia.

Lydia Prince died in 1975, and Prince married Ruth Baker (a single mother to three adopted children) in 1978. He met his second wife, like his first wife, while she was serving the Lord in Jerusalem. Ruth died in December 1998 in Jerusalem, where they had lived since 1981.

Until a few years before his own death in 2003 at the age of eighty-eight, Prince persisted in the ministry God had called him to as he traveled the world, imparting God's revealed truth, praying for the sick and afflicted, and sharing his prophetic insights into world events in the light of Scripture. Internationally recognized as a Bible scholar and spiritual patriarch, Derek Prince established a teaching ministry that spanned six continents and more than sixty years. He is the author of more than fifty books, six hundred audio teachings, and one hundred video teachings, many of which have been translated and published in more than one hundred languages. He pioneered teaching on such groundbreaking themes as generational curses, the biblical significance of Israel, and demonology.

Prince's radio program, which began in 1979, has been

translated into more than a dozen languages and continues to touch lives. Derek Prince's main gift of explaining the Bible and its teachings in a clear and simple way has helped build a foundation of faith in millions of lives. His nondenominational, nonsectarian approach has made his teaching equally relevant and helpful to people from all racial and religious backgrounds, and his teaching is estimated to have reached more than half the globe.

In 2002, he said, "It is my desire—and I believe the Lord's desire—that this ministry continue the work, which God began through me over sixty years ago, until Jesus returns."

Derek Prince Ministries—International continues to reach out to believers in over 140 countries with Derek's teaching, fulfilling the mandate to keep on "until Jesus returns." This is accomplished through the outreaches of more than forty-five Derek Prince offices around the world, including primary work in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For current information about these and other worldwide locations, visit [www.derekprince.org](http://www.derekprince.org).



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