

Humility

By Jeff Noblit

Bible Text: James 4:6-10
Preached on: Sunday, May 4, 2014

Anchored in Truth Ministries
1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Let's go back to James and let's look at some practical stuff again from the book of James and James, again, is a local church pastor. He, as I said last time, gets down to brass tacks; he likes to be where the rubber meets the road and he didn't take any time about getting there. He just jumped right to the point and gives us some strong exhortations. I said this morning we're going to talk something about how the power of God is most commonly manifested in a Christian's life. Well, James brings it out here very, very clearly.

Thank you for praying for me. I have just sensed an unusual freedom to preach, especially in the morning services as of late. I woke up just after 3 this morning and could not go back to sleep and that's your fault. Some of you are praying diligently for your pastor and the pulpit ministry. I know you do that. I was just stirred. I just meditated on things. The first thing I did, isn't it amazing how your mind works: I woke up and I thought, "Why am I waking up and why can't I sleep? I'm not worried about anything. I'm not anxious about anything." So, I lay there until I thought of some things to worry about. Have you ever done that? I said, "This is gonna work," so I began singing hymns and meditating on my text and I thought that makes you a little physically weak. When you preach hard, it drains your energy but God knows when we're weak, we're strong. Amen? So, I'm going to ask you the next time you pray for your pastor and pray for the pulpit ministry say, "Lord, use him. Keep him humble. Keep him filled. But if you don't mind, Lord, let him sleep." That would be a nice thing.

James 4. If you're visiting Grace Life or wondering what we're about, I would encourage you to get this morning's message. That's sort of it in a nutshell. It talks about what we believe and what we look to to see God build his church and let us get in on it.

James 4, beginning in verse 6. James says to this local church,

"6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be

turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

I want to talk about humility. If there is one over-riding, clear attribute that will be seen when a man or woman or any Christian is walking in the power of the Spirit, it's what I call a gospel humility. You just have that capacity to forget yourself, die to yourself and walk in the Lord and for the Lord. I would say that's one of the things that makes you very attractive to other people and I mean, particularly other pastors. We have a lot of pastors come through here, a lot come to our conference and I hear that over and over. I'm not trying to falsely puff you up but I hear that constantly. They'll say something like, “Jeff, I enjoy your preaching. I appreciate the teacher. You've helped us in our church but when I met your people, I saw the reality of the truth of Christ and the gospel in their lives.” So, praise the Lord, you're normal. That's just normal. That's the way Christians ought to be. Humility.

I was studying some Saturday and I wanted to take a break and I thought I might find a basketball game on television so I turned on the television and the Kentucky Derby was on. Somebody else see some of that? On Saturday. ABC had a couple of folks as part of the host for the Kentucky Derby and one was a young lady who was a figure skater and the other was this thing. I think he was, she was, it was a figure skater. This guy has this flamboyant woman's hat on. It was a very distasteful and ugly hat but he wanted to make his point. He had sort of a blouse looking thing. Extremely effeminate. Just really flamboyantly out there in his transgendered homosexual whatever. I thought, you know, I'm not saying the Kentucky Derby is in any way a godly event in the sense that it's for Christians or to exalt Christ but it's a basically clean and moral event, it's horse racing, other than the betting and we don't do that part. But ABC puts on this out there, flamboyant homosexual. It's just kind of in-your-face and it just struck me as odd. I thought, “What are they doing? I mean, this is Kentucky. This is the South. This is one of the traditional events of really the world in some ways, particularly of the South and the state of Kentucky. That doesn't fit.” It's almost like they're trying to make a point and of course they are but whatever point they're trying to make, here's what they're saying: we're an unhumiliated people. We don't humble ourselves before an Almighty God. We don't yield and respect the Creator who made men men and women women.

Let me say something else about that. I'm going to always mention this crisis of exalting and celebrating sexual deviancy because when a culture begins to say that, “Well, whatever sexual passions you have, yours is equally as valid and welcome and to be celebrated as anyone else's.” Are we sure we want to go down that road? Do you know the other dominoes that are inevitably going to fall? Logically, God's out of the picture, the Scriptures and their authority are a non-issue to this culture but logically where's the next deviancy we're going to celebrate? Incest? Pedophilia? Bestiality? Why not? When you start saying, “Well, if he genuinely feels that way and he's born that way, that's who he is.” You know it's amazing: when you start thinking you're wiser than God, you dig yourself a deep hole; you start down a slippery slope that you can't get back up. America is plunging down that slope. But to make my point for this message: that's a statement of we are un-humiliated people. No fear of God. Used to, it wasn't too long ago when I was

teenager, a young man, that kind of stuff was hidden off in the dark corners somewhere. No humility.

It's every month or two we hear about another one of these brutal mass murder some school person, kid maybe, or some disgruntled former employee goes into a place of business and tries to kill a lot of people to make his mark and when he's doing that, he's feeling that, "Anything and everyone who has wronged me, I'm going to make them pay. They've taken from me, pleasure, something I felt I should have had and so this is my response." Now, some people are just clinically insane. Their minds are just off and we can't deal with those sociopathic kind of people in a logical way. They have to be incarcerated. But sometimes and probably more often than we'd like to admit, this is just young people often who got into a sociopathic kind of lifestyle because they're thinking logically for what our culture is saying. For example, I think these things are symptomatic of deeper problems: America has increasingly rejected God and his true purpose for life and for living and we fill the void with hedonism which means pleasure is the highest goal of life. Then there's this unceasing deluge of information and mass media encouraging that philosophy that the highest purpose of life is to take all your passions, joys and desires and you be fulfilled along with everyone else. I mean, you can't govern anything, you can't deny anything. If it rises up, express it, be what you are, be uninhibited and have your pleasures in this life. That's what life is, so they say.

So, if a person fully adopts this philosophy and as a side note, tragically we have a lot of people who still claim they're theistic in holding to hedonism. In other words, they re-define and dumb down who God is so that God is in agreement with their hedonism; they make God like themselves is what they do. Throw some Scripture around and use the name Jesus some too. So, be discerning out there. But if a person is fully adopting this philosophy, when is it going to be wrong for him to act out on things he feels like are taking his pleasures away from him if that's the end of life anyway? You know, when you look at human pleasure, I think it's fairly comprehensive to say that people get pleasure from three main areas and I'm talking about unregenerate men, fallen men: companionship and I'd lump them with companionship accomplishments, we want to achieve things so we look good in front of our companions or our peers; of course, sexual fulfillment; and material possessions. I believe all the lust for power, control and everything would fall under one of those categories: companionship, sexual fulfillment and material possessions. As a matter of fact, I don't know of a single one of these mass murdering criminals that has been arrested and interviewed has not in some way or in the research about what they did, felt that they were robbed of pleasure in one of these areas: they lost somebody, they lost companionship, some thing was supposed to be there's and that thing was taken away whether it was a job, income, popularity, whatever it was. Maybe they had a desire for someone else and they were not loved back.

Whatever it may be, they felt like somebody robbed them of the pleasure they are supposed to have in this life. And if pleasure is all life is, then ultimately all others including all of the people are expendable to this end. When you take God out of the equation, these kind of things aren't really illogical. If there's no God and there's no accountability and there are no moral absolutes and "I and my passions" are the end of

life, then don't get in my way, I may have to expend you to achieve them. That's what happens when you start kids off in grade school and you start teaching them they're the products of evolution and there is no God. We're in a tailspin in this country and in this culture in general. Only a return to the God of Scripture and the moral absolutes of God and that we have an accountability to God, can cure or bring some sanity back into our culture.

Now to our text: here James is writing to Christians who had backslidden and slipped into acting to a degree and thinking to a great degree as if they were hedonists, as if it's just about them and not about God. Now, let me give you that side note that I want you always to remember: there is nothing wrong with having the goal of your life pleasure because God is the greatest pleasure of all. The point is to have pleasures in God, not in the world which is defaming of God and dishonoring of God's glory and ultimately hurtful. We used to just teach, "Well, you don't have these pleasures in this world because that's going to run out, that's empty and that's going to hurt you." That's true but only half true. You don't want to have pleasures just only in the world because not only is that going to be empty and going to ultimately hurt you, it also primarily dishonors and brings disrespect to the God we love, know and serve. That's why we don't want the world to see us making the world our ultimate pleasure. It sends the wrong message about the God we know, love and serve as if he's not satisfying enough. Again, it's spiritual adultery. It's saying, "He didn't satisfy me so I have to go seek pleasures in another."

So, let's talk about humility from our text here for just a moment. First of all: I. Let's talk about humility concerning self. Humility concerning self or ourselves, our nature selves. In verse 6, he gives a foundational phrase that everything in this section builds upon. If you miss the first phrase of verse 6, you miss all the section. "But he gives a greater grace." Here's James's point: he says, "You're a child of God. You're born again of the Spirit of God. There has been a radical transformation within you. You're a new creation in Christ Jesus," the Apostle Paul would say. So you have a greater grace, there's been something done to you that is greater than what the people of the world know and understand. Now, all the people of the world have experienced grace, what we call common grace. God sends the rain on the just and the unjust, Amen? They're experiencing all kinds of grace. The fact that God lets them breathe the air is a grace. But we have a greater grace. We have the infinite, rich glories of what we call redemptive grace which has transformed us.

So, James is writings and says, "Wait a minute now, you guys are acting like the people who only know common grace and you're believers, you've experienced redemptive grace. You have something greater. You have a capacity within you to do things they cannot." Here we're talking about not justifying grace. There is a grace whereby you believe and you're justified before a holy God, that's not here. This is talking about sanctifying grace, the grace that enables us to progress in sanctification to please and glorify God that the world knows not of. He says, "You have a greater grace." So, we have this supernatural enablement. I think I was going to define what one teacher defined sanctifying grace as: he called it the desire and the power to do what's right. God saved us, his Spirit lives with us, he has put in us a power, an enablement whereby we have a

desire and a power or an enablement to do what's right that the world does not have. That's why as Grace Life Church we have loving and humble accountability in our fellowship because we're supposed to act like Christians. Is that okay? We expect each other to act like Christians and if a brother or sister for whatever reason falls into some grievous sin, then we will lovingly go to them in complete confidentiality at first, of course, and appeal to them, "Brother, don't live like this. Don't go down this trail." By the way, if you're new to us and you're wondering how does church discipline work, well, 99.9% of the time it ends right there, in confidentiality where one brother or one sister goes to another brother, another sister and lovingly points them to God and they say, "Thank you for showing that to me. Boy, I'm just weak there. I just want to do better. Just pray for me," and it's over. Amen? We love each other. Embrace that. That's Christianity. If you don't have that, you don't have Christianity because we have a greater grace and all of this stems on that core truth of humility.

Years and years and years ago, someone said humility was not thinking low of yourself, it's forgetting yourself. Have you learned and do you understand that humility is just as easily lived in and expressed by exalting yourself as it is putting yourself down? Don't be consumed with yourself either way, just be what you are, live where you are, live as God has enabled you to live, joy in God and purpose to live for his glory and not be too consumed about yourself. True humility is that striving after, dying to self and forgetting self, not just putting self down.

So, a few thoughts on humbling ourselves or reminding ourselves how we ought to be humble. He says here in our text, verse 6. "But He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." One thought on just a prerequisite on humility and that is: think about what the Bible says about who we are. "In and of myself there is nothing good," the Bible says. "There is no one who does good, no not one." We've received a corrupt and rebellious nature from our father when we were conceived and that's our core nature and being, a nature that "comes forth from the womb," the Bible says, "speaking lies." The apostle said, "There is no good thing that is in our flesh." The Scripture says, "We are dead in trespasses and sins." We've never done any good in the true sense of good in and of ourselves and out of our own abilities. I am naturally and rightfully in the court of true justice rightfully the object of God's wrath. The Scripture says, "We are by nature the children of wrath." My salvation is not of works effort or any so-called inheritance because I have none and any goodness that comes out of my life is due to God's working in my life and through my life. My natural heart is deceitful and wicked and continually seeks after evil apart from Christ's presence and working within me.

Now, I don't have an esteem problem because I have great confidence in Christ. Psychologists come in here and say, "The preacher should be careful here and not hurt people's self-esteem." I don't want to hurt your self-esteem, I want to obliterate your self-esteem. I want to just blast it to smithereens because there is nothing in you. What you need to be doing is joying in Christ in you, not in anything about yourself. And I've said it a million times and I'll say it a million and one times: God did not look down from

heaven and see you and think, "Oh, he's so attractive. Oh, she's so precious. Oh, they're so desirable I want to die for them." No, it's right the opposite. He looked at us and every fiber of his infinitely holy being said, "I should crush them in wrath." But there is an aspect of God called his love, his mercy and his grace that said, "I will choose to love that which is most radically unlovely to me." That gives me value, not that I had it but that God chose to love me though I was deeply and totally unloving to him.

So, these thoughts and these conclusions build that basis of humility in our lives. Living a lifestyle with this kind of conscious attitude will prompt God to increasingly give me more grace and that's the beauty of these things. The grace to say, as you humble yourselves and acknowledge the truth, God pours out more grace on you. God has infinite supplies of this desire and the power to do what's right and more of it is poured on you as you obey what you already have. That's why he says God gives a greater grace. It's not just a one time potion, it's a continual flow that comes out from God. So, God wants to give us that grace so that we'll have the strength not to succumb to the luring entanglements and enticements of the world. You see, the strength to overcome the world is not what you do but is what Christ does, of course, through you.

Now, the specific he says here in this humbling is first of all, verse 7, "Submit therefore to God." The word "submit" there is a military term. It simply means "to get in line." It simply means "get in your proper rank." Any of you brothers and sisters been in the military? You know what it means then. You have a rank, other guys have a rank and you honor those above you in rank. It's simply means you're to have an unconditional surrender to God. It's an imperative mood aorist tense command which means it's a command that calls for decisive action with lasting results. So James is saying, "Get back in line. Get back in rank. Find your spot again humbled under the authority of God and now let's live that out." That's what that means. Look, those of us who are not afraid of preaching the sovereignty of God have to remember something: the sovereignty of God includes you commanding yourself to get with it for God. The sovereignty of God does not mean that you and I can be lazy and not command ourselves and listen to God's command to get with it and do what's right. We have those points when people say a little simple thing to us and it's make an impact. Sort of a reference point: we were here one day and an older gentleman in the church talked about serving the Lord and he said, "You know, in the mornings when I have my quiet time, I just command myself, I'm going to serve God today. I'm going to deny my flesh. I'm going to purpose to turn against sin. I'm going to serve my Lord today." That helped me, just a simple thing. Sometimes we can get so full of the great theologically glories and wonders of God and that's good to meditate on those great wonders of God but sometimes we just need the simple kindergarten exhortation of, "Do right!" That's what James is saying here. "Get back in line." That's what he's saying, "Get back in line. Submit therefore to God."

The second part, the other side of this coin, if you will, is "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Again, it's that decisive resoluteness of heart and spirit to take a stand against. This is the aorist tense again. The aorist tense means finished action in past time with continuing results. James said, "You guys need to get back on track here, get back in your rank and say no to Satan." Say, Satan I am not. Be determined as an act of your will

and your heart and in your mind, have a determined mental state of saying, "I am not going to succumb to the Satanic philosophy of life, that is, life is about me and about pleasure in this world. I'm going to resist that stuff and live for the glory of God." Now, be balanced. That doesn't mean you can't enjoy a steak dinner or playing with your grandkids or whatever else that God has given us in common grace but it means in your heart you see God through and in everything and thank him for the pleasures he gives you even in common grace. Amen? See God in it and make God the end of your pleasure, not the things of this world. Say no to Satan's false philosophy.

One of the Puritan writers I was reading on this said that for the Christian, if you don't humble yourself, remember God has a mighty hand. Now, Christian, there's no Plan B for us. You either humble yourself or God will humble you. Now, if you can go on in your boisterous arrogance, if you can go on in your self-centered, lack of humility, it's my way or the highway kind of spirit and that goes on and on, then that's just good evidence that you're not his. God humbles his. I don't care if you're the most powerful businessman in this whole area, the most popular politician or whatever you may be. It just doesn't matter, God humbles his own.

So, humility about ourselves. Remember where we came from, what we are. Have a determined resoluteness of spirit, "I'm going to get in my rank. God is my God. God is my authority. His moral absolutes mean something to me." Where are the men of God in this age when the wickedness of America is just vomiting out and multiplying exponentially everywhere? Where are the men of God calling the country back to accountability under the authority of God? What's happened to that? Where is Jerry Falwell? Seriously? Where are the men who have some backbone about this stuff? It's just an unhumiliated culture and here we are such mealy-mouthed, weak, casper milquetoast, backbones like a jellyfish pulpits who basically kind of try to hold onto sound theology but let's not offend anyone very much. I'm sorry, this truth is very offensive. God says humble yourselves. Get back in rank. Be determined to resist the devil's ploys and philosophies that this world is the end of life and living for pleasure is the end of this life.

Humility concerning sin. He's going to get a little more specific here, if you will, in verses 8-10. In verse 8 he says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." So, when he mentions hands he's talking about the things we do, we actually can perform sin. He says, "Stop the things you're doing as far as the deeds in your life." Now, you do that by what he said in the first part of verse 8 "drawing near to God and he will draw near to you." You see, you draw near to God in repentance and faith. You say, "I'm going to stop doing that. I'm going to stop thinking that way." Again, all the way through, these are imperatives. There is a resoluteness, a determination should be in your spirit, "I am not doing that anymore. I am going to wage war against that sin in my life." Was it John Owen that said "If we're not killing sin, it's killing us all the time." You're either in the battle to kill sin or it's killing you and that's why James writes it this way.

Now, this is sort of the other side of the coin. We're talking about submitting to God and now he's talking about, "Now get some things out of your life. Let's get down to brass tacks." Also, of course, he mentions our hearts here. We're to turn our hands from deeds but we're to be troubled in our hearts about the very desire to do the deeds. I'll say it again: we're to turn our bodies, our lives from the sinful deeds but we're to be troubled in our hearts that we even have the desire to do the evil deeds. Now, he elaborates here by using the phrase "double-minded" and his point is: you belong to God; you've received the greater grace; you're supposed to be a called out one from the world but yet you're still hanging onto the world and living like you're still a part of the world. I'm not saying you can't enjoy things in the world, I mean, you're holding onto the philosophies of living only for pleasures in the world. That's being double-minded. Your heart is wrong.

Look at verse 9, "Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom." What is he talking about? He's saying, "You've been ha ha, happy, happy, joy, joy and you're chasing after base fallen worldly pleasures." He said, "You need to talk to your heart and say, Heart, why aren't you troubled that you enjoy things that so dishonor God?" He's saying, "The things that give you joy ought to be causing you to feel miserable." Look, "Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom." You need to have a repentance that you have these desires in your heart to enjoy things that dishonor God. It is a strange paradox, is it not? That living in these fallen bodies, though we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, we seemingly at the same time can enjoy the pleasures of sin and yet hate them and are grieved over them at the same time.

Now, what happened it appears to these folks James is writing to is they had gotten way out of balance. They're not in the war anymore; they're not fighting the fight anymore. They're just given over to the pleasures. Not the pleasures of God, not enjoying the pleasures of common grace but the base pleasures of enjoying the world the way lost people enjoy the world. And I'm sure there were many corrupt and just out-and-out sinful things they were involved in too. He said, "You ought to be troubled in your heart, mourn and weep." Matthew 5:4, this is why Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Luke 7:38, we have the repentant woman sitting at the feet of our Lord, washing his feet with tears and wiping them with her hair and anointing them with very, very costly perfume. What is she mourning over? She's mourning over, "I have such a troubled and wicked heart but I know he has forgiven me." She's mourning over it, though. And until you get to heaven and until you get a glorified body, you should always carry with you the ballast of a contrite and humbled heart. "God, I'm troubled that the desire is there. It's so black. It's so ugly. It's so vile."

If you come into my office and say, "Pastor, I need to counsel with you. I'm just troubled over the selfishness, the pride, the envy, the ego, the dirtiness of my heart. It troubles me." I'm going to say to you, "Thank God." You know what the person wants me to say, "Well, let's get that out." Well, we can work on it and we're going to work on it but it isn't going to be completely out until you get to heaven. But listen to me, we're not fatalists. It isn't que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be, God is sovereign. No, no, no, no, no. Again, an imperative here: you can tell your heart to learn to weep over what dishonors God.

Would you do that? Would you do what James is saying and have a resolute determination, “I am going to learn to be troubled over the times that I enjoy things that dishonor the character and the teachings and certainly the law of my God.”

Well, humility about sins means we have a resoluteness about the deeds of sin and a troubled heart about the desire to sin but lastly, James says here, #3, this is a humility also that leads to exaltation. It's an interesting term he gives us here in verse 10, “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.” If you will turn, Christian, is what he's saying, he's writing to Christians, “If you will turn and recognize you're one of those who has been the recipient of a greater grace, not the common grace all the people of the world know, you've been given a greater grace, a new heart and you'll have a resoluteness in your spirit to submit to God, get back in your rank and resist the devil. I'm not going to give in to the worldly devilish philosophy of living for the pleasures of this world alone but to find pleasures in my God. I'm going to actively repent of the deeds I've been doing and I'm going to actively seek to be troubled over finding those wicked desires in my heart.”

Then he says, verse 10, you are in effect humbling yourself in the presence of the Lord. That's what, in fact, you're doing. He gives us that phrase, “He will exalt you.” Interesting. Interesting. He will exalt you in two ways, I think: he'll exalt you in your heart because he will bring the powerful, sweet, clear witness of the Spirit to you that says, “You're forgiven. You're forgiven. Completely forgiven. You are as clean as if you never ever sinned before. Your righteousness is not the restored righteousness of the original Adam in the Garden of Eden, your righteousness is the righteousness of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.” I don't know about you but when I'm a sinner and I'm mourning, that lifts my spirit. That's what God does, he lifts your spirit. Do you realize that in Christianity the way up is down. To have our spirits soar, we mourn. Now, don't go out in the world and expect them to get this, don't turn on Joel tonight and think you're going to get this. It's not going to happen. He's a false teacher leading people straight to hell with a goofy grin on his face. He lifts our spirit. Yield yourself completely to Jesus and discover why he's called the Prince of Peace. My goodness. The writer of Hebrews uses a phrase several times writing to these legalistic Jewish people, at least that was their background, and he says “enter into his,” what's the word? “Rest.” Rest. What rest is that? Oh, with a deep, deep troubling of the wickedness, the rebel spirit, the sinful deeds, the heart desire to dishonor my Lord with all the deep troubling that gives me, I cast my eyes on Christ and rest. That's a lifting of our spirits, is it not?

Not only does he lift our spirit, he also lifts our status. I'm not guaranteeing this for every single person but my point is: if it's God's will for you to do something special, if it's God's will for you to have a certain position or a certain office of leadership or responsibility in the world, in the home, in the community or in the church, this is the way you get there: you get there by humility. I just want to say this because I think Grace Life, you get it and that is that if a lady or a gentleman comes into Grace Life Church and they start throwing their weight around, “I do this. I do that. I'm good at this. I expect to do this. I expect to do that.” I've seen this happen numerous times. I've seen you very sweetly, very kindly, very lovingly, ignore them. I've watched you do it because you

know they don't have the humility necessary. Look: if God wants you to do something, you may be called of God to do something, you may have the spiritual gifts to do something but now listen: God will always put you in a menial role for a season. For me it was eight years; I was eight years under another pastor before I was Senior Pastor. Do you know why? Because it's not about your calling. It's not about your gifts. It's about your character and he puts you in places beneath what you're able to do to build the humility and the character and then he can trust you with the office and the position. Amen? I can point out successful men in this church who have significant leadership roles. I know them and I've watched the humility season build the character and then God opened the door for bigger stuff and aren't you guys glad? Because if you got there too quickly, you'd have ruined everything and so would I. As a matter of fact, I was still so rough I don't know how God used me. I guess you know how, he just beats you in the head with a stick of firewood. He just knows how to humble us. He knows how to get our attention and he certainly had to do that in my life.

I think about Rahab the harlot. Rahab was nobody. She was nobody but she let the Hebrew spies hide out there so that the armies of Jericho would not discover them and know what they're up to and here she is a nobody, just serving the Lord who she barely knew but there was enough revelation given to her and now she's one of the heroes in the hall of faith in the book of Hebrews. Just a humble nobody and God exalted her. I think about David. David's brothers were fine, healthy, strong, handsome guys. David was more or less the runt of the family and while his brothers had more dignified responsibilities and roles in the family enterprise, David was given the lowly job of keeping the sheep. He took his role, did his job with great excellence. Don't you like to pull into the drive-through at McDonald's and see a kid there that takes their job seriously and works that with joy? You know what I'm talking about? I will drive away thinking, "I'd like to hire that kid somewhere one day." I just want to do it. It might be pouring you a coke and giving you a burger but they're going to do it in an excellent way with personality, with zeal and with an effort to make you feel good about it. That's the way David was. He just sang God's praises out there keeping the sheep by himself.

Then the prophet came to the household of Jesse one day and said, "Jesse, one of your boys is going to be king of Israel." Jesse lined up all the boys and marched them by the prophet. Fine, handsome, strapping sons of Jesse and the prophet kept saying, "Nope. Nope. Nope. Have you got any other boys?" "Well, just one little boy, David. He keeps the sheep." "Bring him in here." David walked in and the prophet in effect says, "This is the king of Israel." Humbled and God exalted him. Then he went through seasons of humbling. Saul, the king, who had the kingdom taken away whom David would replace, hated David. He saw David's godliness. He saw David gaining popularity because of his character and his righteousness and Saul wanted to kill David but David would not bring his hand against Saul. He said, "I'll not bring my hand against God's anointed." Saul had the office. God put him there and David said, "It's not my place to bring a hand against him." Now, he didn't deny his wickedness, he didn't run with Saul and help Saul do his wickedness but he would not bring hand against him. Humility. Then God at the right time put David on the throne and he's even the greatest, if you will, type of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

We could go on. Joseph, betrayed by his brothers in just base humility, thrown in an Egyptian dungeon, interprets a dream for the Pharaoh and becomes the Prime Minister of the mightiest nation in the world. His brothers come and bow down before him later, wanting grain, of course, not knowing who he was. God exalted him. Peter, sticking his foot in his mouth, doing all kinds of things that would make you think, "This guy is never going to do anything," but Jesus called him a rock. But Jesus crushed that rock first in humility. Then he became this mighty preacher on the day of Pentecost. The Apostle Paul struck down while he's riding his horse, blinded, just broken in humility and slowly over a season of time, God brings him up and makes him the great apostle to the Gentiles. That's true with every single person God uses. If we'll humble ourselves before God, if there's a place for us, we'll find it.

I'm just curious if you remember my testimony of the first job that I did here at Grace Life Church of the Shoals, First Baptist Church of Muscle Shoals then, 34 years ago. Thirty-four years ago, I'd been here about two weeks, the literal first job I did, carrying sheet rock. We were in the building over there, the old original building. There were no other buildings and the men were building Sunday School classrooms on either end. How many of you got in on some of that building? How many of you are still here? 8-10 maybe. Give everyone of these guys a \$5 bill when you leave today. We're talking, what was it, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday nights, three or so nights a week we came up here and worked. I was a college student just walked in the door, sat on the back, there might have been 120 people or so attending at that time and the pastor at that time, Bob, said we're having a work night tomorrow night, it was a Wednesday night, work night tomorrow night, if anyone wants to show up and work. I'd only visited a couple of weeks. I don't think I'd met hardly anybody so Jonathan Edwards, my college roommate and I, showed up Thursday night to work. Now, the pastor didn't know who we were. He didn't recognize that we'd visited the church. He thought we were contractors or worked for a contractor and he saw me and Jonathan Edwards walk in. We just wanted to get in on helping the church. We just thought God was blessing the place and we wanted to get in on it. He said, "Who do you all work for?" I said, "We work for the Lord." He said, "Good. You see those 12 foot sheet rock." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Carry them up the steps." Have you ever carried sheet rock up steps? That was my very first job that I ever did here and was glad to do it. Had not the faintest idea I would serve on the staff here and be the youth director here, the Associate Pastor here and then the Senior Pastor. Not the faintest idea. Glad to do the job. Glad to get in on it.

That's where we start, Amen? If we'll humble ourselves before God, he will exalt us if that's he will, in due time.

Let's stand together in prayer.

Father, we thank you that indeed we have been given a greater grace. We are not like the world. The world is experiencing grace beyond anything they could ever deserve just to be alive and breathing and have homes and automobiles and clothes and food on their table and so our we but, Lord, for us your children, we've been given infinitely more. A

redemptive grace has come upon us, a change has come on us and I pray for Jeff Noblit and for all of us that we will have a resoluteness to yield to you and submit to God and to find our rank, resist the false philosophies of the devil, to have a determination about, "I'm not going to do the things I've been doing," if I've slipped into things that are wrong, to have a determination that, "I'm going to be grieved in my spirit when I see these old ugly desires rise up in me." Lord, as we walk in that truth, we will be presenting ourselves to God and know that if and when it's right, he will lift our spirits and put us in the places in the roles we ought to have in your church for your glory. We thank you for it.

God, I love these people. I'm so thankful that I get to co-labor with them in your gospel and I pray that today is just the beginning of many, many years of effective ministry for your glory and, Lord, you would do wonderful things through this body that would baffle all of our minds and you would get all the praise and all the glory and all the exaltation for it. We pray all this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.