

Pride, Humility, Arrogance, and Meekness

Several times in these lessons, we have closely examined words in the Bible that are grossly misunderstood by modern Christians. We are, in a sense, building a dictionary; one with Biblical definitions of important words such as love, grace, and mercy.

With this dictionary, we are able to read the Bible and understand what it MEANS; which is impossible when you read the word “grace” and think it means “merciful love” when in fact it means “overlooking of the sins of ignorance”.

This lesson will tackle four words horribly abused by today's Christians; two pairs of opposites, pride and humility, and arrogance and meekness. If you apply the things you've learned from your Bible, you will be called proud by the world's apostate Christians; on an almost daily basis. They will tell you to be more humble – by that, they mean you should never judge them or any sinner, but only walk around with a downcast look, thinking about what an awful sinner you are.

They will call you arrogant for thinking you know something about the Bible they don't, and tell you to be more meek – by that, they mean the exact same thing they meant when they told you to be humble. These two pairs of words are considered synonymous by most of the world... but they aren't. If they had meant the same thing, God would have used only one word. But He used two, because each has its own distinct meaning. So let's learn what those meanings are, starting with...

PRIDE

As always when studying words in the Bible, we start – not at the Hebrew definitions, which are as flawed as modern English dictionaries when it comes to explaining GOD'S meaning – but with the Bible itself, by doing a simple search for that word.

Does God like pride? **Proverbs 6:16-17**. Is “pride” the #1 item on that list? Or is it a proud LOOK that is first among things God hates? (Same verse). This is not just a point of semantics! Is the pride God hates intimately connected with a LOOK? **Proverbs 21:4**.

So there is more to this than simply the word “pride”; this condemns “a proud look”, not necessarily a proud parent or pride in one's achievements. Unfortunately, like we discovered with mercy, there are about a half-dozen different words translated as “pride” in the Bible.

This makes a perfect blanket definition impossible, since we'd have to define many different Hebrew words all translated as “pride”. But the Hebrew words translated “pride” usually mean “lifted up”, “strength”, or “rebellious” – so they are all somewhat similar.

Since a detailed study of each of these separate words would take too much time, and since it wouldn't really help us understand much more, I'm going to treat these similar words as "close enough" for our purposes in this lesson. All these words translated "pride" have two things in common; an implication of "highness", as in the attitude that you are above other people – specifically, above God (**Isaiah 65:2-5**); and a refusal to accept correction – again, specifically from God. And that is the key to understanding Biblical pride.

How does God feel about horses? **Psalms 32:8-10**. What does God compare horses to? **Proverbs 26:3**. Horses have many fine qualities, but their strength is also their weakness; their pride. The horses most prized by men today are the perfect examples of "a proud look", or "a high look".

If you've ever worked around horses, you've seen them toss their heads in response to a command from the rider. In response to this, God says you need "a whip for the horse". The horses toss their heads *in rebellion against the rider's command!* And from a moral standpoint, that is an example of a very bad trait in humans.

Is pride connected with not listening to God? **Jeremiah 13:15-17**. Notice that if you DON'T listen to God, He will bring punishment ("*a whip for the horse... a rod for the fool's back*"), and when he saw the destruction Jeremiah would "*weep in secret places for your pride*"!

What do the proud do? **Psalms 119:21**. What does pride cause – and what is the opposite of pride? **Proverbs 28:25**. So trusting God – which requires obeying His commands and listening to what He says – is the opposite of pride. What does Peter tell us pride is? **1 Peter 5:5**.

That isn't exactly a clear statement "pride is..." but it is easy to show what pride is from that verse. First, he says "*submit yourselves... be subject one to another...*". Remember, that *submission* to someone else's will is the opposite of what the horses who needed a whip (and the wicked who needed a rod) did! And thus, the opposite of PRIDE! And then Peter equates "*being subject...*" with "*being clothed with humility*". And finally concludes "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*" – showing that putting the will of others above your own is humility, and resisting their will to do your own is PRIDE!

So a temporary and tentative definition of pride would be "*not submitting your will to God's commands or the desires of your brethren*". We'll get a better definition later, but that will work for now. First, we need to study humility, since the best way to understand something is to study its opposite.

HUMILITY

Is humility the opposite of pride? **Proverbs 29:23**, **James 4:6**. Do the humble keep God's commandments? **Deuteronomy 8:2-3**. When Ahab (a *very* wicked king of Israel) was given a proclamation of doom, how did he respond? **1 Kings 21:27**. And how did God respond? **Verses 28-29**.

Think of how a proud horse would have tossed his head against God's command, and raged and snorted! But Ahab *humbled himself*, and "*went softly*". He accepted God's judgment and quietly tried to change God's mind. And despite Ahab's wickedness, God noticed and softened the judgment!

What is humility equated with? **Proverbs 22:4**. What should people who humble themselves do? **Jeremiah 44:10**. What exactly is it about man that must be humbled? **Isaiah 2:11**. Whom will God humble? **Isaiah 10:33**. With whom does God dwell? **Isaiah 57:15**.

A humble man obeys God. A humble man listens to God. A humble man is a perfect example of **Isaiah 66:2**. How do men humble themselves? **2 Chronicles 7:14**. Notice that humbling is directly connected to “*turning from their wicked ways*” – that is, to hear and obey God is humility!

Hezekiah gives us an example of both pride and humility in **2 Chronicles 32:24-26**. God healed Hezekiah, and Hezekiah was lifted up by pride in his possessions and accomplishments and showed off to the messengers from Babylon (**2 Kings 20:12-13**), which made God very angry (**2 Kings 20:14-18**).

He forgot he had nothing which had not been given to him by God (**1 Corinthians 4:7**). It was as if your horse was glorying because he had discovered a new land – when *you had led your horse there*, **and mostly against his will at that!**

God had led Hezekiah to where he was, and usually against his will – so what right did Hezekiah have to be proud of his accomplishments, as if he had built this kingdom himself? But Hezekiah’s humility in accepting the judgment of God saved him and Jerusalem from punishment in his lifetime (**2 Kings 20:19**).

THE BASEST OF MEN

Since the story is very similar, it’s natural turn to Nebuchadnezzar here. In **Daniel 4**, Nebuchadnezzar writes in the first person of the events which happened to him. This is unique in that it is the only portion of the Bible written by a pagan and a non-Israelite (Ruth later became an Israelite, so she doesn’t count).

In **Daniel 4:17**, Nebuchadnezzar quotes the angel in his dream saying that “*the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men*”. The impact of this statement on Nebuchadnezzar is not obvious from the Bible alone; but when you study the archeology of Babylon, you realize Nebuchadnezzar *was not of royal birth!*

Nebuchadnezzar’s father was Nabopolassar, who was the first king of the new Babylonian empire. And according to the “*Clay Cylinder of Nabopolassar*” discovered in 1921, Nabopolassar was by his own admission a “Shepherd... the son of a nobody... anonymous among the people”. And so, unlike the rulers of most empires, Nebuchadnezzar was truly “the basest of men”, son of a mere shepherd, one of the least respected professions (**Genesis 46:34**).

The reason I mention this is Nebuchadnezzar’s family had no right to the throne, and he knew it. So when Nebuchadnezzar was wandering in his palace one day and said, “*Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?*” (**Daniel 4:30**), it is no wonder that God felt it was time to teach him a lesson!

What was the decree against Nebuchadnezzar? **Daniel 4:31-33**. And when the seven years of humbling were finished? **Verses 34-36**. And what did Nebuchadnezzar learn from all this? **Verse 37**. That was the point of all this! To show him (and us) that “*those who walk in pride, He is able to abase*”!

Much like Hezekiah, Nebuchadnezzar had been installed, blessed, and sustained by God (**Jeremiah 25:9, Jeremiah 27:6, Ezekiel 29:18**). And, like Hezekiah, instead of remembering that and obeying God, Nebuchadnezzar frequently rebelled – with things like the golden statue of **Daniel 3** and surely many other things which were not recorded. This pride, this “high look” and tossing of the head against God, led them both to believe their own might had created this great empire – when both should have known full well that “*the most high rules in the kingdoms of men*”.

Nebuchadnezzar seems to have learned that lesson, but unfortunately he didn't pass it on to his children – lessons rarely last more than one generation. For his son (probably actually his grandson, the original language is ambiguous about the difference) needed the same lesson taught to him in **Daniel 5**.

Belshazzar was feasting with the holy vessels from God's temple, and Daniel's recap in **Daniel 5:18-23** of what God did for "the basest of men", Nebuchadnezzar, adds information to what we already knew. **Nebuchadnezzar being ruler of the known world wasn't the problem!**

It wasn't exercising absolute power or all the normal honor of a king that was the problem; it was only when his heart was "lifted up", and when his mind was "hardened in pride", and **he stopped listening to God's correction that God humbled him.** Belshazzar knew all of this, but tossed his head at God in pride anyway, and died that same night (**verse 30**).

LITTLE IN YOUR OWN SIGHT

Another good example is King Saul. While the Bible does not specifically call him proud, it does do so indirectly in **Psalms 52:1**. This Psalm was written by David, and the subject is clearly about Saul as you can see in the first verse.

The words in your Bible that precede some Psalms are inspired parts of the original text, not added by the translators of our Bible. In the KJV, this "inspired comment" is in << brackets >>, and it shows this was written about Saul during the events of **1 Samuel 21-22**. And in this Psalm, Saul is accused of "*boasting himself in mischief*" (**verse 1**), and it is easy to connect "boasting" to "pride".

Samuel also indirectly called Saul proud in **1 Samuel 15**. Saul had been ordered to kill every man, woman, child and beast of the Amalekites (**verses 1-3**). And Saul went to war, and didn't obey God's command; he had a better idea (**verses 4-9**). This made God furious (**verses 10-12**). But notice he didn't think he had rebelled! (**verses 13-15**)

Proud people NEVER think they're rebelling! They *never* think they're proud! They think they're HONORING God by going beyond His word and disobeying His law! Just as they think that, even though they know Christmas is pagan "well, we should honor Jesus' birthday SOMEHOW! Why not on Christmas?? We're not keeping it to celebrate the sun-God, after all!"

And in the exact same way, Saul believed by saving "*the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God*", that **he was doing BETTER than God commanded – by doing the OPPOSITE of what God commanded!** But how did Saul dare to do differently than God had said? What made him think he had the right to improve on God's commands? **Verses 16-19.**

It was when he stopped "*trembling at God's word*" (**Isaiah 66:2**)! Back when Saul was "little in his own sight" *he would NEVER have done that!* But when Saul began to think he was a great man, then his pride **lifted him up and then he started "improving" on God's commands! How many BILLIONS of deceived Christians have done that!** All while believing they are humble!

CONCLUSION ON PRIDE AND HUMILITY

So far, this has mostly focused on external examples of pride and humility. But is pride an INTERNAL thing? **Ecclesiastes 7:8**. Where does contention – argumentativeness – come from? **Proverbs 13:10**. When two people argue about the truth, one of them is – often both are – proud. It is only pride that

prevents people from understanding the truth; it is pride, which hardens men's hearts so they cannot accept a new idea or admit they might have been wrong.

But what does God say? **Proverbs 16:19**. What was wrong with the Pharisees? **Romans 10:1-3**. Like Saul, they had a righteousness! (**Matthew 5:20**). They firmly, violently believed they were serving God! *But not according to God's commands – according to their OWN RULES!* (**Mark 7:7**).

But who is it that God saves – those who do MORE than God commands, and find “new” and “better” ways of honoring Him – or those who simply do exactly what God said? **Micah 6:8**. With whom is God close? **Psalms 34:18**.

As I've said many, many times in these lessons, God could easily force everyone on Earth to obey Him. But God is looking for people who will obey Him *WITHOUT being forced!* For the same reason you don't go kidnap a spouse (even if it were legal!), because you want someone who has a choice, but **CHOOSES** to love you!

Unfortunately, being human, with a spirit that “*lusts to envy*” (**James 4:5**), and “*is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (**Romans 8:7**), we all require SOME force. That is why the beginning of wisdom is the FEAR of the Lord (**Proverbs 9:10**). And what does that fear of the Lord lead to? **Proverbs 16:6**. And is it compared to humility? **Proverbs 15:33**.

By putting together all the pieces we've gathered on pride and humility, there can be only one answer. God gave commands to the people in the OC and they either obeyed or disobeyed; those who obeyed were humble, those who disobeyed were proud.

In the NC, God's spirit gives us promptings; it condemns us for our sins and shows us what we should do. But we, being carnal, don't like to listen to that spirit; that's why there is a “*war in our members*” (**Romans 7:14-25**). So it's a fight, and a series of choices that we must make throughout our lives. **And which choice and how quickly we make it determines whether we are proud or humble!**

Let's return to our horse analogy; if you're riding a horse and at the lightest touch of the rein the horse responds, eager to obey your command, that horse is humble and a credit to his trainer. On the other hand, if you have to wear spurs, carry a whip, and fight a bucking, rearing, head-tossing horse across the prairie, you would quickly decide to ride a different horse on your next trip. That horse is proud, and refuses to accept instructions from anyone. Sure, with enough pain and willpower on your part, you can FORCE him to obey you – but who wants a constant struggle like that?

God feels the same way. He will not struggle against man's carnality forever (**Genesis 6:3**). When His spirit prompts us to do something, if we respond at the lightest suggestion of that spirit with immediate compliance, we are perfectly humble. If, on the other hand, it requires God cursing us with plagues to get us to mend our ways... we are quite proud. It is a simple spectrum of obedience, and the more God has to do to get you to obey Him, the more proud you are.

So if you want to be more humble and less proud, listen for those promptings; be sensitive to the commands of God. Recognize the “head-tossing” attitude within your nature and silence the argumentative nature of your carnal spirit, the self-justifying voice that says, “oh, He didn't mean that, and it's not such a big deal anyway” – and instead when God says something, simply do it! **That is how you achieve humility.**

Put simply, *humility is obeying the commands of God without a fight*. Whether these are commands you read in the Bible, promptings of the holy spirit, or just some carnal friend telling you something that's true. The more you justify, drag your feet, and argue against the truth – however it comes to you – the less humble you are. It's that simple.

When God says to do something, if you do it without a fight, then you're humble. When you put His will above your own, and to a lesser extent, when you put the will of other humans above your own, you're humble (**Philippians 2:3**).

If, on the other hand, you argue with God about every word He says, you're proud. Pride is refusal to submit your will to God or anyone else. And while you can argue with God a lot and still receive salvation, *your reward will be inversely commensurate with the amount of force required to get you to obey God from the heart*.

In other words, the more God has to beat you to make you righteous, the less your reward will be. On the other hand, the faster you obey God, the less God has to do for you to accept the truth, and the greater your reward will be. How much sense that makes!

WHAT ISN'T PRIDE

Christians today try to avoid using the word pride today at all, in any sense; they won't say they're "proud" of their son's achievements, because "God hates pride". So they do their best to express the *emotion* of pride, without actually using the *word*. This is ridiculous, but quite common.

What the world believes pride is – admitting you understand something, know something, are good at something, or have done something well – is never condemned in the Bible. Bragging and boasting about it is (**Proverbs 27:2**); but when you are the world champion at something, you are; it is not a sin to say you are. It *is* a sin to flaunt it in everyone's face all the time, and use that fact to justify rebellion against God or selfishness in general.

Of the words in the Bible, the closest one to our modern definition of pride is "glorying". Is it good to glory? **1 Corinthians 5:6**. Should Paul have gloried? **2 Corinthians 12:1**. Was Herod's glorying good? **Acts 12:21-23**. Does glorying make sense? **1 Corinthians 4:7**.

These are the verses always quoted to condemn pride; and they do indeed condemn glorying... *but not ALL glorying*. Quoting just these verses, and ignoring the other dozens of verses that mention glorying, is deceptive and unethical. For honest Bible study, you need to look at ALL the verses about a subject – those that condemn glorying, AND those that encourage it.

Did Paul glory in the people he'd helped to convert? **1 Thessalonians 2:20**. Did Jesus ask His Father for glory? **John 17:5**. Did Jesus give us that same glory? **Verse 22**. Did Jesus tell us how to be exalted and receive glory (wrongly translated "worship" in the KJV)? **Luke 14:7-11**. Does God glory? **Deuteronomy 5:24, Psalms 4:2**, etc. Did God command US to glory? **Jeremiah 9:24**.

So clearly, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with glorying – which the world today would call being proud. But clearly, it *can* be wrong under some circumstances. What are those circumstances? **Proverbs 27:2**. Did Jesus SEEK His own glory? **John 8:50**. What did He seek? **John 7:18**. How should we glory? **2 Corinthians 10:17**. Did Paul seek glory? **1 Thessalonians 2:6**.

What did God have against the Laodiceans? **Revelation 3:14-22**. Most people think it was pride that was Laodicea's problem... and it was, sort of. This does clearly describe that attitude of glorying, of saying "*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*". **But that wasn't wrong! Because God does the same thing!** Read **Psalms 50:7-12**.

God plainly says, "I AM GOD". He doesn't "*let someone else's lips praise Him*"! He scoffs at sacrifices, saying in effect that He is rich and increased with goods and HAS NEED OF NOTHING! Different words, but the same attitude as the Laodiceans were condemned for having. **But the difference is, GOD ACTUALLY IS RICH! He actually HAS NEED OF NOTHING! So it's not a sin for Him to say so!**

Is God "high" and "exalted" (remember, most words translated as "pride" actually mean "high" or "exalted")? **Isaiah 57:15**. So it wasn't saying they were "rich and increased with goods" and "had need of nothing" that was Laodicea's problem! It was acting that way WHEN THEY WERE NOT!

It was acting as if they were better than everyone else, *when in fact they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"*! It all comes back down to what you learned in the last lesson. TRUTH! God IS exalted. God DOES own all the cattle on a thousand hills. If God were hungry, He would NOT ask you or me! And that is God's GLORYING – His PRIDE!

But for you or me to say that to God is beyond foolish, it's idiotic. And yet that is just how those Israelites acted who said to God "*come not near to me; for I am holier than thou*" (**Isaiah 65:5**). Of course, they probably didn't actually SAY that! **But their actions said it for them!**

What does the world glory in? **Philippians 3:19**. They glory in their SHAME! In other words, the things they should be ASHAMED of, is what they glory in! They should be ashamed of obsessing over "their" ball team, not proud because "they" won the big game! They should be ashamed of their lazy, rebellious children – not proud of them.

They should be ashamed of their religion that follows the doctrines of men, not be proud that they belong to "God's one and only true church"! **1 Corinthians 5** is a perfect example of how they should be ashamed of their beliefs. In **verse 2**, Paul says they should have MOURNED and put this man out of the church, but instead they were PUFFED UP – they were proud!

Like so many modern churches, they were GLORYING in their tolerance of sin (**verse 6**); because they are MORE tolerant than other people, because THEY were "spiritual" and THEY could "love" this rebellious sinner so much that THEY could tolerate him being in their church until hopefully, their "love" could convince him to change his ways!

As a matter of fact, they're more tolerant than God Himself would be! And so they can toss their head at the God of the Bible and say, "why aren't YOU this loving? Why don't YOU tolerate sin like we do!" – and in that way, they say, "stand thou afar off... for we are holier than thou"!

It's TRUTH that solves this problem. I know the Bible pretty well. That's not pride; it's a simple fact. But should I glory about that fact – walk around telling people how many times I've read the Bible? I'm sure many people know their Bibles better than I do. I'm pretty sure God has it memorized. For that matter, so does Satan. So what right have I to boast of what little I know – particularly when God gave me the understanding anyway?

On the other hand, I DID put forth some little effort to understand my Bible. And I am proud of what I have accomplished with it – I played a relatively small part in the process, yet for that part I did play I have a right to “*glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me*” (**Jeremiah 9:24**).

This is what God meant, when He told us to study to be “*a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth*” (**2 Timothy 2:15 RSV**) – today, instead of saying, “has no need to be ashamed”, we would say we “should be proud” of the work we’ve done. The meaning is identical.

Likewise, God was “well pleased” by His son (**Luke 3:22**), and we should also be proud of the accomplishments of our children, students, relatives, etc. It’s not a sin to say we understand something that someone else doesn’t (**John 8:55**). It’s just about truth; God hates glorying *when you have no right to glory; and hates it even more when you SHOULD be ashamed of what you’re proud of!*

But it’s truth, not pride, to call someone a fool, hypocrite, son of the devil, or anything else *if it’s true and we do it for their good, not for ours* (**Matthew 23, John 8, Ephesians 4:29**). Most anything the world calls “bad pride” is in fact not pride at all. An interesting example is that even David was falsely condemned for pride in **1 Samuel 17:28**.

If you read the context, that wasn’t the case at all; David had been sent by his father (**verses 17-18**). And David was righteously indignant that none of the men in the Israelite army had the faith to stand against this “*uncircumcised Philistine*” (**verses 24-26**). For this, his brother accused him of pride – just like modern false Christians; when we condemn their lack of faith *they bitterly respond by calling us proud!*

How did David respond to his brother’s false accusation? **Verse 29**. There was a CAUSE for David’s condemnation! Israel had a shameful lack of faith, and David had a RIGHT to point it out **because he WAS faithful!** He was able to judge them *because he was not guilty of the same sin!*

THE MISUNDERSTOOD JOB

No man in the Bible is more misunderstood, slandered, and generally maligned than Job. Paul’s *writings* are more abused than Job’s, but no one’s *character* is more abused. Men have called him proud, self-righteous, arrogant, and many other names – yet as Job said, his critics are not worthy to be in charge of his dogs (**Job 30:1**). This is the clear opinion of God Himself, as you’ll soon see.

We’ve studied many parts of Job in the past lessons, but now we’re going to plunge in to get the whole picture. To answer the questions “what was wrong with Job?”; “what should he have done?”; “how could he have avoided this trial, or at least shortened it?” It will help if you’ve read the book of Job first. You will certainly want to read it all the way through after you’ve finished this lesson.

First, forget everything you’ve heard about Job – it was wrong. Start at the basics. What did God think of Job? **Job 1:1**. Did God brag about Job to Satan? **Verse 8**. Did He do it again, after Satan tormented Job the first time? **Job 2:3**. Did God say Job was tormented *without a cause?* (Same verse).

God considered Job to be SO righteous, and SO perfect, that he brought him up to Satan, implying “if Job can be righteous, why can’t you, Satan?” – that’s an impressive fact. God never mentioned Job’s pride! In fact, God held Job up as a PERFECT example of righteousness!

So before someone says, “Job was proud”, they should **make sure they know what God said about him!** But did God feel the same way at the end of the book about Job AND the things Job had said about God? **Job 42:7-8**. In fact, a thousand years later, what did God say about Job? **Ezekiel 14:13-20**.

No one questions the incredible righteousness of Noah and Daniel, nor God’s love for them. And of all the hundreds of righteous men in the Bible, God chose *Job* to stand with them as examples of superb righteousness! Not Abraham, David, Moses, Joseph or Elijah; Job. Think about that!

But what did *Satan* think of Job’s alleged righteousness? **Job 1:9-11**. Satan said “Well yeah! Job obeys you because you’ve BRIBED him to do so!” So God allowed Satan to test this theory. And who did Job prove was right? **Job 1:21-22**. Job proved God right, not Satan!

Was Satan convinced? Was he ready to accept that Job was righteous? **Job 2:4-5**. Did Job again prove God right? **Verses 6-10**. Yes he did! ...At first. Job handled the loss of all his possessions and his children admirably (**Job 2:10**). But as time went on, that changed and in **Job 3:1**, Job “*sinned with his lips*”.

Satan doesn’t believe man can obey God; Jesus proved that man can. His obedience judged the devil (**John 16:11**) and so did Job’s righteousness. But the devil challenged Job’s righteousness, so God allowed Satan to test his theory. **But God would never have let this happen if it were not for Job’s own good**. You’ll see how it was for Job’s own good before we’re done.

WAS JOB PROUD?

If Job were proud, he surely would not have listened to a youth criticize him so harshly, and without using his flattering titles (**Job 32:22-33:1**), for what must have taken at least half an hour in **Job 32-37!**

Had Job rejected anything Elihu said, and responded as most Christians would with “how dare you judge me!”, “You sin too!”, “when you’re MY age, you’ll understand!”, “who do you think you are??”, or any of the other common phrases people use when they’re judged, you can be sure God wouldn’t have shown up in the whirlwind! **If he hadn’t listened to “the foolishness of preaching”, God would NEVER have given Job an opportunity to work out their problems face-to-face!**

Those who call Job proud, point to God’s belittling of Job in **chapters 38-41**, and to the statement in **Job 32:1-2**. What is CRITICAL to the understanding of this entire book is that Job’s friends and Elihu *were mad at Job for different reasons!*

Job’s friends gave up arguing with Job “*because he was righteous in his own eyes*”. They thought Job was *self-righteous*, but also *unrighteous*. They thought he was proud. This was not God’s opinion, as you’ve read! It was Satan’s!

But *Elihu* was angry with Job “*because he justified himself rather than God*”. This is not the same thing at all! Job’s problem was that, when looking for reasons for his trial **he sought to justify himself, and did not look for reasons to justify God!**

On the other hand, God was very angry with Job’s friends (**Job 42:7-8**), and Elihu was also angry with them “*because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job*” (**Job 32:3**). In the entire book, with all of the criticism of Job by his three friends **not one specific sin was condemned!**

They never found ONE SINGLE SIN in Job to condemn; so they condemned him with generalities, saying things like “sin is bad; sinners are cursed; stop sinning!” And Elihu – and God – were furious at them for that.

THE STORY OF JOB

Job’s friends came to comfort him, and they sat with him in silence for a week (**Job 2:11-13**). This gives some small idea of the amount of time that was passing; considering all that must have happened it was certainly several weeks, possibly even several months, between **Job 1** and **Job 42**. Regardless, now all this time had passed and Job’s prayers had gone unanswered. He was in great agony, and in **Job 3:1 (RSV)**, Job “*opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth*”.

Job gives us an important clue to why this was happening in **Job 3:25-26**. Job had FEARED this might happen to him! Why? Job had done nothing wrong, according to God. So why did he fear? **This can only be evidence of a lack of trust in God – lack of faith – long before his trial!**

To paraphrase these two verses, Job was “greatly afraid” that if he had “safety” and “rest” then through no fault of his own “trouble would come”. Compare this attitude to **Luke 12:16-21**. This doesn’t describe Job, but Job was afraid of BECOMING this man! He had been very worried about having “rest”, and then “trouble coming” (**Job 31:24-28** – see also **Deuteronomy 8:12-19**).

THE SOURCE OF JOB’S FRIENDS’ ARGUMENTS

Back in **Job 4**, Eliphaz relates a dream he had before coming to see Job. Eliphaz felt this dream was given to guide him in arguing with Job, *and it was! But not by God!* Eliphaz did not “*try the spirits whether they are of God*” (**1 John 4:1**).

I’ve talked about this dream in at least three lessons, so I won’t spend much time on it here. Suffice it to say this Satan-inspired dream laid out the fundamental principle of Antichrist, that men cannot obey God! And if ANGELS can’t keep God happy, how can pitiful humans made of mud who have a lifespan like a moth, manage to obey God! (**Job 4:17-19**).

If you keep that idea in mind, you will see it again and again in every argument by Job’s three friends. They tried very hard to prove this point to Job, restating it dozens of different ways. Now read some of Eliphaz’s key points in **Job 4:7-8, Job 5:2-7**. And what did Eliphaz recommend? **Job 5:8-9, 17**.

His conclusion is that Job has sinned, and Job should repent. How did Job respond? **Job 6:8-9**. What did he think his friends should have done? **Verses 14-15**. Did Job think he deserved this punishment? **Verses 22-23**. Did Job invite his friends to show SPECIFIC examples of his sins? **Verse 24**. Did Job say his friends spoke the truth? **Verses 25-26**. Did he complain because there were no SPECIFICS in their arguments? (Same verses). **The same thing that made Elihu angry!**

They had found no answer, but they condemned Job anyway! They didn’t have any SPECIFIC examples of sins Job had committed, so they just said; “only the wicked are cursed; so you *MUST* be wicked!” And Job responded, “I agree! **But where have I sinned? Who have I hurt?**” (paraphrases, both)

JOB'S BIG MISTAKE

And so, knowing there had to be SOME reason for his suffering (and there was), Job turned to something else in **Job 7:20-21**. Now Job hit upon the idea that perhaps this was because God had not FORGIVEN him for past sins! He revisits this idea again and again, for instance **Job 13:23-27**.

Job had sinned as a youth; everyone has. Job had repented and God had forgiven him. But he was suffering and couldn't think of any reason; so he finally concluded that God hadn't forgiven him, and was still blaming him for those old sins! And that was Job's mistake.

Meanwhile, in **Job 8:2-6** Job's second friend Bildad (correctly) resented Job assigning blame to God for this trial. But again he makes the statement that "IF you *were* pure and upright..." But remember! God himself had said Job WAS pure and upright! **Job's friends were wrong about this!**

Bildad gave many examples of how the righteous are blessed and the wicked suffer. And Job again responded with "Yes, I know, but *where have I sinned?? What can I do about it??*" (**Job 9:2-3**), and then Job gets back to his own conclusion that God has not judged his sins fairly in **verses 3-4, 12-18**.

Then in **verses 19, 32-35**, and **Job 10:2-13** he gets the idea that if he could go before God's judgment seat face to face to debate his case, and convince God he really HAD repented, then the trial would be over! As the book progresses, watch Job believe more and more firmly, that God has not forgiven him. He doesn't understand why he is suffering the same as the wicked, or why his suffering is getting worse (**Job 9:14-16**), and wants to confront God about what he feels is unjust judgment.

THE THIRD FRIEND

Zophar says the same things in **Job 11** as Job's two other friends had been saying, condemning Job for thinking he is "pure" and being "clean in his own eyes", and spouting platitudes about how the righteous are blessed and the righteous suffer.

Each friend tells Job the same thing, "the wicked suffer, so stop sinning!" and each time Job responds with ever-increasing frustration, that he KNOWS the wicked suffer, but **he ISN'T sinning!** (I cannot overemphasize that GOD also said Job wasn't sinning!).

In **Job 12:1-3**, Job sarcastically says "*no doubt you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you!*" and then tells them how OBVIOUS the things they're telling him are, saying "*who DOESN'T know these things!*" then spends the rest of the chapter saying similar things to what they've said about the greatness of God and how the righteous are blessed, to prove that he knows them too!

After that, in **Job 13:1-2**, he reiterates that he KNOWS everything they're telling him; and that he AGREES with it, **but it isn't helping because he isn't sinning!** So that's why he believes his only option is to argue with God personally (**verse 3**).

He then (correctly) condemns them because they are willing to believe that God is right, even if God is wrong (**verses 7-11**). God is not above His law; if God does something wrong – even something that SEEMS wrong to you – a righteous man says so (**Genesis 18:25**). God hates "accepting someone's person", believing them just because of who they are, or how rich or powerful they are. It's mentioned dozens of times in the Bible!

Read **Deuteronomy 1:17** and **Leviticus 19:15**. God doesn't need you to accept His person! He doesn't need you to make lying arguments to justify His actions – *they are justified on their own! TRUTH justifies God!* But if you THINK God is wrong, and instead of calling Him on it, you make up an argument to defend Him just “because He's God, He MUST be right”, then “*He will surely reprove you!*” – and that's exactly what happened in **Job 42:7-8**.

THE MIDDLE OF THE BOOK

Chapters 4-31 are just the same story over and over; Job says he hasn't sinned and wants to confront God about why he hasn't been forgiven; then one of the friends says the wicked suffer and the righteous are blessed, and Job should stop sinning. Job says he can't, because he isn't sinning; another friend says the wicked suffer and Job should stop sinning. And so on.

I won't go through the whole book here, but just to illustrate the point read **Job 15:14-16, 20** (Eliphaz); **Job 16:1-5, 17-21**; **Job 17:5-7** (Job); **Job 18:1-4** (Bildad); **Job 19:1-7**. In this final example Job complains they've accused him ten times, and STILL no one has told him WHAT his sin is, if any!

Both sides of the argument spoke true things; Job as well as his friends. But Eliphaz's dream was inspired by the devil, and the recurring theme that man cannot please God inspired most of the statements of the three friends. Even though most, if not all, of what they said was TRUE, it was twisted and misused to condemn a righteous man. That is Satan's greatest talent!

ELIHU

God, of course, was watching this process. God heard Job's requests for an audience with Him, and granted it by proxy, by inspiring Elihu to speak with him – **Job 33:4-7**. Now, Elihu was angry with all four of them – righteously angry, because all four were wrong! But they were wrong in different ways, as **Job 32:1-3** showed.

He couldn't help but conclude, that although “*Days SHOULD speak, and multitude of years SHOULD teach wisdom... Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment*” (**Job 32:7-9**). He listened to them, but concluded the same thing as I've told you here in **Job 32:11-13**. God didn't give the understanding to them; He gave it to an insignificant youth to “*confound the wise*” (**1 Corinthians 1:27-29**). These statements shocked them speechless (**Job 32:15**).

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH JOB?

As I said at first, God stirred Satan up and allowed him to torment Job for Job's own good (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). How did this profit Job? Or what was Job doing wrong, to cause all this? How was God justified in allowing such suffering to happen to him? That was the question Job never asked! Job sought to find answers to justify HIMSELF, not to justify God! (**Job 32:2**), so Elihu had to justify God for him (**Job 36:2-4**).

When Elihu was sent to Job, he brought SPECIFICS! You can find these in **Job 33:8-12** and **Job 34:5-6, 9**. Elihu says Job was WRONG to say this... but which part? Was Job wrong to say, “I am innocent”, “I am righteous”? God didn't think so in **Job 1** and **2**! So it was the OTHER part of that statement which was wrong! **God wasn't cruelly chasing him down to punish him for the sins of his youth! God was actually HELPING Job!**

Elihu answers the charge that God had perverted Job's judgment in **Job 34:10-12, 23**. What does Elihu say Job SHOULD have done? What was the RIGHT ANSWER to his problems? It's summed up in **verses 31-32. These are among the most important verses in the Bible.**

To avoid this trial, Job SHOULD have humbly said, "I have borne this punishment; I will not offend again; that which I don't see, teach me; if I have sinned, I will sin no more". And continued saying – and doing – that as long as it took.

Job didn't know what his sin was! No one did! **Because there wasn't one!** But if Job had said this, instead of saying, "God has perverted my judgment", the trial would have been much shorter – and if he'd been the sort of person who WOULD say that, it probably wouldn't have happened at all!

What's funny is, Elihu said Job's three friends were "wicked men" (**Job 34:36**) – and yet the entire Christian world takes their side in condemning Job's pride! He was also mad at Job for saying that all his righteousness had no meaning to God, and serving God didn't bring the blessings he'd been promised (**Job 35:3**). And finally, Elihu summarizes the problem in **Job 35:14-16**. God had been watching, and God was judging faithfully; therefore, said Elihu, TRUST IN HIM!

But now because it WASN'T SO – because Job DIDN'T trust God – THAT IS why God allowed Satan to bring this suffering on Job! See **Job 36:16-18**. It was because of Job's LACK OF FAITH! God WOULD have delivered Job long before this *IF Job had handled this problem correctly!* But because after **chapter 2** Job started "*sinning with his lips*", he "*fulfilled the judgment of the wicked*".

Isn't that an odd phrase? But think about it! Satan had said Job would turn on God if he faced personal suffering (**Job 2:4-6**). **And Job was heading down that road, and making the devil right! He was "*fulfilling the judgment of the wicked*"!**

THAT was making God angry, but not *very* angry (**Job 35:15**). Elihu was showing Job how righteous God's judgments were, and giving Job reasons why he should have had more faith in God (**Job 36:19-26**). After showing many examples of God's greatness, Elihu shows the POINT of all this was to teach that God does not afflict people for no reason, as Job was saying He did! (**Job 37:14, 23-24**).

It was at that point God stepped in, personally, and took over the argument from Elihu. God's point is the same as Elihu's. This speech about "where were you, Job, when I..." wasn't to abase Job's PRIDE, as the entire world believes; it was to teach Job that God was great *and He should be trusted, because His judgments were Truth!*

LACK OF FAITH

In the beginning, when Job said "*that which I greatly feared has come upon me*", we see Job was afraid that, even though he'd done everything right (and he had), God might allow punishment to come on him anyway! And it was, ironically, that FEAR that something would happen – that lack of faith – that CAUSED something to happen! A lesson so many could benefit from today!

Job was perfectly righteous *but Job was not perfectly faithful!* Satan couldn't point out that flaw, because Satan doesn't understand faith, having none himself! Job's FLAW, which God could plainly see long before Satan came to visit heaven, was that Job did not fully trust God. He trusted Him some; but not ENOUGH (**Job 13:15**).

So God orchestrated this whole sequence of events, with Satan, Job's friends, and Elihu, to show Job that men – himself included – cannot be trusted absolutely; but that God CAN. This is the lesson Job learned from this (**Job 42:1-6**) and he **repented** bitterly for his lack of faith. Job describes what he learned during this process as the difference between HEARING about God, and SEEING God.

HEARING VS. SEEING

This ending has an unexpected twist. Israel SAW God on Mt. Sinai (**Exodus 24:10-11**). But they rejected that covenant offered to them, and “*they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will HEAR: but let not God speak with us, lest we die*” (**Exodus 20:19**).

They went from SEEING God (the NC), to only HEARING about God *through* Moses (the OC)! But Job was traveling in the other direction; Job was under the OC at the beginning of this book, and was as righteous as physical, carnal man can be; *but Job only understood the letter of the law!*

If you studied Lesson 21 well, you'll remember that if you had to sum up the difference between the covenants in one word, that word is FAITH. Because the word was not mixed with FAITH in the Israelites, it didn't profit them! But it WAS mixed with faith in Moses, Caleb, and Joshua.

At the beginning of the book, Job's fear stands out – the mark of the OC! He believed God's word, obeyed God, *but that was not mixed with enough faith!* Elihu condemned Job's lack of faith, and **Job was humbled by that, and realized his mistake!** He repented bitterly *and at that point Job passed into the New Covenant and SAW GOD!*

That's why after his trial was over, he received TWICE as much as he had before (**Job 42:12**) just as the first resurrection (NC) receives TWICE the inheritance of the second resurrection (OC) [see Lesson 7, page 13, for the reasoning behind, and proof of, that statement].

PART 2: ARROGANCE AND MEEKNESS

This pair of words is considered synonymous with pride and humility, but they most definitely are not. There is a simple difference that I will get to after we study the facts. Arrogance is used four times in the Bible, in **1 Samuel 2:3**, **Proverbs 8:13**, **Isaiah 13:11**, and **Jeremiah 48:29**.

The key passage is “*let not **arrogancy** come out of your mouth*”. That means being arrogant happens when you SPEAK! Also, arrogance is similar to, but not the same as, pride: “*I will cause the **arrogancy of the proud** to cease*”. So arrogance is something proud people *say*. Because there is so little said about it, to understand it we have to study its opposite: meekness.

MEEKNESS

Consider **Psalms 45:2-7**. In this prophecy of Jesus' triumphant return to Earth to rule all nations (compare with **Hebrews 1:9**, **Deuteronomy 32:41**, and **Revelation 19:11-21**), David speaks of many things about God's might, majesty, and vengeance against God's enemies... but the odd thing is, in the midst of these other things, he says “*because of truth and MEEKNESS and righteousness*”.

The true Jesus WAS and IS “*meek and lowly in heart*” (**Matthew 11:29**). And yet this same meek Jesus will preside over a slaughter of the wicked so great the blood from the slain will be as deep as the bridle on the horses (**Revelation 14:18-20**).

The world's Jesus with a beatific, effeminate, downcast gaze is their perfect ideal of meekness. Yet that creature could not be imagined as someone whose "arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies". That doesn't fit with the world's definition of meekness **which means their definition is wrong!**

A critical verse is **Galatians 6:1**. When you correct someone's sins, they – or someone watching – will invariably criticize you, and tell you that you should be more meek, and "*restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*". What they mean by this, is that you should patiently teach – preferably by example alone – and you are not to judge, and never under any circumstances be stern or harsh.

But how did our "perfect example in all things, who was meek and lowly of heart", deal with rebellious sinners? Did He behave according to their definition of meekness? **John 8:36-41**. Here, Jesus had "*overtaken the Pharisees in a fault*". How did He "*restore them in the spirit of meekness*"?

Jesus said they were not children of Abraham – implying, as He later stated, they were children of the devil; so they called Him illegitimate when they said "*WE are not born of fornication*", the implication is clearly "like YOU were – we heard the story about how Mary was "found" with child before she was married!" Surely the enemies of God would not have missed the opportunity to ridicule such an implausible event as a virgin birth! How much easier to blame Jesus' birth on fornication!

Jesus responded to them, still in the spirit of meekness, with **John 8:42-47**. Now if you or I were to say these things to any rebellious sinner today, we'd be told that we were proud, self-righteous, holier-than-thou, and un-meek. In fact – and I've done this – if you even QUOTE these exact words AT a sinner, they'll call you un-meek! Yet how can the words of Christ be anything but meek??

Clearly, meekness does not mean backing down for fear of offending someone. It doesn't mean handling a dispute without strong words. Does meekness mean never judging anyone? **Zephaniah 2:3**. And what does that meekness – and judgment and righteousness – buy you in the day of wrath? (Same verse).

The reason they can't understand meekness is because they are looking for it in the wrong place! Meekness is not to be found in how you *learn*, but in how you *teach*! Not in how you *follow*, but in how you *LEAD*! That's why Jesus emphasized His meekness **when** He asked us to *follow* Him! (**Matthew 11:29**).

While pride and humility refer to how we *obey* others, arrogance and meekness refer to how we *lead* others. Humility is how you follow a leader; meekness is how you lead a follower. Pride is how you resist commands; arrogance is when you give commands wrongly. These statements will make more sense in a moment. But with that idea, consider how many of the statements about meekness are contrasted with royal authority.

Was it noteworthy that the King of Kings was meek? **Matthew 21:5**. We already noted how **Psalms 45:4** contrasted majesty with meekness; because meekness *seldom is found with royalty*! Why? How do kings usually act? **Mark 10:42-45**. Are we to "*exercise lordship over the church*"? Or are we – leaders included – all brethren? **Matthew 23:8**.

That doesn't mean there isn't any authority in God's true church, but that's for another lesson. It does mean the leaders should not be treated like kings. To clarify that, we have to explain a bit about kings and leaders in general.

How do men in authority in Gentile nations behave? **Luke 7:8**. Now consider this for a moment; suppose this man accustomed to authority should give a command to “go there”. What if his servant says “why?” How would that man have reacted? Would he have patiently explained why he gave the command? **John 15:15**. Absolutely not! When he says “do this” his servant HAD BETTER DO IT!

And if the servant *was* foolish enough to demand a reason, “because I said so” is all the reason he would get – and if he were lucky, he wouldn’t be flogged as an additional “explanation”! *And it is that attitude of “because I said so” which is the heart of arrogance – and the opposite of meekness!*

“BECAUSE I SAID SO”

An argument is true or not true because of *evidence*, not authority. Because of truth, and because of witnesses to that truth. It should stand or fall, not because “God’s apostle said so”, but because GOD SAID SO. Not because “this is what the church teaches” but because “this is what the BIBLE TEACHES”.

When you speak to people, you should *never* say, “this is what Nathaniel says”, but rather “this is what the *Bible* says”. **If it isn’t what the Bible says, you shouldn’t believe it; and if it is, then the fact that I teach it won’t make it any more or less true.**

The entire pseudo-Christian world teaches doctrines of MEN, which Jesus condemned in **Mark 7** and **Matthew 15**, among other places. They say “the church fathers taught”, or “the apostle’s creed states”, or “John Calvin said” or “my church believes”, or “we should learn from the holy traditions of the church”, and any number of other *arrogant statements!*

If something is true, and at all relevant to salvation, it is clearly taught in the Bible. If a doctrine is not taught in the Bible, then you don’t need it – or want it. How much more clearly could God have said so than He did in **Deuteronomy 12:30-32** and **Revelation 22:18-19**?

Arrogance is asking someone to believe you *because you’re you*; it’s asking them to trust you because of your office in God’s church; or because you healed them last week; or because you’re smarter than them. You could teach pure truth for fifty years and then one day be wrong! *What you’ve done or taught in the past doesn’t mean you’re right today! Truth means you’re right! Facts, solid, Biblical facts prove a point! Nothing else!*

JESUS NEVER ASKED US TO TRUST HIM

Asking you to believe me about some new doctrine because I, Nathaniel Burson, was right about the truth about heaven and hell *is arrogance*. The fact that I was right before *does not mean I am right now!* That is why even JESUS did not say, “believe me, because I am the King of Kings!” in fact, He said the opposite “*If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true*” (**John 5:31**).

Jesus also said “don’t believe me, believe your Bible” – at least, a paraphrase of it – in **John 5:39**. The whole argument in **John 5** is a good example of how Jesus defended His position without descending into arrogance; He never once said, “because I said so”, or “don’t you know who I am?? How dare you question me!” as so many people in authority in the world’s churches say!

...And that’s why He was meek, and they are not. Teaching someone meekly – or “*restoring such a one in the spirit of meekness*” – is simply approaching them with this attitude: “this is what the Bible says.

Don't believe me – believe your Bible. If you don't want to believe it, then don't; God is glorified whether you accept the truth, or whether you reject it".

This will *not* look meek to the world. Ironically, it looks arrogant to them! But it will look meek to God. But don't take my word for it! Look at the example; how did Paul instruct people? **2 Corinthians 10:1**. He taught with the "meekness and gentleness of Jesus" as an example – and you just studied what that example was. When Paul offered them a choice of how to be corrected, what was it? **1 Corinthians 4:21**.

The rod is how Gentile kings corrected their servants; and how pagan churches corrected their sinners. The opposite is the spirit of meekness, which to put it in a modern expression, is basically saying, "this is truth; take it or leave it".

GALATIANS 6:1

This much-abused verse deserves its own section here. Read it carefully, and see exactly what it says. It says if "*a man be overtaken in a fault*". Right there, that requires judgment; else, how can you know he is "in a fault" unless you judged his actions?

Then the command is to "*restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*". As you've learned, this just means to explain the problem to them *with proof*, not by saying "because I said so", or "trust me". And finally, there is the statement "*lest you also be tempted*". When this verse has been quoted at me, this last has always been sneeringly thrown at me, implying that if I don't teach this person meekly – by their definition, of course – then I should be careful, lest I also be tempted by their sins!

But let's think about that. Suppose you catch someone stealing. And you say, "you need to stop that! That's a sin!" Do you really need to be "careful" lest you be tempted to steal, too? Does that make sense at all? What genuine risk is there of you being tempted to commit the same sin, just because you weren't meek enough when you corrected a sinner? None!

The RISK is that you will be tempted, not in the sense we usually use the word, but TESTED by God. In other words, if you approach the person with an attitude of arrogance, God will notice and bring suffering to you in order to teach you meekness; He will bring you TRIALS which you will have to overcome, in order to learn to correct others properly!

This threat of God's, to visit trials on those who are not meek in their dealings, will be very important to our next segment, so remember it!

MEEKNESS IN ACTION

Having laid this foundation, we have an amazing example of both meekness and arrogance in practice. This is found in the contrast between Moses and Paul. Was Moses meek? **Numbers 12:3**. No verse helps us understand meekness more than this one. Moses was meek – not only meek, but "*meek above all men on the face of the Earth*".

Let's see how Moses handled having his God-given authority challenged. When Aaron and Miriam condemned him, what did they say? **Verses 1-2**. The key offense was not so much criticizing Moses' choice in women, as their statement "*Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?*"

Now search the context and find where Moses defended himself. It isn't there! Because *Moses was meek!* But the LORD heard it; and the LORD, who had given Moses his authority, DEFENDED that authority. **Verses 4-16.** As God Himself asked, why “*were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*”

Another example of a similar challenge is found a few chapters later in **Numbers 16:1-3.** Notice nearly identical phrases “*Ye take too much upon you [Moses], seeing all the congregation are holy...*”. Again, open rebellion against God's chosen leader.

Now had I been Moses, I surely would have responded with something like this “Ok everyone, show of hands; who parted the Red Sea? Anyone? Ok, who saw God's hind-quarters? Anyone? Which of you talks to God face to face? Only me, huh? Were any of you on Mt. Sinai when I got the Ten Commandments? Did any of you call down plagues on Egypt? I didn't think so. So be careful – or I might drop a suggestion to God next time we're chatting about some people I know that would look really good in boils and leprosy!”

I don't hold this up as an example of what you SHOULD do, but rather as what my first instinct would have been – and what I would have done in my younger days. And you'll see I'm not alone in this attitude, there are Biblical examples of it. Of course, they are less flippant, but they're there.

Regardless, this is nothing at all like how Moses handled it (to my shame). Rather than defending himself or his position, what did Moses do? **Verses 4-7.** Moses instead said he would do nothing, but the next day they would let God show which of them He had chosen to lead His people.

He also tried to reason with them, showing that God had already exalted them to do the service of the tabernacle; why did they need the priesthood as well? (**verses 8-11**). These men continued to rebel (**verses 12-14**), and Moses – meek above all men – GOT VERY ANGRY! (**Verse 15**).

Again, meekness is the opposite of anger in the world's eyes; but it is not only possible, but necessary, for meek men to sometimes be angry at the rebellion of the wicked! But how did Moses VENT that anger? In ranting and railing at those people, as you or I might have done? No! By asking GOD to judge them for him – and reminding God that he had done nothing whatsoever to hurt these men!

How that prayer affected God can be read in **verses 20-22.** Not only was God going to kill Korah and his fellows *but the entire rebellious Israelite nation!* And again Moses fell on his face, this time with Aaron, and begged for the lives of these rebellious people! **Verse 22.** And again God heard, and directed Moses to deal with the rebels as you read in **verses 23-27.**

But even here, it was vital the people know that Moses wasn't behind this punishment! *Moses was not avenging a threat to his authority!* **Verses 28-34.** He wasn't putting down an uprising as pagan kings do. It wasn't HIS authority that was threatened – it was God's! (**1 Samuel 8:7**). Why should MOSES defend something of God's? It was God's authority that was challenged, so let God defend it! (Which God had to do again in this same chapter – **Numbers 16:41-50** – Israelites were slow learners.)

You have seen Moses' meek attitude, let's see how that affected him throughout his life. What does God think of meekness? **1 Peter 3:4.** How old was Moses when he died? **Deuteronomy 34:7.** Did he die weak, blind, and crippled as most of the world has? (Same verse). **Meek people suffer less in this life!**

Many people will inherit the kingdom of God, but some of them suffer more than others! Some, like Stephen, die without feeling pain (**Acts 7:60**). Others say, “*few and evil have been the days of my life*” (**Genesis 47:9**). Meekness is one of the primary virtues which control how much we must suffer! For proof of that, let’s compare the story of Moses with...

THE STORY OF PAUL

Paul’s authority was also challenged, similarly to how Korah challenged Moses. Start in **1 Corinthians 9:3**. Someone was “examining”, or criticizing Paul; something that he felt obliged to answer! This chapter is his answer.

From Paul’s answer, we can easily conclude people were saying Paul was just teaching people for the money; that he was out to fleece the Corinthians – and he wasn’t a “real” apostle anyway! Starting in **verse 1**, read the whole chapter. Notice how Paul defends himself in **verses 1-2**.

Remember how I would have responded if I were Moses? Don’t **verses 1-2** remind you a little bit of that? “Am I not an apostle? ... have I not seen Jesus Christ?” – doesn’t that remind you a little of “show of hands – who here has talked to God face-to-face”?

Paul revisits the same problem in **2 Corinthians 10:8-18**, where the problem has apparently gotten worse because Paul defends it much more strongly. He plainly says here that he is going to “*boast somewhat more of our authority*”. Remember we talked about boasting being bad? In **chapter 11:1** he says what he is doing is “folly”, but he is being foolish because he is concerned for their salvation (**verses 2-4**).

Now, does Paul respond like Moses did? **Verses 5-15**. Does he speak – by his own admission – as a fool? **Verse 16**. Is what he is doing foolish, and NOT by commandment of God? **Verse 17**. Is he glorying? **Verse 18**. Didn’t Paul just say that people who “*compare themselves among themselves*” are not wise? **2 Corinthians 10:12**. What does Paul do next? **2 Corinthians 11:21-23**. Isn’t that “comparing himself” among the other apostles? – and concluding “are they apostles? I am more”. Is that “*letting another man praise you... not your own lips*”? (**Proverbs 27:2**).

Paul realized this was foolish – he said so in practically every other verse – but he did it anyway, because he thought it would help the Corinthians. But it didn’t. A few years later, everyone in Asia (which included Corinth) had abandoned Paul (**2 Timothy 1:15**). Not only that, but how he handled this brought him considerable personal grief down the road, as you’ll see.

Before we get to that, ask yourself, is this how Moses would have handled this problem? Did Paul “fall on his face”, and say “God will show who is His apostle and who is troubling His church?” – he SHOULD have, that’s what a MEEK man would have done; but it wasn’t what he did. Instead, Paul tried to get them to believe him *because he was Paul!*

Paul was saying “look at all the miracles I’ve done; look at all I’ve suffered for the church; look at how hard I’ve worked; I’M RIGHT! Believe me because of these things!” As it happens, Paul WAS right, and the church SHOULD have remembered all the things Paul had done for them; *but Paul should never have said them himself! Doing so was an act of arrogance!*

Paul’s attitude should have been more like Jesus’, but it wasn’t; compare almost identical circumstances with completely opposite attitudes in **John 18:22-23** and **Acts 23:2-3**. They were even slapped by the SAME PERSON – the high priest! And so it’s a perfect opportunity to compare their

reactions. Jesus said, “if I have done evil, show me what it is; and if not, why did you slap me?” and Paul said, “God shall smite you, you whited wall!” Jesus was meek. Paul wasn’t.

Similarly, when the Corinthians were criticizing him, Paul should have said, “if I have done evil, testify of the evil; and if not, why do you criticize me?”. Instead, Paul “*answered a fool according to his folly*”, and “*became like unto him*” (**Proverbs 26:4**).

Paul was wise enough to realize this was happening, but he cared for the people so much that he risked his own spiritual welfare to try to make a point *that God would have made for him if he had just stepped back and let God defend him as Moses did!* **And if he had enough faith, and TRULY loved the people, that’s what Paul would have done!** Because THAT might have helped the people. Foolish boasting didn’t, and never will. It only hurt him.

THE PRICE OF ARROGANCE

But now let’s look at the price Paul paid for this attitude. This problem of arrogance is one that he struggled with his whole life; continue reading now in **2 Corinthians 12:1**. Was it a good thing for Paul to glory like he had been doing? He said “*it is doubtless NOT profitable for me to boast*” (**NKJV**).

Did Paul’s nature DESIRE to glory and boast over his visions? **Verse 6**. Did Paul’s nature incline towards being “elevated above measure” (pride)? **Verse 7**. And to keep that character flaw in check, what did God do? (Same verse). What was the sole purpose of that “thorn in the flesh”? (Same verse).

What this “thorn” actually was is debatable, but it is quite probable based on **Galatians 4:15** and **Galatians 6:11** that Paul had a serious problem with his eyes; quite possibly tracing back to his blindness and the scales in **Acts 9:1-18**. Paul’s eyes may never have fully recovered from that experience, in order to keep Paul from being “exalted above measure”.

In Paul’s defense, he had greater understanding than any other NT apostle. Possibly any man in history. God showed him things he had never shown ANYONE. And God worked powerful miracles through him, so any man would have been tempted to act like Nebuchadnezzar and say “is not this a great church, which I have built – sure, God helped, but I did the hard work!”

Moving on in **2 Corinthians 12:8-10**, Paul realized after asking God repeatedly, that this thorn was there for a purpose, and appreciated that purpose once he understood it. In **verses 11-12** Paul summarizes by saying pretty much what I’ve said here; “I am become a fool in glorying”. Because the Corinthians ought to have appreciated and commended him, instead they falsely accused him of wanting only their money – when, ironically, he never even took money from them! (**Verse 13**).

Paul was right – they SHOULD have praised him. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram SHOULD have praised Moses. They SHOULD have respected the office and authority God gave Moses. But when they DIDN’T, MOSES let God – who gave him the authority – defend that authority. Paul took it upon himself to defend it himself and not only failed miserably to help the people, but paid a great personal price as well.

Because consider this; what did Paul suffer? **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**. What did Moses suffer? **Deuteronomy 34:7**. Do you see the difference? Paul lived a life with a thorn, probably poor eyesight. Moses died at 120 years old (likely nearly twice Paul’s age), and “his eye was not dim”. Paul was weak and sickly, Moses’ “*natural force was not abated*” at 120 years old!

Paul was a great man, but he was a man with a lot of flaws. He wasn't the holy, glowing saint the world pictures. He was a real man, with frailties and weaknesses that he was only too glad to confess (**Romans 7:14-25** for example). Because of that, Paul had a very hard life; we can learn from his example, and that of Moses, and try to avoid as much misery as possible.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF MEEKNESS

Now that you can recognize these attitudes better, consider the example of David. David was the anointed king over Israel. But David had made a bad mistake with Bathsheba, and God pronounced a punishment on him in **2 Samuel 12:10-12**. Shortly thereafter, trouble between him and his son Absalom started to fester (**chapters 13-15**) – which God stirred up to fulfill His curse.

When David perceived that Absalom was stealing the kingdom, he didn't fight him; he knew God was behind this. He left Jerusalem and fled (**2 Samuel 15:13-17**). What's more, the high priest was willing to bring the Ark with David, who was, again, the rightful king; how did David respond? **2 Samuel 15:24-26**.

Notice that attitude, so lacking in Paul! If David pleased God, God would bring him back to Jerusalem; and if not, well, that would be that. Either way, David had no right to move the Ark from its resting place in the house of God!

Another good example is John as compared to Peter. John never mentioned his own name in his books. He always referred to himself indirectly as “that disciple whom Jesus loved”, or “that other disciple”. This speaks of an attitude – if sincere – of meekness. If it's done today, it's usually false modesty which masks a deep pride. But in John's case, it was genuine.

By all accounts, John lived longer than any other apostle, suffered less, and was entrusted with gathering up the books of the NT and writing the last books of the Bible. You can see why when you compare the reactions of John and Peter when Jesus' tomb was discovered empty. Read **John 20:1-4**. John wasn't uninterested, because he outran Peter!

But when he came to the tomb, John (“the other disciple”) showed restraint and respect and stopped at the door and looked in (**verse 5**). What did Peter do? **Verses 6-7**. Only then did John go in (**verse 8**). This, while of course was not a sin for Peter, was a good indication of a general attitude of rushing headlong into a situation, as compared to looking before you leap.

When they are mentioned in the gospels, it's always in the same order “Peter, James, and John” (**Luke 8:51** for instance). And when you read Peter's books, you'll see that like Paul, he paid a price for his attitude. It's no sin to be impulsive, but it tends to result in arrogance as a leader; and see what Jesus prophesied would happen to Peter in **John 21:17-19**.

And in response to that sobering prophecy, Peter's only comment was “oh yeah? Well, what about *JOHN?*?” (to grossly paraphrase **verses 20-22**). Basically, Jesus responded “it's none of your business what I tell John to do; you have your orders”. This again, is not an attitude of meekness on Peter's part.

And this explains why Peter's book speaks often about lessons he had to learn (for example, see **1 Peter 1:7, 2:19-21, 3:9-12, 14**, and so on). These comments show the lessons Peter himself had to learn; lessons of meekness and humility, things he had not learned when he rushed into the tomb.

A particularly glaring example is in **1 Peter 3:4**. Can you picture any of Peter's actions in the gospels as representing a "meek and quiet spirit"? That is something he had to learn, and something any of us who resemble him must learn as well.

Peter's impetuosity was not a completely bad thing; he was, after all, the only disciple to walk on water... but like all traits, it must be "*brought into captivity.. to the obedience of Christ*" (**2 Corinthians 10:5**). Peter's zeal was a great thing, but it needed to be harnessed by wisdom and humility, not allowed to run wild.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

These were all great men, and I don't mean to vilify them in any way. But they were men, they made mistakes, and we are fools if we don't profit from those mistakes. They would want us to observe their flaws and save ourselves the grief those flaws brought to them. That's why Paul told us to follow him **ONLY AS** he followed Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1**).

There is no point in ranting and railing or boasting and speaking of your qualifications to try to convince people who just won't listen (**2 Timothy 2:25**). Their choices are their business, and it's just our job to present them with the choice. After all, if God doesn't build the house, the builders are wasting their time (**Psalms 127:1**). In trying to teach people the truth, we are trying to build a house for God. If God doesn't help build that "house" by giving them understanding, we are wasting our time.

It's easy to get emotionally invested in people, as Paul did, and focus on the individuals, and spend your life trying to drag people who don't even like God into the Kingdom. **If they don't wish to learn the truth from you, let them learn it somewhere else – or not at all. That's why there is a second resurrection.** To summarize many of the concepts in this lesson at once, I want to visit a statement of Jesus and expand it into a parable.

Matthew 11:28-30 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; **for I am meek and lowly in heart:** and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is EASY, and my burden is LIGHT.*

God's way of life does not always seem easy. *But it always can be!* If you truly understand and truly follow God, your "burden" in this life should be MUCH lighter than it was before you learned the truth! That's a promise from Jesus!

And yet most people never see the fulfillment of that promise. Like Paul, their lives are much harder since knowing God than they were before. Why is that? *Because they were not pulling Jesus' yoke – they were sort-of pulling it, and ALSO still pulling some other, worldly yoke!*

To illustrate that principle, suppose you were walking along the road one day, homeless, with all your possessions on your back. And you saw Jesus over there in a field, plowing it with a manual yoke. And suppose Jesus saw you struggling under your burden, and said, "come over here and help me pull! My yoke is easy, my burden is light!"

But suppose, when you go over to help Him pull, you constantly pull in a different direction from Him! He's a big burly fellow, and He is GOING to win – you will, eventually, go His direction! But how much energy and struggle will there be, if you're trying to pull in a different direction all day! That yoke surely would not seem easy to you!

Or suppose you put on His yoke and were actually trying to pull in the same direction – but you hadn't yet taken off your knapsack with all your belongings! Well, naturally you're going to get worn out because you're not just pulling His yoke, *you're carrying His yoke and all the baggage from your previous life!* So **NO WONDER** it's exhausting, and not “easy, and light”!

Jesus' yoke is EASY if you put down your baggage and pull in the same direction as He pulls! It is HARD if you're trying to pull in your own direction, while carrying all your possessions on your back and trying to drag fifty unconverted people along behind you into the Kingdom! Then it's a downright impossible task!

It really is that simple. When you just trust God and let people who hate God go their own way; when you realize that “*naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked I shall return there*” (**Job 1:21**), when you “*are not careful to answer*” rebellious pseudo-Christians (**Daniel 3:16**), when you, in short, “*seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness*” (**Matthew 6:33**), life really is absurdly easy. It's practically coasting. That's why it all really does come down to this one verse...

Micah 6:8 *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

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Nathaniel Burson
10758 Hwy 155 South
Big Sandy, TX 75755

Questions@TheSimpleAnswers.com

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