

# The Foot Of Pride

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, let's turn to that passage that we read in Luke chapter 18, and particularly, I'm going to focus on some words in verse 14, although we will look at the rest of the chapter as well.

So, verse 14 of Luke chapter 18, the last sentence of it, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Pride is almost universally regarded today as a good thing.

We hear of gay pride, of black pride, or even white pride, pride in our country, pride in our team, pride in our family.

And we can see how pride can have a good sense, admiration for or loyalty to someone or something.

Writing to the church in Corinth, for instance, the Apostle Paul says, "I take great pride in you." 2 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 4.

[ 1 : 09 ] It's a word that's translated there as pride. It's a word that literally means to glory in someone or something. And that can be used in a very good sense, because we're looking at that other person or other situation, and we're glorifying them.

It's not a proud thing in ourselves. But the same word in the New Testament can be used in the sense of proud boasting. Earlier, the Apostle Paul said to the same church in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 6, "Your boasting is not good." And it's the very same word, glorying, that is used there.

So, this alerts us to the fact that pride has a dark underbelly. As we mentioned to the children, there's that verse in the Old Testament, chapter 16 of Proverbs, verse 18, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." John Calvin, writing in the 1500s, said, "The whole human race is infected with the disease of pride." Now, in case we think that that's just the view of an ancient reformer, one of the greatest songwriters of the 20th and 21st centuries agrees with that.

There's a whole lot of people in trouble tonight from the disease of conceit, a whole lot of people seeing double tonight from the disease of conceit. Give you delusions of grandeur and an evil eye, give you the idea that you're too good to die.

Then they bury you from your head to your feet from the disease of conceit." The words, of course, of Bob Dylan from 1989. And maybe you agree that pride is a huge problem, but of course, you're not proud yourself.

[ 2 : 59 ] Well, C.S. Lewis has a little test for you. If you want to find out how proud you are, he says, the easiest way is to ask yourself, how much do I dislike it when other people snub me or refuse to take notice of me or shove their ore in or patronize me or show off?

I think that when we do that, we'll really find out how proud we are. Do you know that a revolution took place with regard to attitudes to pride in the first few centuries A.D.?

But for the four centuries or so before that, in Greek thought, which was very influential in the world at that time, in Greek thought, pride was regarded as a good thing, much like today.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle believed the great-souled man had a profound regard for his own excellence. To underestimate it would have stamped him as mean-spirited.

So such pride in oneself was praised and humility was despised. The soul was viewed as good and the body was viewed as bad.

[ 4 : 17 ] Therefore, one could take pride in the intellect overcoming the passions of the body. And in the same way, the noble people in society could take pride in dominating the common people.

Because remember, although we often say democracy arose in Greece, it was democracy not for everyone. It was democracy for just a few people. Slaves and other people, they didn't have the rights of democracy.

So there was this looking down because of the pride in oneself. This exaltation of pride and despising of humility was turned on its head by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. There was one exception to the general Greek praise for pride, and that was in the word hubris.

And it's a word that we've come to use today. The word hubris referred to an attitude of overweening arrogance to God and to man.

[ 5 : 29 ] The Scottish theologian, Willie Barclay, in his book New Testament Words, which is an excellent book, who says that hubris is mingled pride and cruelty.

Hubris is the pride which makes a man defy God and the arrogant contempt which makes him trample on the hearts of his fellow men.

It's interesting that, of course, we have now adopted this word for this dark underbelly of pride. And this is precisely what the New Testament is getting at as it condemns pride.

In fact, various forms of the word hubris are used in the New Testament. Luke chapter 18 verse 32, Jesus speaking of himself here in this very chapter.

He says, he, the Son of Man, will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him. And that word that's translated insult him literally means they will treat him with hubris.

[ 6 : 33 ] They will treat him with this overweening pride or arrogance. They will spit on him, flog him, and kill him. That word is getting at the very heart of why people oppose Jesus.

It was their pride. They would not recognize him as the Son of God because he was challenging them and their position. And so, they treated him cruelly.

It was this cruel pride that they exhibited. And Paul himself, the Apostle Paul, applies the same word to himself.

Now, when he was opposing Jesus, in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 13, he says, I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.

And that word that's translated violent is literally hubristic. He was full of this arrogant pride against Jesus and against his people.

[ 7 : 31 ] And so, he pursued them, throwing him into prison and even standing there approving when Stephen was condemned to death.

All this tells us the real danger of pride. Charles Spurgeon, the great Victorian preacher in London said, Don't be proud of race, face, place, or grace.

It's a very memorable way of putting it, isn't it? To be proud of race. How much havoc that causes in the world? Racial pride. Proud of face. Proud because we're better looking than somebody else.

Proud of place. Whether it's the place you come from or whether it's your place probably more commonly in society, your rank, your status, your class. Or even proud of grace.

How could we possibly be proud of grace? But we can be. We think it's because we're something special that God has shown us His grace. Forgetting that grace is something that is shown to the undeserved.

[ 8 : 42 ] It's God's undeserved love. But of course, it's all these kinds of pride that has caused such havoc in the world. So, let's look then at what we can learn about pride from our text and from this passage.

Our text says that pride brings you down and humility lifts you up. And this truth is seen in the various scenes and encounters described by Luke in this section.

First of all, we have pride in religion in verses 11 and 12 here. Because there are two men here, we're told in this little first vignette here.

Two men, one a Pharisee, one a tax collector. The Pharisee, of course, was a very religious person. He was religiously orthodox and he was morally strict. Perhaps like the contemporary popular view of what a Presbyterian minister is supposed to be.

Although, unlike the latter, the Pharisee was highly respected in his day. The tax collector was a very rich person, but he was rich through money lending and extortion, and also by being a collaborator with the Romans.

[ 9 : 54 ] He was a kind of combination of a loan shark and a traitor. And so, he was despised and hated in society of that time. So, how do these two men, they both go up to the temple and they're approaching God.

How do they approach God? Well, the Pharisee approaches God and we're told that he prays about himself. Or even that could be translated, he prays to himself.

Whatever it is, it's all self-focused. Because we see that his prayer is full of I, I, I.

He exalts himself. He exalts himself by comparing himself with others whom he's looking down on. You know, the criminals or even this tax collector.

I thank you, God, that I'm not like them. He's looking down on them. He's got this holier-than-thou attitude. He's better than others. We've got to be on our guard against that kind of attitude that's always measuring ourselves against others.

[ 11 : 00 ] He was in the presence of God. He ought to have been measuring himself against God's standard, against God's person, against God's character. But not only that, not only was he measuring himself in the wrong way, he was boasting of his religious achievements.

I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of all I get. This is how he's coming to God and says, well, God must accept me because I'm better than other people and because of all these religious achievements.

C.S. Lewis says, and it's a very worthwhile bit to look at in his book, Mere Christianity, he has a chapter on pride.

And in it he says, a proud man is always looking down on things and people. Of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.

And he goes on to say, as long as you are proud, you cannot know God. You see, if we're looking down at others, comparing ourselves to others, we're not looking up to God and remembering how small we are, how sinful we are in comparison with God.

[ 12 : 15 ] But notice too that this man is also given the impression of being so humble. He comes saying, I thank you, God.

He's giving this impression of being so humble. But all the time he's boasting about himself. And again, C.S. Lewis says, a man is never so proud as when striking an attitude of humility.

So again, we've got to be on our guard, haven't we, against such an attitude. Jesus said that the Pharisee was not justified before God, verse 14.

His relationship with God's law was not right. He was still guilty. His relationship with God himself was not right. His pride contaminated all his religious observances.

He was not heading to heaven. The tax collector, on the other hand, his whole attitude speaks humility, not pride.

[ 13 : 17 ] First of all, distance. He stood at a distance. He stood far off from anybody else in some quiet corner of the temple courts. Didn't draw attention to himself.

He was self-effacing. He was also downcast. Wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven. He felt shame in the presence of God.

And he beat his breast. That was the contemporary way of showing sorrow or grief. And particularly, he's doing this in the presence of God.

That's the attitude of humility as he comes before God. He knew that his life was indefensible. And so, he's coming in this self-effacing and this way of feeling shame, expressing shame, and expressing sorrow.

He realized his guilt. He realized his sinful nature. Do you know the very expression that he uses here is not, I'm a sinner.

[ 14 : 24 ] He says, I'm the sinner. It's as if he's saying, I'm really what a sinner epitomizes. I'm the sinner.

That's how he regards himself before God. And so, he knew he had only one hope as he comes before God. Not in boasting of his own achievements. His only hope is in the mercy of God.

And he comes saying, God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Praying that God would not deal with him as he deserved, but would pardon him.

Now, how is this possible? How is it possible that someone like that, you know, who was a loan shark and a traitor and so proud in all his dealings and all the rest of it, how on earth could he come asking for the mercy of God?

Well, the word that he uses here is a very interesting word for have mercy. It implies the need for God's wrath to be placated.

[ 15 : 28 ] It's a word that is linked to the whole idea of propitiation. And that means that God is angry with sin and that anger, that wrath against God needs to be turned away.

And it's the very word that is used about the death of Jesus accomplishing that. It's used later on in the New Testament that he is the propitiation for our sins.

And here in this very chapter, Jesus speaks about his death, that he's going up to Jerusalem and he's going to die there. And that is the means by which somebody, yes, as evil and sinful as this tax collector could be forgiven.

Because he comes genuinely, humbly before God and asks for forgiveness on that basis that God has a way by which our sin can be forgiven.

Jesus said, this man was declared right with God. He was justified, as the word is used. He was declared not guilty and instead accounted righteous.

[ 16 : 33 ] That's the amazing thing that takes place when we turn from our sin and our sinful pride to come humbly and ask for such forgiveness. So, pride brings you down.

This man who was so proud, he's not accepted by God. But the tax collector who came humbly, he was lifted up. Have you humbled yourself before God and ask for His forgiveness and His mercy on the basis of what Christ has done for you?

So, there's pride in religion. But there's also pride we see in this passage also, a little bit more briefly, pride in intellect, verses 15 to 17.

The disciples, they saw these children that were trying to get to Jesus, and they thought that these children were unimportant, unimportant for Jesus.

Because they had no power. They weren't going to influence society. You know, they weren't going to increase His popularity or whatever. They were too young. Their intellect was not developed enough to really appreciate Jesus.

[ 17 : 44 ] They thought Jesus was only interested in grown-ups and people who had influence and people who had intellect. And of course, today, there is a tremendous pride in intellect, similar to in the Greek-Roman world.

Today, we think that science and politics and economics will solve everything. We can control everything. Then along comes a tiny invisible virus that throws the whole world into chaos, wrecking lives, wrecking economies.

We're not as powerful and as wise as we thought we were. I'm reminded again of Bob Dylan's words about the comedian Lenny Bruce.

He showed the wise men of his day to be nothing more than fools. In 1 Corinthians 1, verses 20 to 21, the apostle Paul says, Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

[ 19 : 00 ] Have we learned the lesson of humility? Have our leaders learned that lesson of humility? I doubt it. But that's the lesson, one of the lessons God is teaching us.

How little power we have, how little wisdom we have. But then in comparison with the disciples' attitude, there were the children. They had no achievements, little ability, limited intellectual capacity, but they had no pride.

When Jesus called, they came to Him. And Jesus said that was all that mattered, that they came just as they were, humbly.

Jesus called them, they came. Jesus is calling you today. Whether you're sitting here in church or whether you're at home, Jesus is calling you through these words. Turn from your pride and come, come just as a little child, to trust in the Lord Jesus.

Pride brings you down. Humility lifts you up. John Calvin said, Humility is the beginning of true intelligence. And that's echoing what's said in Proverbs and also in Psalm 111 verse 10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[ 20 : 25 ] Thirdly, we have in this passage pride in morality. We had a little bit of that with the Pharisee, but we see it even more clearly with the rich young ruler, as he's called. He thought he could get everlasting life by doing something great, that he comes to Jesus, what must I do to get eternal life?

He thought he kept all God's law. Verse 21, all these I've kept since my youth. And perhaps we're not reading too much into it to say, well, he had this attitude of pride that he had fulfilled God's law.

So, what more can God ask? Whatever it is, I'll do it. I'm able to do it. And he seemed kind of puzzled. You know, I've done all of this. I've kept God's law.

I've kept God's law. And he said, well, why don't I feel that I have eternal life? I should have it. See, pride in our own goodness never satisfies, because we can never be sure that we're good enough for God.

Jesus showed that he was missing something. In fact, he was missing a few things. He was missing the one commandment that related to his neighbor concerning coveting.

[ 21 : 50 ] That's not mentioned. And this young man didn't put that in and say, well, what about the command about not coveting? Jesus hadn't mentioned it.

Nor does Jesus mention the first four commandments relating to God. And you see, it was in these areas that this man was falling down.

He had a love of his possessions. We may say a greedy, proud love of his possessions and his wealth. There was something else on the throne of his life, not God.

It was his wealth and the pride that he could have in himself and his own achievements because of it. Jesus asked him to show love to others, to give to the poor, and to show love to God by following Jesus.

But pride wouldn't let him. Pride brings you down. We're told he went away miserable. He went away sad. Verse 23.

[ 22 : 54 ] Humility would have lifted him up. His pride brought him down. And also in connection with this man, the rich young ruler, we see pride in wealth.

This is really what stopped him. There's no mention at all of him putting God first in relation to his wealth. His God was his wealth.

It was tied up with his identity. That's who he was. He took pride in that. And of course also that wealth was there for his own use. He would decide how it would be used.

He wasn't going to give it all to the poor. Pride and wealth are inextricably intertwined in our society. Ambition to advance ourselves to be better off than others.

There's something there that's very intrinsic in our society today. Again, Dylan has a song called Foot of Pride.

[ 23 : 53 ] You know what they say about being nice to the right people on the way up. Sooner or later you're going to meet them coming down. Well, there ain't no going back when your foot of pride come down.

And that's based on a verse in the Old Testament, Psalm 36 verse 11, Let not the foot of pride come upon me. It's that idea again of hubris, of pride, despising others, looking down on others.

Jesus said to this young man, you've got to give all that up. You've got to let it go. You've got to recognize me as God and follow me. You've got to recognize my word as far more important than your will.

But pride brought him down. Humility would have lifted him up. And then finally, there's the possibility of pride in our poverty.

We're thinking here about Jesus meeting with the blind beggar Bartimaeus. And thinking first of all about how Bartimaeus could have acted or the attitude he could have had.

[ 25 : 06 ] He might have given him to the temptation to have a kind of inverted snobbery. To have pride in his poverty and his need. To demand his rights as a victim.

God must help me. And if he doesn't, there's something wrong with God. That's the attitude that we see all too common today, isn't it? And it's an attitude we may suffer from ourselves.

God, God must. I have a right for God to help me in my need or my problem, whatever it is. But of course, Bartimaeus didn't approach Jesus in that way, did he?

His actual attitude was one of humility. So unlike most of the others in this passage. His humility is seen in his persistence. You know, when at first it seemed Jesus didn't hear him, he went on shouting.

In spite of the fact that the crowd were telling him to be quiet, he went on shouting until Jesus heard him and Jesus stopped. You know, sometimes again, our pride will not allow us to be persistent.

[ 26 : 15 ] We've prayed about something and nothing seems to happen. God hasn't answered me. We give up because in our pride we think God should have.

But he goes on. And he doesn't care what other people may say about him or what other people may think. He goes on until he gets an answer. And his appeal to Jesus is again for mercy, but it's a different word that's used here.

It's the idea of having compassion or someone taking pity on someone else. He's asking the Lord Jesus to have pity on him, to have compassion for him.

And again, so often we read today and hear today that people say, I don't want pity. I don't want people to pity me. And again, it's that pride that's in us that doesn't realize that we are poor and pitiful and blind and naked, and we need the grace of God.

And he comes also, Bartimaeus, trusting in Jesus. We see his faith because Jesus says to him, your faith has healed you. And you see, faith always goes hand in hand with humility because faith is looking to someone else.

[ 27 : 34 ] Faith is placing your trust in someone else, not in yourself. It's the very opposite of pride. A lot of people talk today about faith as if faith is something, a kind of virtue that we have.

You know, you're faith, and you must have faith. But that's a total disuse of the word faith. Faith is always in someone else or in something else.

You're placing that person higher, more trustworthy than yourself. And that's what we do as we come to the Lord Jesus.

John Calvin again said, nothing but the pure knowledge of God can teach us humility. It's not just because this man Bartimaeus realized his own poor, miserable condition.

It's because he realized who Jesus was. It's because he realized the true grace of God in Jesus that he came humbly before him and asked for his mercy.

[ 28 : 42 ] We've been talking a lot about humility as well as pride. And the greatest example, of course, of humility is Jesus Himself.

In Mark 10, verse 45, Jesus speaking of Himself as the Son of Man says, He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

In His great work of redeeming the human race, of redeeming sinners, He didn't come in pride into the world. He came as a servant to serve us.

If anyone was entitled to stand on His dignity, it was surely Jesus. But He didn't. I'm reminded of what Winston Churchill once said, I know of no case where a man added to his dignity by standing on it.

Well, Jesus never stood on His own dignity. He came as a servant. He came humbly. So, we are called to follow the Lord Jesus.

[ 29 : 52 ] Because as the Apostle Paul says in chapter 2 of Philippians, verses 5 to 8, he says, Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Jesus gave himself to save us, but he also gave himself as an example as to how to live once we are saved.

We have to trust in him and his finished work, but then we have to live as he wants us to live. In Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 to 30, Jesus said, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Again, there we see the two things. He says, come to me. We first of all got to come to him, to trust in him. But once we've done that, we take his yoke on us.

[ 31 : 22 ] In other words, you know, the picture of the yoke was that often a younger, more inexperienced animal would be yoked together with an older, more experienced one, whether they were plowing or whatever, and they would learn.

And so, in the same way, we must walk with Jesus and look to him and learn from him how to be humble. And also, of course, there's that context of Mark chapter 10, verse 45.

You know the famous verse that he'd come to give his life as a ransom for many. But the context is that the disciples were arguing amongst themselves as to who was to be the greatest. And he said, no, you're not to be like that.

You're not to be like the rulers of this world as to who's the greatest. You're to follow me. I came not to be served, but to serve. So, again, we see that pride brings us down, but humility lifts us up.

Jesus came, excuse me, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. But he rose from the dead as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

[ 32 : 32 ] So, what about you this morning? You may be very religious. You may have attended this church or another church for years and years. You may give to charity, but you don't know eternal life.

You're not justified before God. What's holding you back? Is it pride? You may be very intellectual. You may think that your scientific or philosophical or political or economic wisdom should give you all the answers.

But you're not justified before God. You haven't got eternal life. Why not? Is it pride that's holding you back?

Bow the knee before Jesus. You may be very moral. You may have always been a good person. You may have concern about the world. You may be concerned about the environment.

But you're not justified before God. You don't have eternal life. Why not? Is it pride? You may be very well off.

[ 33 : 39 ] You may be successful. You may have status. You may have class. But you're not justified. You don't have eternal life. Your money can't buy your way into heaven.

They say money opens a lot of doors, but there's one door that won't open, the door to heaven. And there's that one door that not any of our kinds of pride will ever open.

It's open to the humble. You may be poor. You may even be homeless. You may be ill. You may be a victim. But none of that justifies you or gives you eternal life.

What's holding you back? Is it pride? Not even your need makes you deserve eternal life. Only God's mercy in Christ can give you that.

In a moment, we're going to sing these words. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and poor contempt on all my pride.

[ 34 : 52 ] Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God, all the vain things that char me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

May God bless His own word to us. And now we're going to sing that.