

IF MY PEOPLE #2
Message 2
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This is again a message without an outline. We are looking at 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. This takes place at the time of the dedication of the first temple. These verses say:

13 "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,

14 "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 I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

This passage spoke first of all to Israel. What caused Israel to come to the place where God would cause there to be no rain, or where God commanded the locusts to devour the land, or to send pestilence among them? Why does God bring us to circumstances we cannot handle? Well, it may be because we have let things enter inadvertently and we have fallen into some sin. Verse 14 says, "If my people which are called by My name will humble themselves." Number one was that pride set in, and pride is the chief sin of mankind. When pride of some sort has entered, humbling comes first. What causes more problems for us than pride?

Now our passage was written to the nation of Israel. Did Israel have things by which they might have been endangered to become proud? Our verses were given in a time when Solomon was on the throne. King David had won great victories. He had taken over the nation when the disastrous reign of Saul was over. And David had led Israel from one victory to another and he was their great king. They had many things they could boast about in the Lord about, but they could just as easily become proud, as though they were so good.

I am giving these messages because we feel that our country, our town, and our church are in need of revival. The chief sin of mankind is pride, and it may be in anyone of us without us knowing it ourselves and we do well to consider it as a possibility. The most striking thing about pride is that we may be proud and we may be totally unaware of it. And maybe we are truly a Christian, and God has let circumstances into our lives

that we cannot master, and that may be because He wants to get our attention.

Now in Israel, after David Solomon became, they had lived in peace for some time and the nation prospered like never before. It was like the roaring 1920s. Solomon had made gold and silver as common as stones in Israel. When that happens, what is the danger?

And God knew what the outcome might be in the future and He spoke to Solomon at the time of the dedication of the first temple. And how many times in the history of Israel did this issue of falling into pride play out? It had already played out many times during the time of the judges. They sinned, repented, and were restored. And then they sinned and repented and were restored. Over and over this happened. And in the times of the kings after Solomon, again and again this took place. And so, God prescribes a cure for such times like this: "If My people which are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land."

God said something like this: "If you leave Me, it will be because you have become proud. If you then ever want to come back to Me, you will have to pick up right there where you first went astray. You will have to humble yourselves." Note first, that God does not humble us. Note second, that we have to humble ourselves. He might give us the circumstances that will lead to it, but we must humble ourselves. He will not humble us. Our question is, when do we need to humble ourselves? When we have exalted ourselves. The key direction of pride is up; and the key direction of humility it is down. It is high minded contrasted with low minded.

Do we struggle to ask prayer for things that trouble us? Maybe we have a financial struggle, or any other personal issue, does pride keep us from asking for prayer? How about anger? It is a revelation of pride. Maybe we are bitter about something; is it not due to pride? Lou Suter said that bitterness is thwarted pride. Hebrews talks about a root of bitterness. It is underground and can't be seen. But if it is not dealt with and allowed to grow it springs up and bears very bad fruit. It defiles others and spreads like cancer, affecting others. Like the green bile that comes out of the gall when one is butchering animals defiles any meat it touches, so bitterness that touches others defiles them too.

Some Christians may learn early in their Christian life how bad pride is and they may not struggle as others will. I suspect that the majority of pastors are susceptible to pride above most others. God's greatest job in a pastor is to teach him to humble himself under the mighty hand of God. One pastor said that is why a pastor needs a wife.

There are a number of Hebrew words that are translated pride, but there is one word that is used 9 times and it always speaks of pride in a bad sense and the primary root of the word means "to rise." This word is used first in Job and we'll look at those passages later.

I am not as familiar with OT words as with NT words. The key NT word is the word "huperaphainos." It comes from the word "above" and "to appear." So, it is someone who appears above others. It is an appearance. It is not real. The English word "pride" can be used in a good sense. This word in the NT is never used in a good sense.

This word is translated as "proud" 5 times out of its 5 occurrences. The Hebrew word gay'eh is used 9 times and always translated proud. There is a positive pride, but these words are never used like that. According to the onlinebible definition, the NT word, *huperaphainos* means "showing one's self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent, or with an overweening estimate of one's means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, haughty."

One writer said pride is a poison because it's the basis for disrespecting others. Pride is destructive to relationships. It can ruin our relationship with people and with God.

1 Peter 5:6-7 is a key passage. Let me read it and note the words having to do with humility and the word, proud.

5 Likewise you younger people, submit (that means to place oneself under) submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Pride is a premature exaltation of oneself, and it is something we think of ourselves. God will exalt those who humble themselves but only in due time. But the proud God resists.

When we are gifted with something, or if a man is handsome, or a woman is pretty, or we are blessed with money etc. we are in danger of pride. Listen to 1 Corinthians 4:7:

7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Now let me ask you a question: In the human being, where is pride generated? Well, let me give you some of the parts of man. There is the body, the soul, the spirit, the heart, the mind, the emotions, and some of those can be broken down to their parts. Where, in man, is pride? Well, I left out one key area. There is what we call the self. The self is the real you. The real you is not the body. The body is one of the possessions of the real you, the self. As a matter of fact, all the other parts of man are possessions of the real you. The real you is the person, the self. We are made in the image of God and that image is the real you. We name it by pronouns like this; I, me, you, etc.. And we give the real you a name. My name is Phil Schlamp. My last name tells you which family I belong to and my first name tells you who I am.

And there, in the real me or you, is where the problem of pride resides. I am so and so; I can do this or that, or I have this or that. I am handsome. I am pretty. I can play hockey better than others. My truck is better than yours. Now listen to this verse: "As a man (the person, the real you) thinks in his heart, so is he." Pride lies in me, the person. And pride thinks in his or her heart about him or herself. It is my view that God's job of bringing us to see ourselves is a much bigger job than creating the universe. It only took God six days to create the entire universe, and it takes Him our whole life-time to conform us to the image of Christ. It is not that we may not reach points of humility as we go along but there are things we have not experienced yet, and when we do and become proud, God will have to start all over again on this new thing, if we give in to pride.

Listen to Paul in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ." Who or what is crucified? It is not the body or soul or heart. It is I, the self. In the self life lies every issue of pride.

Now let me tell you something that may surprise you: If you or I did not have the capacity for pride, we could be of no value to God. It is the big I that has to learn to submit. But if God cannot bring us to where we submit ourselves under His mighty hand, He cannot use us and it may well be the ruin of us.

In years past, and even today, some speak of going to the cross. They say we must go to the cross. But the question is, what does that mean? The cross is that place where I die to all that is selfish and sinful. Now let us say I have to clean something up with someone. Maybe it is just that I spoke to my wife or my husband in anger and now I am under conviction. I know I need to clean this up, but I can hardly bring myself to do it. It may be as simple as confessing to one's wife or husband that one has spoken harshly to them. But before we repent, self must bow before God Almighty, say no to the flesh, and confess to the one that we wronged. That is the cross. Someone has said that the crucified life is the big, capital I crossed out. The self life is a huge part of every person's life; saved or unsaved.

L.E. Maxwell says in his book, "Crowded to Christ": "The last enemy destroyed in the believer is self. It dies hard. It will make any concessions if allowed to live. Self will permit the believer to do anything, give anything, sacrifice anything, suffer anything, be anything, go anywhere, take any liberties, bear any crosses, afflict soul and body to any degree - anything if it can only live. It will consent to live in a hovel, in a garret, in the slums, in far-away heathendom, if only its life can be spared."

Today we have a dilemma for many godly Christians. They long to go to church. Many churches have drifted from truth so far that many godly Christians cannot find a church that they feel they can go to. It is not that many of them think they are too good for any church. It is that they feel that by going to that church they are giving consent to that which they strongly disagree with. Because of that, many may do church online. It is their last resort. But they are missing out on some blessings that can only be gained by being part of a local assembly.

Let me tell you about one of those blessings that we, who do go to church, may not consider a blessing at all. As a matter of fact, we may wish we could do church online. When we go to church with others, you find that there are things you disagree with others on. In church one has to live together in harmony with others. There may come all kinds of circumstances where we

rub each other the wrong way. Let me ask you, do you know about that?

And you might say to me, "You call that a blessing?" Well, I do. Let me explain. Let me ask you how many of you are perfect? How many of us would like the Lord to correct us in that area where we are not yet perfected? How many of us would like to gain the victory in the area we struggle with right now?

It is a long time since I used this illustration but for lack of finding a better, I'll use it again. My family and I have enjoyed finding rocks that are of high enough quality that they can be polished. I have likened the Christian life to a rock in the polisher. By far the most rocks that exist will not polish. Some may grind away to nothing, others don't but they will never take on a good shine. But there are those that do take on a beautiful shine. They are small in number.

Well God finds some precious stones among mankind. Here they are: Any person who hears the Gospel and repents of his or her sins and puts his or her faith in Jesus Christ becomes a precious stone to the Lord. And the Lord will begin to polish such a person. In this polishing God wants to make us like Christ.

Here is how rock polishing goes. You put the rocks into a rock tumbler. You put in the right amount of stones. Then you put in the right amount of water. Then you put in the right amount of rough grit in the water and then you turn the tumbler on and it turns, and turns, and turns. And then the rocks begin to hit each other and they hit, and hit, and hit. And the grit gets between them. And the water and the rocks and the grit cause the bumps and lumps and sharp edges to begin to wear down.

Let us liken the tumbler to a church. We'll liken the rocks to believers. The water is the Word of God and the grit is life's circumstances. You cannot polish one rock alone. There must be more. That is one of the major reasons for church life. But when we are with other believers, we rub shoulders with them. And we start to rub each other the wrong way. And there is this one bigger rock in there and it keeps hitting almost everybody. And we say, "Oh if only I could get rid of that rock." And what would happen if we could? God might not be able to do what He wants to do in us. And you might say, "Well, I'll tell you, I could do without so and so." And the question is, do I really want what is best for me?

But the house church believer does not have the same privilege of rubbing others the wrong way or being rubbed the wrong way, unless, unless, there are at least a few people. And as soon as you have at least a few people, there you will meet problems. Ask any house church. If a person is watching church online all alone, such a person is missing out on the potential of a huge blessing. In listening to church there is opportunity for the Lord to work in their lives but a major element is missing. And where there is a group, no matter how large or how small, the Lord keeps turning and it is round after round and in church we start to say, "Oh, if I could only sit in a house church. What I would give to not have some of these circumstances with other believers. Oh Lord, please stop this tumbler, I want out, or I want to throw some of these rocks out." But the tumbler turns and turns, day after day and we may not even be out of the rough stage. And then, in the tumbler, I may have this one big ugly lump. And it gets hit again and again. And that lump is pride. But ever so slowly it is getting worn down, but it may have a long way to go. This is especially true for young people.

Let me quote from Spurgeon. He describes pride as "an all-pervading sin." He said, "Pride is so natural to fallen man that it springs up in his heart like weeds in a well-watered garden ... its every touch is evil. You may hunt down this fox, and think you have destroyed it, and lo! Your very exultation is pride. None have more pride than those who dream that they have none. Pride is a sin with a thousand lives; it seems impossible to kill it.'" "

Well, here is the question: Can pride be overcome? We can overcome it to the stage in life where we are now. But the danger is always this: We may not recognize we have pride. I can look back in my life and see places I have lived in pride and I never recognized it at the time. We may master pride on one point, but for God to deal with it all takes a lifetime because in life, as we grow older, we meet circumstances we have never met before.

1 Peter 5:6-7 says:

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

May I put it like this, "In the tumbler, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." Here is what the last words of verse 7 say: "...for He cares for you." Do all things work together for good to those who love God? Are there times when we have to take a stand? Yes! But how it is done is what is crucial. Have I become humble? Is there humility? In the NT the word for humility means lowliness of thinking. I ask, is there lowliness of thinking in my life's circumstances, or do I appear above?

A while ago I said to the Lord, "Lord, teach me how to live in victory when all is dark." That is life in the tumbler. Now somebody tell me, after the rough grit has done its work, how many smaller sizes of grit must the rocks endure yet? Is it three? And then at last, when the tumbler is opened the last time, after thousands upon thousands of rounds, and you run clean water over the rocks, you will know instantly which rocks are precious. And here is the word for us. Our tumbler is opened for the last time, either at the rapture, or when we die. And I ask you, how do you and I want to stand before the Lord?

Let me take a little time to show us how helpless we are to fix ourselves when we are stuck in pride. It is a long time ago when I preached through the book of Job. Turn to Job. I believe, as you know, that the book of Job describes to us how God removed the deadly tumor of pride from a very righteous man, a man that was now in great danger from the devil of being destroyed by pride. His name was Job. We learn in this story how much God is willing to go through to reduce us to such a size where we are able to see that we are living in pride.

My wife recommended a message to me the other day called, "The spiritual forces of Evil, Part One", by Alistair Begg. He was talking about the world we cannot see, the world of spirits. I want you to think a moment. If we could see right now what is happening in the spiritual world right here in this church, or then in our town, what do you think we would see? Well, Begg was explaining how dark our present world situation is and he explained the demonic world. And he said: "You'll have to decide if you believe this or not. You'll have to determine if you will bow down under the authority of God's Word, and realize that the conflict in our world and the opposition to His people which is manifest in many parts of the world today is not simply political bumbling. It's traceable to the fact that within the governments of the world there are dark and sinister unseen forces that are at work. That the very people that are making the decisions are the very agents of these things. That sounds

so bizarre doesn't it." Let me add here that sinister forces are not only at work in world leaders. They are at work in many church leaders and in many of the Christians in those churches.

Then quoting another he said, "If once the curtain were pulled back and the spiritual world was opened to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything in its range, that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem by comparison, a mere game. It's not here, but it is up there, that is where the real conflict is waged. But our earthly struggle groans in its backlash. The most powerful forces in our world are unseen forces. And we actually live our life, largely, if not in some cases completely unaware of the spiritual battle that ensues in the spiritual realm." End quote.

Nowhere is this battle so plainly laid out for us as in the book of Job. This book gives us a look into the forces of the dark world, a world that wants to rear its ugly head among us. And it is amazing to see the amount of work God will go through to deliver one of His own precious gems who is slipping into the hands of the evil one, and the ground the evil one found to catch Job in was his godly life. Job was subtly slipping into pride. And it was the very worst kind of pride there is; pride of personal holiness or righteousness.

It is most interesting to me, that the word that most closely speaks of our idea of bad pride is first found in the book of Job and it occurs twice. Now we might say, "How would the Bible not mention this word sooner? It is possible that Job was the first book in the Bible that was written, or at least among the first. It is also interesting to me that it is written about one of the most godly, of men, and that it was in this man that this pride of holiness was found. It is the truly spiritual man that is in danger of this pride.

And I want us to see from this book what kind of a job it is for God to remove pride from godly Christians. Turn to Job 40. I've shared much of this with you in the past but we do well to look at it again and our young people need to hear it as well. In Job 40, God is done with revealing to Job that he has a cancerous tumor, and that it must be removed if he is not to be ruined entirely. Job had said, "Oh, if I could come before God, I would tell Him a thing or two." And then, finally, after 37 chapters, God, for the first time speaks to Job. He said, "Well Job, if you are so bright, I have a few questions for you." And then He asked question after question after question and Job had no answers. None.

Could it be that God has permitted into my life or your life some very hard circumstance for the purpose of rooting out something out of our lives we have never yet mastered? We don't even know it is there. Could God be seeking our attention in this hard circumstance?

Here is what happens after Job cannot answer God. We begin by reading 40:1-2:

1 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said:

2 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it."

God says, "Job, you have been arguing with Me. You wanted to talk, now talk." Then Job responds in 40:3-5 like this:

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

4 "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further."

Job was a very godly man and this he had not known about himself. In other words, Job says here, "I am a very wicked sinner and I have no answers." Job has been reduced to nothing. You see, God likes to create out of nothing. When we are still something, He cannot make anything of value out of us. So, we must be reduced to impotence, to nothing.

Now let us read verses 6-14.

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

7 "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me:

8 "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?

9 Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?

10 Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty.

11 Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him.

12 Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; Tread down the wicked in their place.

13 Hide them in the dust together, Bind their faces in hidden darkness.

14 Then I will also confess to you That your own right hand can save you.

As I see it, God is saying, "Job, I will give you the job of humbling man, and if you can do it, you can just say good bye to Me. If you can do that, you won't ever need Me again. Any man with the power to humble other people, can save himself. He does not need Me at all."

Let me quote from a message I did some years ago:

"Now let me summarize verses 15-24 for you. God is saying, 'Job, I want you to consider the largest dinosaur there is on land, behemoth. Catch him, and put a ring through his nose and tame him, and if you can do that when he is awake, then you can humble man. Then Job, find the largest dinosaur in water, leviathan, and cast a fishing line out, hook him and pull him in, and if you can do that, I will acknowledge that you can humble man. You see, Job, pride is so forcibly bound in every human being, that you, as a mere man, have not even the slimmest chance of rooting it out. And Job, it is growing in you, and if I do not remove it, you are finished.'" End quote.

Now I want us to see, what it took 41 chapters in this book to bring about. We'll read 42:1-6:

1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'

5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.

6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

Job's pride was of the very worst kind. Pride of righteousness or spiritual pride is the very worst kind, and of course, truly spiritual people stand in the gravest danger of this kind of pride. Is it therefore best not to become truly spiritual? Of course not. As one grows spiritually, one must learn to handle greater danger.

Our text said, "If My people, who are called by My name will humble themselves." 1 Peter 5 says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." We believe man has a free will, and he does. God cannot save us or humble us unless we make that choice.

God does not humble us. We are commanded by God to humble ourselves. Therefore, Scriptures says, 'If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves...' But since pride is so bound in the heart of man that we are incapable of ourselves to deal with pride, God has to bring us to the point where we see it and then we have to choose to humble ourselves. So, we ask, what does God use to bring us to the point where we humble ourselves? It is the grit in the rock tumbler. It is life's circumstances. So, God says in 1 Chronicles 7:13, "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people..." What does He use to bring us to where we see ourselves for who we really are? What does He use to bring us to where we pray? What does He use to bring us to where we seek His face? What does He use to bring us to where we turn from our wicked ways? Various hard circumstances in life. Various trials and testings. That is why He sent grasshoppers and drought to Israel. Through these things he sought to bring them to the point where they will humble themselves before Him.

And now I ask you, how is true humility revealed? It is revealed in how we deal with each other. Murray writes, "'The humble man looks upon the feeblest and unworthiest child of God, and honors him and prefers him in honor as the son of a king. The spirit of Him who washed the disciples' feet, makes it a joy for us to be

indeed the least, to be servants of one another. The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised and himself forgotten, because in God's presence he has learned to say with Paul, 'I am nothing.' He has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and sought not His own honor, as the spirit of his life.'"

As we go through these few messages, I have no idea where each of us is. I am just giving what I feel I should give at this time. But I included in the church bulletin the last part of Andrew Murray's book on humility and I'll just read the prayer to close. You can read the rest for yourselves. Here is the prayer:

"That of Your great goodness You would make known to me, and take from my heart every kind and form and degree of Pride, whether it be from evil spirits or my own corrupt nature; and that You would awaken in me the deepest depth and truth of that Humility, which can make me capable of Your light and Holy Spirit."

This is a quote from a book on prayer. I know we cannot do this in the way suggested on the rest of the page because we have to work and do our jobs. But we could easily pray this prayer morning and evening, and maybe even once during the day. It is no use praying this in hopes that simply praying will accomplish it. One has to be willing to see it if pride is there in the first place and one has to long to be freed from pride.