

Lesson 16
Psalms 12, 28, 33, 40, 42, 43, 54, 60, 69, 70, 121, 131
Humility, Hope, Help

C.S. Lewis, in his great book “Mere Christianity,” called pride the “great sin.” I couldn’t agree more. I believe pride is not only the result of all sin, but also behind all fear, which is the first fruits of sin. Jesus described Satan as the father of lies, and that is true. But what is behind Satan’s lying ways? Pride. In Isaiah 14:13-14, we’re given a character assessment of Satan, “For you [speaking of Satan] have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’” Can you hear all the pride in these statements? What also comes through in these verses? – self-glorification.

A clear fruit of pride is self-glorification. Social media feasts on this truth. We can formulate the ideal profiles of ourselves on platforms like FacadeBook and Instasham, but are they really true? If we’re obsessed with glorifying ourselves, then we cannot be giving glory to God. He has no interest in sharing the spotlight with those who seek it for themselves.

I just said that pride is behind all fear. That might sound off-base, but follow me on this. 1 John 4:18a tells us, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.” Now, keeping this verse in mind, if we are continuing to live in fear *despite* the truth that perfect love casts out fear, our pride is telling us God’s Word is not true. Remember Satan’s attacks on the truthfulness of God’s Word in the Garden of Eden? The great prideful one tempts us to not believe God’s Word through challenging its truthfulness with lies. If we come into agreement with these lies, we are adopting Satan’s prideful position of challenging the truth of God’s Word. Therefore, out of pride, we choose to live in fear as opposed to accepting that God’s perfect love casts out fear.

So, you may be asking, what does all of this talk about pride have to do with today’s lesson in the Psalms about Humility, Hope, and Help? Because God is spirit, our flesh struggles with the concept of a personal relationship with a spirit being. Yet, with the birth, life, sacrifice, and resurrection of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, God became more relatable. Through Jesus, we have the hope of being reconciled to God (Romans 5:10), so we are challenged to contemplate what a relationship with God looks like. When we enter into a human relationship, we learn what things please a person and what things don’t. When it comes to having a relationship with God, His Word reveals to us what He responds to and what He does not.

I’ll conclude this lecture with the things God *does* respond to, so let’s first look at the things God *does not* respond well to. God is not a fan of the prideful. This should come as no surprise as He is no fan of the great prideful one – Satan. Listen to some of God’s thoughts on the prideful and haughty:

- Proverbs 18:12: “Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty”
- 2 Samuel 22:28: “But Your eyes *are* on the haughty, *that* You may bring *them* down.”
- Proverbs 11:2: “When pride comes, then comes shame;”
- Proverbs 9:23: “A man’s pride will bring him low;”
- Matthew 23:12: “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled.”
- 1 Peter 5:5: “God resists the proud”

One of the things I like to do when I first look at one of Carol’s lessons is the title she gives it. I hope you saw the progression in this lesson’s title, “Humility, hope, help.” Humility is the antidote to pride. A confession of one’s sinful condition before a perfect and holy God ignites the subtle flame of humility. Yet, if someone does not yet know God or His Word, how can that person confess to Him? Our pride won’t allow it unless it is confronted with something greater than our pride. While I’m sure there are others, I can think of two things that confront our pride. First, according to Numbers 32:23, our sin will find us out. Note it doesn’t say *God* will find us out but our sin will. Think about the insidiousness of sin.

Our flesh is tempted by Satan – usually under the guise it will bring us pleasure. In pursuit of this alleged pleasure, we step into that sin. Then, the truth of the evil and destructive forces of sin rears its ugly head – and the very thing that we thought would bring us pleasure has now condemned us and overwhelmed our pride.

The second thing that I believe challenges our pride is the realization of the obviousness of God’s creative powers. Romans 1:20, in speaking of the unrighteous tells us, “For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they [the unrighteous] are without excuse.” When you take the time to truly look at any form of life, you have to be willfully ignorant to not see the design. If there is a design, then there must be a Designer. The Designer is always greater than the design.

So, we have at least two things that challenge our pride – our sin and God as our Creator. When our pride is challenged, we are in a vulnerable state – we come to a fork in the road of our lives. One path is to continue in our pride through hardening our hearts by denying the truth of sin’s deadly consequences and God as our creator. Another path is our pride has been chewed up, and there’s nothing there to replace it. Therefore, we live in fear and depression (which as we said earlier is a form of pride). Or the third path is a step towards the truth of God’s loving redemptive and restoring heart.

If we choose to listen to the testimony and leadings of the Holy Spirit into the truth of God’s Word, He will, as we said earlier, ignite the subtle flame of humility. From this humility – a surrender of one’s pride, we make the good confession. We look upon the cross and find our Lord and Savior being humility’s role model by humbling Himself and becoming obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:8). Andrew Murray, in his amazing book “Humility,” said, “*Jesus Christ took the place and fulfilled the destiny of man, as a creature, by his life of perfect humility. His humility is our salvation. His salvation is our humility.*”

In our pride, we would never make declarations of God, but a *humble* confession of Him progresses into *bold* confessions of Him and our new life in Him. Our lesson’s reading is loaded with these confessions. Let’s take a look at some of them – all of these are from Psalm 40 – one of David’s Psalms:

Verse 8: “I desire to do your will, my God:”

Verse 9: “I proclaim Your saving acts in the great assembly;”

Verse 10: “I do not hide Your righteousness in my heart; I speak of Your faithfulness and Your saving help; I do not conceal Your love and Your faithfulness from the great assembly.”

Verse 17: “But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me.”

The last verse is not the only one in our reading where David makes a humility- and humble-driven admission of his condition before God. He makes similar confessions in Psalm 69 such as, “You, God, know my folly; my guilt is not hidden from You.” (v. 5) “I am in trouble.” (v. 17) “Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless.” (vs. 20) Chuck Smith once commented that he does not know how anyone who has had a true encounter with Jesus Christ can have a place of pride in their lives. Pastor Chuck nailed it. All I can do is quietly shake my head and smile when I hear people say something like, “When I get to heaven, I’m going to have a thing or two tell God.” I have news for those people making statements like this; *if* you get to heaven, when you enter God’s presence, every drop of pride in that statement will instantaneously evaporate, every wall you have constructed around your heart will suddenly collapse, you will immediately fall to your knees, and be overwhelmed by His holiness and goodness.

Prayer starts with humility, and God develops it into a relationship. Out of that relationship we discover God’s character. From God’s character, we arrive at the second step of our lesson title’s progression – hope. What do you think of when hear the concept of a Christian’s hope? Most will say that when we die, we get to be with God in heaven. This is a true statement – according to the Bible. 2 Corinthians 5:8 assures us to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Let me ask you this, does it make sense to you that after all Jesus went through – surrender His glory, be born into poverty on this sin-filled earth, live a life denying every temptation, be betrayed by the very people He came to save,

and then beaten, scourged, and crucified – all that we get for this enormous act of love and sacrifice is just so that when we die, we can go to heaven? Don't get me wrong, that's an amazing promise, but the sad thing is too many Christians believe that's the extent of the hope that we're promised from God through faith in His Son's atoning work. What about the life we're living *now* after we confess our belief in Christ?

The fullness of the hope in the gospel's good news is for *both* this life and the next. The interesting thing is the gateway to this full hope involves the same process – dying. Jesus as the Lamb of God had to die as a sacrifice on our behalf to the Father, and for those who choose to believe in this, they will be given eternal life. As a component of our confession of Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we, also die. Romans 6:4a tells us, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death." Galatians 2:20 expands on that and tells us that, by faith, we are crucified with Christ upon our confession, so our flesh is crucified and buried.

The second half of Romans 6:4 promises that, when it comes to death, that's not the end of the story for either Jesus or the believer - "that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Jesus was resurrected, and He lives to this day. For the believer, what happens when we are crucified and buried with Christ? The Bible offers three life-changing hope-drenched promises:

- We're forgiven of every past, present, and future sin – forever liberated from our slavery and chains to sin (Ephesians 1:7)
- We're a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) with a promise of abundant life in the Spirit (John 10:10)
- We're reconciled to God, which opens up the door to being with God *now* in a deep, personal, and intimate relationship (Romans 5:10)

The elements of true hope are God's character that is clearly revealed in His Word. One of my favorite movies of all time is the *Shawshank Redemption*. The two main characters played by Tim Robins and Morgan Freeman develop a brotherly relationship while in prison. There is a key moment in the movie where the two of them get into a disagreement over the topic of hope. Morgan Freeman's character doesn't trust hope. Tim Robbins' character believes in hope. Towards the end of the movie, Tim Robbin's character leaves his friend a note telling him, "Hope is a good thing."

I'll put a qualifier on that last statement, "**True** hope is a good thing." There is nothing more soul draining than false hope. The good news for us as believers in Jesus Christ is the hope we have is in the *only* true and living God. As we just said, the elements of true hope are God's character that is clearly revealed in His Word. Our lesson's reading is loaded with statements of hope rooted in God's character. They include:

Psalms 28:5 – "the Lord is my strength and my shield"

Psalms 28:8 – "the Lord is...a fortress of salvation"

Psalms 33:3 – "He is faithful in all He does"

Psalms 33:11 – "But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever"

Psalms 33:18 – "But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him; on those whose hope is in His unfailing love"

Psalms 43:3 – "Send me Your light and Your faithful care"

Psalms 54:4 – "the Lord is the one Who sustains me"

Psalms 121:3 – "He will not let our foot slip"

From our reading we are implored to wait on the Lord. Waiting on God is a form of trusting in His character to deliver on the promises of His hope. I am not the most patient person – waiting is something I'm not particularly good at. I like productivity, and I like results – and I like them to happen quickly. As I prepared this lecture, the Lord really impressed on me what was behind my impatience. My

old nemesis, my pride. No one is more aware of my lack of patience than my wife, Vickie. I came home one day sharing my frustrations of hitting every stop light along the way. She had been spending some time with the Lord on this same topic, and she shared with me what she learned. She told me that I should use those times waiting at the light to pray for people. Now, the impatient and prideful flesh in me wanted to spout off and say, “*Thanks for you input, Pollyanna!*” Fortunately, the Holy Spirit muzzled me and spoke these words to me, “She’s right, again, Dan.”

Probably the best verse in Scripture that speaks to the hope promised in waiting on the Lord is Isaiah 40:31: “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” This is a remarkable promise from God, so why do knuckleheads like me have such a hard time with waiting and patience? As I said earlier – pride. In other words, I haven’t fully humbled myself before the Lord to let Him play out His perfect will. Here’s the real evil behind a lack of patience – whatever good I think I can produce out of my seeking to fix things quickly is likely getting in the way of the greater works God can and will do. From this analysis, I can see that humility produces a trust in God’s character that generates a patient and expectant hope.

King David is described in the Scriptures as a man after God’s own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14) Can you imagine a better moniker for yourself? We know David was a flawed man, but God saw through those flaws and chose his bloodline to be the one to which Jesus would come. In preparing this lecture, I thought about what was it about David that God loved so much and entrusted him with his leadership of His chosen people? One of the reasons, I believe, was David saw God as a living Being that truly loved him. David had an extraordinary understanding of God’s character, yet He didn’t have Jesus as an example! He understood that if God truly loved him, He expected God to be there at all times to help him. This leads us to the final component of our lesson – help. What did Jesus call the Holy Spirit in John 14:26? – the Helper.

What is it about us that holds us back from asking for help? I believe that is pride. Sorry guys, but we’re probably less likely to ask for help than women. I’m not saying women don’t have their own pride issues, but when it comes to asking for help, for most of us men, that is a clear sign of weakness to our prideful minds. With all of David’s gifts and anointing, he had zero hesitancy in asking God for help in many circumstances – especially in our reading. Let’s look and listen to these petitions for help, and see what we can learn from them.

Psalms 40:17: “But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay.”

Psalms 12:1: “Help, LORD, for no one is faithful anymore; those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.”

Psalms 28:2: “Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.”

Psalms 33:20: “We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.”

Psalms 40:2: “He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”

Psalms 40:13: “Be pleased to save me, LORD; come quickly, LORD, to help me.”

Psalms 54:4: “Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.”

Psalms 60:5: “Save us and help us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered.”

Psalms 121:1-2: “I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

David was a man of declarations. I believe verbal declarations of God’s true character releases a power that affirms allegiance to Jesus - both to ourselves and to God. Out of humility, David acknowledged he was poor and needy. I believe he was speaking to his spirit in this confession. His calls for help were personal and expectant. He could ask God for His mercy to help him because He knew God

to be merciful. He acknowledged that he was surrounded by an enemy, and his only real help will not come from men, but from God. He realized that God's helping ways are pleasing to Him.

Let's park at that one for a moment. Do you believe that God is pleased to be your God, your Savior, your Lord, and your Helper? Do you believe that God takes pleasure in being all He's supposed to be to you? If you don't, then you are listening to Satan. Likely due to your less-than-ideal circumstances, you have come into agreement with the devil's lying ways about God not being pleased with you. How many of us when things are not going well immediately jump to the place that God is mad at us or He doesn't care about us? Jesus said in John 10:28, "they shall never snatch them from My hand." The "them" He is speaking to are His lambs – we believers in Him. Let me ask you a question – if Jesus Himself says He's not going to ever let go of you, does it make any sense He's mad at you and has let you go unprotected? Please consider these verses.

- Hebrews 12:2: "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
- Hebrews 7:25: "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

What is that joy that is set before Jesus that propelled Him to endure the cross and despise the shame? It is do the will of the Father, and that will is to make a way for each of us to be reconciled to Him. And, what is Jesus doing at the right hand of the throne of God? Making intercession for each believer. When is He doing this? Always! That object of Jesus' joy and desire to intercede is you!

David understood this was the mindset of God probably as well as anyone in the Bible. God loves His job of being your God because He loves you. The problem is when we are suffering and in pain and call out for help, when it doesn't come when we want it, we go to places of doubt and fear. That is only natural because our flesh is weak. God's greatest help is in the spirit. This is not to say He won't help in the flesh, but we are at first spirit beings. Therefore, the most enduring form of help is in the spirit. Horatio Spafford is the author of the great hymn *It is Well With My Soul*. He penned these words at time when his five children had died, and he lost most of his property holdings to the Chicago fire. Only the Holy Spirit, as Mr. Spafford's Helper, can produce those hopeful words at a time of such devastation.

As we contemplate this progression of humility, hope, and help, how can we not ask the question, "How can I get more of that in my life?" I mentioned early in the lecture that when it comes to God listening to us, there are attitudes to which He will likely not respond well, if at all. These attitudes are centered in pride and haughtiness. So, what kind of attitude does God respond well to?

Psalms 34:18: "The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit."

Isaiah 57:15: "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Isaiah 66:2: "For all those *things* My hand has made, and all those *things* exist," says the LORD. "But on this *one* will I look: On *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

The key word in these verses is "contrite." Contrite is defined in Webster's Online Dictionary as, "Feeling or showing sorrow and remorse for improper or objectionable behavior, actions, etc." Remember what was one of the pride killers we talked about? Our sin finding us out. The contrite spirit is a humbled spirit – it's a spirit that acknowledges one's sin and frailties. Per this week's reading, that step of confession ignites a humility in us, and it is that place God is waiting for us to get to, so He can be what we were always designed to be – His children fully reconciled to Him in His constant loving and protective care. With our humble confession, God's promises of His hope-filled character traits come alive and become real as His help testifies to His trustworthiness. If you're not sensing God's help, please

do your best to wait on Him. Remember the cross – great purpose was achieved in Jesus' pain and suffering. Jesus is our role model that even unto death, His story wasn't over, and praise the Lord, neither is ours.

Today's lesson in the Psalms shows us a path to God through humility. If we choose to take this path, God will reveal His character through His Word and through the circumstances He allows and/or initiates in our lives. As we discover the truth of God's character, we will find a cross-proven hope of a loving God who loves to be our help. Great things came of Jesus' humble submission to the Father's will. Imagine what things God has in store for you should you humble yourself to Him!