

Humble Yourself

by Richard Owen Roberts

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Transcript

Now, let me come directly to the burden of my heart tonight. There are two incredibly wonderful issues involved in true revival. Now, an awful lot of people are not interested in revival.

And if I thought revival was what they think revival is, I wouldn't be interested either. I'd go home and stay there. But, there are, as I said, two absolutely magnificent issues in revival that ought to lay hold of our hearts and ought to drive us to our faces before God in pleading for another great movement of the Holy Spirit.

But the first of these issues is the more commonly spoken of, the manifest presence of Christ in the midst of his people. The first time I felt I was ready to write a book on revival, it seemed to me necessary to give some definition to what I was speaking about because there is such a variety of views as to what constitutes revival. And so I said on that occasion, a revival is an extraordinary work of the Spirit of God producing extraordinary results.

No, I still stand by that. But my own judgment in the matter has been refined, I would say. And now, I believe that I would define revival simply as God.

God in the midst of his people. There is an incredibly lovely way in which Christ draws near. And when Christ draws near, things that we have thought little of, things that we have known perhaps no conviction

at all concerning, suddenly appear ugly in the light of the beauty of Christ's holiness as he manifests himself.

So that revival always results in the people of God coming to levels of repentance of which they have known nothing before. Now, some confuse this issue because they are sure that Christ is always with us to the same degree. That there's never any variation.

He doesn't distance himself. He doesn't draw near. He's always nigh.

They use such assurances as, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. And they fail to distinguish as the Scriptures do, but not by the language which I'm going to employ. But nonetheless, the distinction is there between the essential presence of God, the manifest presence of God, and the cultivated presence of God.

God says concerning himself, I fill heaven and earth. The presence of God is as much this very hour in some den of iniquity as it is here when you're speaking of the essential presence. You can't go anywhere but what God is present.

But what is the impact of that aspect of his presence? Do people feel restrained from drinking themselves into oblivion because God is present in the tavern? Do prostitutes suddenly cease forever their life work because of the essential presence of God? No! The essential presence of God does not have a restraining influence on sin and sinners. But when God draws near, there is a fear that develops. Some of us who are older saw some of this just in society itself.

As a young preacher, I found that people were afraid to openly sin. I wouldn't want to say they didn't sin, but I dare to say they sinned behind closed doors and under the cover of darkness because there was a sense of the fear of God. There was at least the remnants of the presence of Christ in the churches in those years.

So the church was to some degree salt and light. But it's not now. We have lost the manifest presence of Christ in the church.

And so we are burdened to pray for revival that Christ himself may draw near. Now I know it's somewhat artificial to distinguish between revival and awakening in terms of actual usage because throughout the centuries, the terms have been used interchangeably in that great movement that begun under the ministry of George Whitefield in about 1735 in England. That movement on that side of the Atlantic was called the evangelical revival.

And yet, on this continent, the same movement involving some of the same men was described as the great awakening. So the terms have been used interchangeably. But if we have the right to give a distinct meaning to each of those wonderful terms, revival happens in the church.

And when the church is revived, awakening happens in the world. Know how we long to see a season when indeed the church is so thoroughly revived and turned into the likeness of Christ that the world is awakened and drawn in a great rush to our Savior. The other issue that I would like to speak of just for a moment or two, the second great wondrous aspect of revival, is that in revival, the Word runs like a mighty flood.

Now, I don't know what you're observing, but I do get around a good bit still and am away from home a good share of the time preaching in a great variety of places. But it doesn't much matter where I'm preaching. A significant portion of the congregation that says anything at all to me will say, oh, that was interesting.

And when you have preached, say, for two hours, which I often do, on a single text, a command text, and somebody steps up to you and says, oh, that was interesting, I'll have to think about that. You want to reply, and sometimes it's appropriate to reply. Don't think about it! Obey! But there's not an awful lot of obedience to the Word that is taking place.

And where an individual does obey, by and large, it stops with that person. But in seasons of revival, the Word of God runs like a mighty flood. The Apostle Paul made reference to this matter in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 3, verse 1, in the form of a prayer request.

Pray that the Word may run rapidly! And dear friends, if you've studied accounts of revival, that is one of the truly exciting aspects of the revival. The Word of God is rushing forward and sweeping before multitudes of people, radically transformed by the Word of God, which currently seems to be having relatively little impact. So for those who aren't much interested in revival, if they understand what revival is, then we know that at the heart of their disinterest is the disinterest in Christ and His Word.

But for those who are interested in revival and do understand these two great issues, what could be more desirable? What could the heart rightly long more for than the manifest presence of Christ in the midst of His people and the Word rushing forward like a mighty flood, sweeping the multitudes into the Kingdom of God? This evening, we've listened to a family group singing and they have drawn our attention to that classic revival passage in 2 Chronicles 7. And in the light of their contribution, I believe it would be well to open the Word of God to the passage and to taste one out of the several issues of immense importance that are drawn to our attention in this passage. So, I'm reading from 2 Chronicles 7 and picking up the reading at verse 11. And while you're turning to it for the sake of a few who may not be aware of the greater context, this seventh chapter is the culmination of Solomon's great prayer of dedication of the temple that occurred in chapter 6. And it is the Lord's response to Solomon and the prayer of which we now read.

So, 2 Chronicles 7, starting at verse 11. Then Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's palace and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the Lord and in his palace. Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and he said to him, I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.

If I shut up the heavens so there is no rain. If I command the locusts to devour the land. Or if I send pestilence among my people and my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.

Then will I hear from heaven, will forgive their sins and will heal their land. Now, I'm not sure there are very many who have ever seriously considered the consequence of a land that is healed by God. But a wonderful way to inform your soul about the consequence of this promised healing is to familiarize yourself with Deuteronomy chapter 28.

Because in that 28th chapter of Deuteronomy we have the blessings and the cursings that God promises to bring either upon those who are obedient or upon those who are disobedient. In that chapter, which if

you are not familiar with, I would plead with you to read before you come to tomorrow morning's session. But in that chapter about 11 or 12 verses are devoted to blessings.

And then some 50 verses devoted to curses. And when you go over the passage it is crystal clear. America was once under the blessings and America is now under the curses.

And the curses don't go away. But God still removes curses and restores blessing. And when God says he will heal the land he's promising to remove the curses and to replace them with the blessings.

But let me read on. Now my eyes shall be opened and my ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever and my eyes and my heart will be there perpetually.

And as for you, if you walk before me, Solomon, as your father David walked, even to do all according to that I have commanded you. And you will keep my statutes and my ordinances. Then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David saying you shall not lack a man to be ruler over Israel.

But if you turn away and you forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot you from my land which I have given you and this house which I have consecrated in my name I will cast out of my sight and I'll make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. As for this house which was exalted, everyone who passes by will be astonished and say why has the Lord done this to this land and to this house? And they will say because they forsook the Lord the God of their fathers who brought them from the land of Egypt and they adopted other gods and they worshiped them and they served them therefore he brought all this adversity on them. Now the word that I wish to focus upon tonight and that I believe is at the very heart of our problem is that first word in the list of four specific calls.

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves. That hasn't happened. What's the sense of talking about prayer? I've been in several supposedly large prayer conferences over the last few weeks in several parts of the country and I've been told in advance of the dozens and even hundreds of churches that were participating.

But in truth not a fraction of those who were supposedly engaged in this conference were present and it's highly unlikely that they had any serious interest in prayer. You can't have serious interest in prayer when you're full of yourself. Prayer is a farce.

The typical local church prayer meeting is a joke. It's disgusting. It's grievous to the Holy Spirit.

Some pastors jokingly and yet I suppose at least three quarters seriously say why our church prayer meeting is the organ recital and all the organs of the Bible are talked about and prayer is requested. And here is a nation rushing pell-mell to hell and we concern ourselves with broken fingers and pains in our side. We haven't taken prayer seriously.

And we can't because we haven't humbled ourselves. Isn't it amazing you can have a community with 35 churches and at least five of them think they're the best church in the community. You can have Christian colleges any number of whom in their advertising material make it clear we're the greatest Christian college.

You attend pastor's fellowships. I used to try in the brief portion of my life that I was a pastor and I would go to the Monday meeting of the pastors in the city but I couldn't handle it. They were boasting sessions.

In a very modest voice one fellow says well, we didn't have a very good weekend. We only baptized seven this week. Oh, I pity you says the next fellow.

The Lord is really doing things in our place. We had 11. Huh, 11? Well, I'm sorry to tell you fellows we had 22.

And the average pastor is sitting there saying I haven't baptized anybody for seven months. Well, if you don't mind baptizing the dead you can baptize 22 or 50 or 100. You can lead your convention in baptisms.

But baptizing the dead I'm speaking of spiritually dead which the bulk of the persons who are baptized are. I mean pastors even say they come forward Sunday morning we baptize them Sunday night then we never see them again. And they still have the outrageous courage to go on baptizing people that deep down within they know are as lost as Satan himself.

I was in one of these larger churches a while ago and the pastor was very upset with my preaching. And finally I said then why did you invite me here? Well, he said I'm beginning to wonder but I thought our people needed to hear what you had to say. Well, I preached Sunday morning on the Beatitudes.

I don't think that's very offensive. Not to the believer. But it can be quite a problem for those who think they're believers and are not.

And he was mad Sunday morning but my words you should have seen him Sunday night when I preached on the first and the greatest commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Monday morning early he called he said the whole staff is up in arms that we've arranged a room at the hotel where you're staying, a dining room and we'll have a private meeting with you. And there were eight of them against this little old man.

And they didn't seem to have any qualms at all attacking me. And of course we've had some experience along these lines, haven't we? And we know how to behave ourselves. You just sit there grinning and let them hurl their mean-spirited accusations.

But after a while they began to feel a little sheepish and they weren't getting any reaction out of me. And so seven of the men left and the senior staff person remained. So I turned to him and I said, Pastor, did you ever knowingly baptize an unconverted person? Yeah, yeah, I would admit I have.

How frequently have you done that? Oh, he said, I haven't really counted. I should suppose not more than a thousand times. The average pastor doesn't baptize a thousand in a lifespan.

And here this fellow admits he's baptized a thousand unregenerate people in a very few years. So I said, then why do you do that? He said, you've got to understand. I've committed myself to build a megachurch.

And I said, you've got to understand that the megachurch you're building is your church and it has nothing whatsoever to do with Christ and you've got to face the fact that you're going to be accountable to God to every one of that thousand people that you led down the road to destruction. That sobered him slightly, but he was still mad. But on the final night he came before the service.

He had avoided me all week. He came before the service. He said, I'd like you to agree to go out with me after the service and have some refreshment.

Yes, I said, of course. Well, he said, when you're finished and all the people are through speaking with you, I'll come for you. So when he did, he said, now let me tell you the purpose.

When we reach the restaurant, I want you to tell me everything that's wrong with me. And I said, why would I do that? Are you telling me you intend to repent? No, he said, I would not dare say that. But what I must say is I have two weeks in which to repent.

And if I do not repent within two weeks, it will be too late. And I said, on what basis do you say that? He said, I know my wicked heart. I'm under incredible conviction right now.

But if I don't act, it will be too late. And when we reached the restaurant, I gave him a dozen things. But I focused upon one.

I said, I have never heard you preach. But from what I've seen of you and of your church, I believe that you're a man who loves the Bible, but not the God of the Bible. But I don't want to be unfair.

Would you regard that as unfair? No, he said, that's the heart of it. I said, then you are an unregenerate man on your way to hell and leading multitudes with you. But brothers and sisters, the sad thing was I never heard from the man again.

And my deep feeling was if indeed he had come to repentance, I would have learned that. Many of these churches that are flourishing are led either by men who have never been born of the Spirit or men who have backslidden so deeply they don't even know the difference between right and wrong. And at the heart of the issue with these men is the issue of pride.

Now that's our focus. The role of pride over against the place of humility in the church. And the absolute necessity of humility if indeed we are to rightly hope for an outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Now let's focus for a few moments upon 2 Chronicles and the portions that relate immediately to it. I'm going to go back for a moment to 1 Chronicles because it relates directly to this seventh chapter. And I invite you as I do so to notice these words out of 1 Chronicles chapter 22.

I'm reading verses 17, 18, and 19. David also commanded the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon, saying, Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not given you rest on every side? For he has given the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before you. Before the Lord.

Before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise, therefore, and build the sanctuary of the Lord God so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the Lord.

So as David speaks to his son about the project that chapters 6 and 7 focus upon in 2 Chronicles, he gives this very straightforward warning. If you seek the Lord your God, then his blessing will be upon you. He has given this season of rest and prosperity.

But don't lose sight of that critical issue of seeking the Lord. Now a second passage also out of 1 Chronicles, but this time chapter 28. A single verse that I draw to your attention.

The words that David spoke specifically to Solomon his son. 2 Chronicles 28.9 As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind. For the Lord searches all hearts and he understands every intent of the thoughts.

If you seek him, he will let you find him. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Now I don't know how any warning could be plainer, but with those two passages in mind, flip back to 1 Kings 11 and notice this very sobering statement.

1 Kings 11. Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh. Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, you shall not associate with them.

Neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods. Yet Solomon held fast to these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, 300 concubines, and his heart was turned away by his wives.

For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods. And his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord. As the heart of David, his father, had bent.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And he did not follow the Lord fully as David, his father, had done.

Then Solomon built a high place for Chinosh, the detestable idol of Moab on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem. And for Moloch, the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon, thus also he did for all his foreign wives who burned incense and sacrificed their gods. Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him.

And I commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods. But he did not observe what the Lord had commanded. So the Lord said to Solomon, Because you have done this and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant.

Is it not amazing that the man who is depicted as the wisest man in the world played the fool, forsook the command of the Lord and brought the wrath of God upon himself and upon Israel? And why? Pride. No doubt it has occurred to you that the root of sexual sin is pride. And we all know something at least of the account of what happened.

And I want to read a summary statement now from 2 Chronicles 12. Many of you will remember that Israel was divided as a result of Solomon's sin. And the ten tribes went in one direction and the two tribes in another.

And then Rehoboam came to the throne. And listen to these summary words from 2 Chronicles 12, verse 14. Words summarizing the whole of the life of Rehoboam.

And he did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord. Now friends, our Savior taught in the Sermon on the Mount that we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And he assured us that if we do so, all these other things will be added unto us.

And then he stated very plainly, after all these things do the Gentiles seek. There is in every human breast a seeking aspect. We are always looking for something.

And if we do not set our hearts to seek the Lord, we end up seeking something else. Our Lord is assured that if you seek Me first and My kingdom, all else will be added unto you. But it is an absolute guarantee that if you don't seek Him first, you will seek something else, as did Solomon, as did Rehoboam, and you will lose the kingdom.

Do you remember the summary words concerning the situation that Asa was facing in the early days of his reign? He said the kingdom is ours because we sought the Lord and He let us find Him. And we in North America must acknowledge we have lost the kingdom because we did not set our hearts to seek the Lord. And pride is the underlying issue.

Many foolish people with whom I speak say, I don't see why you keep stressing that we must seek the Lord. I didn't know He was lost. And I say to them, there's something else you obviously don't know.

And that is your loss. You remember the words of Isaiah 57, 15. Thus saith the High and the Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy.

I dwell in the High and Lofty Place with Him also who is broken and contrite to revive the heart of the broken one, to revive the spirit of the contrite. God has a limited habitation. He dwells in only two places, the High and the Lofty, and the heart and the spirit of the broken and the contrite.

We have millions of people in our land who honestly think they're Christians because they once gave a hearty salute to Christ. But no, Christ only dwells in the broken and the contrite. The proud and hard know nothing of God.

They may have adopted religious language, but God makes it crystal clear. He holds the proud in heart at arm's length, and we would do well to remember how long the arm of God is. So Asa says the land is still ours because we sought Him and He let us find Him.

And we say the land is no longer ours because we did not seek God and we have not found Him. And that leaves us at the juncture where we either get serious or it's too late. So we have the account of Solomon with all of his wisdom departing from the Lord.

We have the account of Rehoboam and all the potential good that was in him departing from the Lord. I make reference briefly to another king. A young fellow by the name of Joash.

His story is also in Chronicles. I'm referring specifically now to chapter 24. And I want to give you just ever so brief a sketch of this man and then remind you of the tragedy that happened in his life.

Joash was just a boy when he became king. And in all the early years of his reign, there was a high priest who was a godly man by the name of Joash upon whom this boy king leaned. But when the old priest died, then the princess in the kingdom spoke flattering words to the boy king and he was swayed.

You see, part of the great problem in our church is a significant portion of the people are leaners. Not leaning on the Lord, but leaning on some spiritual prop. And when that prop is gone, down they go.

Here this boy king turns completely aside after several years of walking the straight and the narrow. Then in the providence of God, the son of Jehoiada, the high priest, is a prophet and he appears and he

rebukes this boy for his departure. And this foolish, arrogant young king has the prophet Zechariah put to death.

The son of the man upon whom he leaned put to death because he rebuked him for his gross failure. Let me read just a portion out of chapter 24. Picking it up at verse 17.

After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king. And the king listened to them. They made obeisance to him.

They abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers. They served the ashram and the idols. So wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt.

He sent prophets to them to bring them back to the Lord. Though they testified against them, they would not listen. Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the priest, and he stood above the people and he said to them, Thus God has said, why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord.

He will forsake you. So they conspired against him. And at the command of the king, they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord.

Pride grips this young king. And most of us know at least something of the story of Uzziah in chapter 26. Look at verse 4. He did right in the sight of the Lord.

According to all that Amaziah, his father, had done. And he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah who had understanding through the vision of God. And as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him.

But dropping down to verse 16, these horrifying words, when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly. And he was unfaithful to the Lord his God. For he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him 80 priests of the Lord, valiant men. And they opposed Uzziah the king. They made it clear, this is not your business.

But Uzziah with a censer in his hand was enraged. And while he was enraged with the priest, leprosy broke out upon him. The issue of pride.

And so clearly described, while he was weak, he was seeking the Lord. But when he became strong, he no longer sought the Lord. Now friends, this has been the history of multitudes.

While weak, the Lord is soft. When strong, the Lord is forgotten. This has been the story of multitudes of pastors.

This has been the story of incredibly large numbers of churches. This is the story of nations. When we were small, we sought the Lord.

But now, in our great strength, we don't need the Lord. We dismiss Him. We make a mockery of the things that He holds dear.

Now friends, I'd like to give you a list of words that depict the biblical picture of pride. I've had words that I want to mention. Pride is number one, the beginning sin.

At the heart of all that transpired in the garden, between Eve and the serpent, and Adam and God, the issue of pride is very much in the forefront. So pride is, as I said, number one, the beginning sin. Number two, pride is a blasphemous sin.

A person who tolerates pride elevates themselves either to the equal of God or the superior to God. Now the vast majority of people in our churches worship and serve a God scarcely a half inch bigger than themselves. And that balance is precarious.

And very readily, one can go from supposing God is a little bit bigger to thinking themselves equal to or superior to God. But whatever form pride takes, it is a blasphemous sin. Not one of us has anything to be proud about.

If you're proud of your physique, you didn't make yourself what you are. If you're proud of your brain power, you didn't have anything to do with that. If you're proud of your physical beauty, whatever it is we take pride in, it is God who made us and determined what we are.

And instead of pride, there should be an incredible spirit of thanksgiving. Pride is truly a blasphemous sin. Number three, pride is tragically a binding sin.

A person who allows pride in their life is chained by pride itself. All true freedom, all true liberty is gone because pride entangles a person and wraps them so much up in themselves that they're worthless in terms of the kingdom of God. Number four, pride is a bizarre sin.

You take the people who boast so much of their own prowess, those who feel as if they are truly superior. It might be that anybody could find somebody who looked worse than them in some particular area. But we are all created beings and the only one we have any right to ever compare ourselves with is Christ.

And there isn't a person in this room or anywhere else that looks anywhere near decent in comparison with Christ. Pride is always bizarre. But pride also, number five, is a barrier sin.

It erects walls. It causes division and separation. A high percentage of the church divisions of which I've known over the years, pride is without any doubt the fundamental issue.

Problems in homes that result in divorce. Issues of pride. Over and over and over and over.

Walls are erected by pride. But also, number six, pride is a blinding sin. In the old days when I was a youth, we had the milk wagons that came around and we had the other merchants who brought their stuff and we had the trash peddlers going up and down the streets crying, Rags! Rags! Rags! And as a boy, I remember all those horses had blinders on so that they had very limited, straightforward vision.

Well, pride has a worse effect upon us than blinders have on horses. Pride so obscures our vision that we can't see who we are and where we're headed. A church beset by pride is blind.

They think they're eminently effective. The pastor I described baptizing a thousand people. His success of going from a handful to 6,000 in a very short period of time blinded him to reality.

Okay, there he was leading a multitude of people to hell and totally unaware of what he was doing. And when an old preacher calls it to his attention, he gets rip-roaring mad. And then when conviction comes, he knows perfectly well it may be too late for me.

Pride. A blinding sin. Number seven.

Pride is a boating sin. I know that's not the term everybody uses, but I had an old Welsh grandmother and every once in a while, she would say, I've got the boating. Now, if you haven't heard the term, it's an inner sense of something awful that's going to happen.

Pride is a boating sin. It carries with it a guarantee. The proud in heart will perish.

Pride does go before a fall. But pride, number eight, is also the backslider's sin. Do you remember the proverb, the backslider in heart is filled again with his own waste.

When one comes to Christ in a true conversion, they're emptied of self and filled with Christ. But when backsliding sets in, then self begins to return and to crowd Christ into the far corners of the heart. Backsliding is an issue of pride.

But number nine, backsliding, and then I mention number nine. Pride is a breeder sin. B-r-e-e-d-e-r.

It breeds other sin. I must step down where I can see clearly your eyes and make it clear to you. Most people who think they are repentant have only repented of the fruits of sin in their life.

But underneath the fruits of sin are the roots of sin. And Jude makes it clear that the three great roots of sin are unbelief, stubbornness, rebellion, and pride. If these root sins remain, you can be endlessly confessing the sins that appear on the branches of your life, but there's no change that occurs.

If I may speak very cautiously but specifically, we had a president who was caught in adulterous relationships. He denied them up and down. Finally, he could no longer get away with denying it.

The evidence was mounting up so high. He then confessed his sin. And a lot of silly people among us said, now we must all forgive him.

He has confessed his sin. I said, don't be ridiculous. Confessing an adulterous relationship doesn't mean anything, especially someone who has been a habitual adulterer.

We don't have any reason to think he knows anything of repentance until his pride is broken. And I need to pause and ask, is it possible that the repentance you know is of the fruits of sin and you have never moved to repentance of the very roots of sin in your life? It's not enough to turn from what we've done. It is mandatory that we turn from what we are.

Finally, number ten, for multitude's pride, is there besetting sin? Time after time after time. And it's not at all uncommon to have someone step up after a serious meeting and say, I admit I'm proud, but you should have known my father. No, thank you.

It's hard enough dealing with you. It's almost as if I admit I'm proud, but it isn't a matter of consequence. It just isn't worth worrying about.

But dear friends, I hope that from that list of ten words you see that it is indeed a very critical issue. But don't think I'm done. I want now to ask you to turn to an incredible passage that demonstrates the kind of humility that is acceptable to God.

It too is another passage involving a king. I refer to 2 Samuel 6. In the interest of time, I shall not try to read this, but rather I shall give you a summary of it and then an application. In this sixth chapter of 2 Samuel, the prophet records the experience of King David.

David got under a burden over the fact that the ark of the covenant was out of its rightful place. And I believe that in order to appreciate the consequence of this, we need to remind ourselves of how long the ark of the Lord was out of its rightful place. Remember that overweight priest Eli who had two wicked sons? And you remember, don't you, that he rebuked his sons? Oh, naughty, naughty, naughty.

Oh, you shouldn't do it. Hey, that is a mighty nice piece of meat. Give that to me.

He grew grossly fat consuming that which his sons had misappropriated. And his rebukes of them was a farce. He was so fat that he sat on a stool.

His legs could not support that gross weight. But you remember that a battle came and the Philistines carried off the ark and they put to death his two sons. And when the news of that battle came to Eli, he fell backward off his stool and he broke his fat neck.

Now that was about 20 years before the end of the work of Samuel. Then Samuel was followed by Saul who reigned 32 years and never concerned himself about the ark of the covenant. And then as near as we can tell, this sixth chapter occurs somewhere maybe around the tenth year of the reign of David.

So we got 20 years under Samuel, 32 years under Saul, 10 years under David. All this time, the ark of the covenant is out of its rightful place. So David sets his heart to bring the ark of God back where it belongs.

But he makes a very stupid decision. He doesn't consult the Word of God, but he asks the Philistines when you move the ark, how do you do it? And they said put the ark on a new cart. So they load up the ark on a new cart and they start to bring that ark home.

There's a farm boy accompanying the ark and when the ark hits this very rough place in the road, he reaches up to steady it to keep it from toppling. And the Lord strikes him dead and immediately David flashes into a rage of anger against God. And he calls the name of that place where this fellow was struck dead, Perez, Uzzah.

The Lord has made a breach between us. But then the Spirit of God is gently working in David and he comes to realize that the real sinner in the situation was himself. He took 30,000 men down there to recover the ark.

And not one of them said now before we take any action, let us ask the Lord how He wants us to do this. Many have been perplexed over the Lord striking that poor boy. My own dad, one time he put a lot of pressure on me.

We had a family member who had purchased a condominium in Florida for my folks as they were aging. And one winter he called and said, you must come and bring your family to Florida. I said, Dad, that sounds lovely, but the schedule is much too heavy to even think of it.

Surely, he said, you can get a week in there. Well, finally we found six days. I was finishing meetings in one place on Friday and didn't start the next one until the following Friday.

So my wife drove from Illinois to Florida, picked me up at the airport, and we went and spent a few days with my folks. On the Saturday night, my dad said, we've been attending the local Baptist church. Of course, you can go where you please, but we'd like you to come to church with us.

Oh, of course, Dad. Be delighted. We went to the Baptist church and the pastor read the whole of 2 Samuel 6. And when he got through reading it, he said, I don't understand this passage.

Then he went and preached a sermon that proved he didn't understand it. As we were leaving after the service, my dad and I walking down the sidewalk, he turned to me and he said, I don't understand the passage either. And, you know, I tried to keep eyes forward.

I didn't want to get involved in that one. And then he turned again. He said, do you? And I had to say, yes, Dad.

I understand the passage. Then we get back to the condo. You and I are going to sit down in a quiet corner and you explain it to me.

And strangely, just a short time later, when I was home for a few days, we lived at that time in a very long house, and my wife had a study on one end and I had a study on the other, and I got up first in the morning, went to my study. We just had this unwritten rule that we don't look at one another until we've had a chance to look at the Lord. But one morning early, she came raging into my study.

I'll pretend you're me. She's wagging her finger in my face and saying, do I want you to know if you ever do what David did, you're in the same kind of trouble with me as he was with his wife. I said, Maggie, whatever are you... You know perfectly well the passage.

I'm warning you. I said, Maggie, I don't know what it is you're all agitated about. Well, he danced naked in the street.

I said, strange, I never read that. Go back to your end of the house and reread the passage. And when you've done so, then at the breakfast table, we'll discuss it.

I want to share with you in brief the discussion I had first with my dad then with my wife. You see, my dad was confused. He thought there was an injustice in striking the farm boy.

He didn't understand it any more than the Baptist pastor did. But I said, Dad, in Numbers 4, there's a long passage describing precisely how the ark is to be moved, how every portion of it is to be wrapped and folded, how the rods are to be put through, and how the ark is to be carried on the shoulders of the Kohan. David should have known that.

The priest should have known that. None of them had the good sense to seek the Lord in the matter. They just rushed ahead seeing a need, and they violated God and His Word.

And that's where the church is at today. We don't pay any attention to the Word of God. We see what we think needs to be done, and we rush ahead into it.

But now the other issue, that which was troubling my wife so greatly, without reading the account, I'll simply remind you of the essentials. The second time they go down, they carry the ark on the shoulders of the Kohites, and they bring it into the city, and the people are excited, and David is dancing before the Lord with all of his might. And doing so, contrary to my wife's observation, doing so in a linen ephah.

Now what is the meaning of that? My dear friends, David took off his royal crown. David took off his royal robe. David danced in the street as a common man among common men.

David humbled himself. And the key to the passage is in the words that David replied to his wife when she was expressing her loathing of him. Let me read these words.

Verse 20, David returned to bless his household. Mishael, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, How the king of Israel distinguished himself today. He uncovered himself in the eyes of the servant maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself.

So David said to Mishael, It was before the Lord who chose me above your father and above all his house to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord over Israel. Therefore, I will celebrate before the Lord and I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes. But with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished.

And Mishael, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death. And, of course, at the heart of it is this distinction. I did what your father would not.

Go back in your mind to her father. When the command of the Lord came to Saul, go and utterly destroy the Amalekites. And instead, he kept alive Agag, the king.

And he preserved the best of the sheep and the goats and others of the good. And when confronted by the prophet, he said, I did exactly what the Lord commanded. And the prophet said, I suppose, with good humor on his face, Then what is this bleeding of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that I hear? And then this king had the gall to say, I was afraid of the people.

Here a king standing head and shoulders above all the people pretending that his sin is excusable because he was afraid of the people. And you remember the prophet made it clear to hearken is better. To obey is better.

And he likens the matter to sacrifice and offerings. And then he goes on to speak about the issue of stubbornness, rebellion. And he likens them to idolatry and witchcraft.

But my friends, the heart of this passage is when Saul could no longer deny the consequence of his sin. He said, I'm reading from 1 Samuel 15 verse 24. Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned.

I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship. I wonder how many of you have learned how incredibly important it is to see where a person places the periods in their confession.

I have sinned because I feared the people and listened to their voice. You pay attention to the people who are supposedly confessing their sin and you'll find that a great many of them are unable to say, I have sinned, period. But they add an explanation, an excuse.

Now the tragedy of the hour in which we live is that multitudes of religious leaders would be doing handstands to have somebody of Saul's position saying, I have sinned. Even when it's evident that the confession means nothing. But look further here.

Verse 26, Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you for you have rejected the word of the Lord. And the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe and it tore.

So Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today. And he has given it to your neighbor who is better than you. And also the glory of the Lord will not lie or change his mind for he is not a man that he should change his mind.

Then Saul breathed out, Oh, I have sinned! Twice in one night. But again, no period. Look at it.

I have sinned, but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel and go back with me that I may worship the Lord your God. I have sinned, but I know I've sinned. Samuel, you know I've sinned.

God knows I've sinned. But don't tell the elders or the people. So God tears the kingdom from Saul.

And He gives it to the neighbor who is better than himself. And that neighbor is David who messes things up and is the cause of the death of the farm boy. But he does humble himself.

And you would think David had learned his lesson by this time. But no. A few chapters later, David sends the army to the battle front.

He deliberately stays home and it's at the time when the king goes to war with the troops. He lies in bed all day. He rises late in the afternoon.

He goes up on the roof where he knows he's going to see a beautiful woman taking a bath in the neighborhood. He sends an official summons for that woman. Commands her presence in his bed chamber.

Commits adultery with her when he learns she's pregnant. He calls the husband home from the battle front under the pretense of getting a report as to how the battle was going when his real intent was to send the man home to sleep with his wife in the hopes that he would suppose that the child was his. And when the man's loyalty is so great that he will not go home, but he sleeps at the palace gate, he brings him in the next day, gets him drunk, thinking for sure now he'll go home.

But the second night he lies again at the palace gate, brings him in the third day, writes out a letter, forces the man to carry in his own bosom a letter commanding that he be placed in the most vulnerable part of the battle and therefore put to death. And the man dies. And David lives in his sin, thinking he's gotten away with it.

But he writes Psalm 32 and Psalm 38 acknowledging the trouble he was in. But it's not until the prophet Nathan wags his bony finger in the king's face and says, Thou art the man. And let us take a moment to see for ourselves the very accusation that is leveled against David by the prophet Nathan.

Four accusations that on the surface have nothing to do with the sins of adultery and murder. 2 Samuel chapter 12. But look at these accusations.

Verse 9. Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah, being hit tight with the sword. Have taken his wife to be your wife. And have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

Accusation number one. You despised the word of the Lord. Now that's David and the fellow who wrote so many of the Psalms.

The one who still delights us with the glorious Psalms he wrote. Why have you despised the word of the Lord? Look at verse 10. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me.

And have taken the wife of Uriah, being hit tight to be your wife. Despised the word of the Lord. Despised the person of the Lord.

Verse 12. Indeed, you did it secretly that I'll do this thing before all Israel and under the sun. He despised the word, the person, and the very attributes of God.

Anybody who thinks he does anything in secret shows that he despises the very attributes of God. The eyes of the Lord roam to and fro throughout the whole earth beholding the evil and the good. Nobody ever gets away with anything with God.

And the fourth accusation. Verse 14. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme the child also that is born to you shall surely die.

Despised the word. Despised the person. Despised the attributes.

And despised the reputation of God Almighty. And yet, he is the neighbor who is better than Saul. We don't know that Saul murdered anybody.

We don't have any record of his having committed gross adultery. So why is David the neighbor better than Saul? Because David humbled himself. When he wrote Psalm 51 I will cite just one small portion.

He said, Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. How could he say that? He sinned against Bathsheba. He sinned against her husband.

He sinned against his own family. He sinned against the nation over whom he ruled. And because his sin included sexual sin, he sinned against his own body.

How could he say, Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. He said it because he understood that the great evil of all sin consists in this fact. It is against God.

And there is no humility until it is understood that the great evil of all sin consists in the fact that it is against God. So as urgent as revival is, we're just mouthing words if we're not prepared to humble ourselves. We can't get away with what Saul couldn't get away with.

We can't blame others. The tendency is to blame others. This rotten condition in America is because of the politicians or because of the corrupt media or because the educational system is no good.

Well, that all may be true, but the problem in America is the church. Everything that's wrong in America was first wrong in the church. And the church is us.

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal the land. But let's not move on from here until we are sure that we have humbled ourselves.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/2zCrEI6B72Q.mp4>

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