

### THE FOLLY OF PRIDE (Mk. 10:35-45)

<sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. <sup>36</sup> And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? <sup>37</sup> They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. <sup>38</sup> But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? <sup>39</sup> And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: <sup>40</sup> But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. <sup>41</sup> And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. <sup>42</sup> But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. <sup>43</sup> But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: <sup>44</sup> And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The question James and John were concerned about had been lingering since Mk. 9:33, And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? <sup>34</sup> But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And even though Jesus dealt with the issue, it obviously had not been resolved to their satisfaction. On that occasion in Capernaum, Mk. 9:35 he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant [*διδάκονος*] of all. ... His words had not penetrated! They had travelled by foot all the way from the north of the Sea of Galilee, down the eastern side, and crossing over the Jordan River at the southern end ... and it is still on their minds! ... *What an obstinate lot!*

By now, Mk. 10:32 they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, - they are travelling towards their destination ... and James and John decided to broach the subject again. They don't seem to have told the other disciples they were going to ... probably because they wanted to get the best 'deal' for themselves, - being brothers, - without having to share too much of the benefits of any glory they might accrue, should their desire be received positively by Jesus, <sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. <sup>36</sup> And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? <sup>37</sup> They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

Immediately we see a conflict of priorities. Jesus had only recently said to them, <sup>31</sup> many that are first shall be last; and the last first ... and yet, they seemed not to have been listening or understanding. Maybe it wasn't a matter of them not being able to understand ... maybe it was more of they didn't want to

listen! Look Jesus, we were nothing before You called us, but now we have developed an agenda since we have been following You, and here is what it is ... when You set up Your Kingdom we want to sit on the two thrones immediately on either side of You!

Would you have dared make such a request?! Would you not have been mortified to let anybody know you would think like that?! Had these two men no common savvy?! After all, they would not have been there but for Jesus calling them three years earlier from their fishing nets. Who did they think they were to even consider the *thought* behind asking such a question!

Pride is something we all contend with. Whether we admit it or not, it is an issue that could hinder our witness and work for the Lord. There are different types of pride, of course. There is the type of pride that says, “we’re not proud” ... but when you press the issue just a little bit, you see the pride starting to ooze out. There is also the type of pride Pharisees had ... walking down the street in their humble attire. They are all dressed up and ‘kitted out’ to paint a picture of humility, but when they open their mouths you hear them saying, **Lk. 18:11** *I thank thee, that I am not as other men are* ... I’m a whole lot better! ... It is hard to be humble when you’re perfect in every way!

Solomon wrote in Prov. 16:5, *Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination [disgusting, filthy, unclean] to the Lord* ... That is how much the Lord hates pride! ... **Prov. 21:4** *a proud heart ... is sin.* ... **James 4:6** *God resisteth the proud,* whereas on the other hand, *[He] giveth grace unto the humble.* And if you want to get anywhere with the Lord, here is how to do it, **Ps. 10:17** *LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*

James and John ... If the Lord had not called you to follow Him, you would still be casting your nets! ... What would you and I be if God had not saved us? Where would we be? ... I know I would not be here. If God had not saved me and called me, I would be away doing something else. ... So, what have I to boast in then? What have I achieved that is so important for me to ‘lord it’ over anyone ... but what has been done in my life is down to only one Person, and that is God Who sent His Son to die on the cross of Calvary to save me ... and in Him, He has made out of me a new creation!

But that is not to mean pride has stopped lurking around ... because it hasn't ... and it hadn't been kept outside of the disciples either. Pride was there, and it was showing itself. These disciples loved Jesus. They loved to hear Him preach and teach the truth ... and they believed in Him, and in His Kingdom. But, they 'let themselves down' when they allowed their materialistic views of the Kingdom to interfere with how they followed Jesus. ... I would love to be sitting up there with Jesus, so that all my family and friends would see how well I have done for myself ... Jesus, keep those two seats free for my brother and me!

It was *appealing* ... No, it wasn't, for it was *appalling* they would even think like that, especially after Jesus had recently told them, **Mk. 10:33** *[He] shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: 34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him.* ... James and John were there and heard Him say it ... And they had also been on the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah **Lk. 9:31** ... *spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.* ... And instead of them developing humility, their pride got in the way.

And it wasn't just James and John who were thinking like this, for Peter also said, - on behalf of them all, **Mk. 10:28** *Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.* ... By implication, Lord, You owe us! We have done the self-denial 'bit', and now we want some of the glory, some spiritual remuneration! ... What about the glory and Jesus? He had told them what the religious leaders were going to do to Him ... He had told them they were going to kill Him ... Where is the glory in that?! Paul reminded his readers how the Saviour had **Phil. 2:7** *made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.* ... He humbled Himself, and He set aside His glory ... He became the 'Man of sorrows', acquainted with grief, and despised (Is. 53:3) ... There is no glory in that, - it is the complete opposite! ... But the message does not seem to have penetrated these disciples. Okay, James and John articulated it, but it was what the rest of them were thinking as well!

King David had made some mistakes in his life, - he had done many good things, and he was a great friend of the Lord ... but he had made many mistakes too. Nevertheless, one of the greatest testimonies to God's grace working in his life is found in the words almost at the end of I Chron, **29:10** *Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said,*

Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. **11** Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. **12** Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. **13** Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. **14** But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. ... Here is a king, - the greatest king ever, - and yet he approaches the King of kings with the words on his lips coming from a heart of humility, **14** But who am I ...

When I think of how He came so far from glory  
 Came and dwelt among the lowly such as I  
 To suffer pain and such disgrace,  
 On Mount Calvary He took my place,  
 Then I ask myself this question, "Who am I?"

Who am I that the King would bleed and die for?

James and John, Jesus is going to the cross to die for you. He will be nailed, - crucified, - at Calvary for you. He will take upon Himself your disgrace and your sin ... Before He called you, you didn't know Him and He never entered your mind ... so how can you say He owes you? He owes you nothing, and yet He called you because He loves you. He has a purpose in your salvation, and it is to His glory. Yes, it is of great advantage to you to be saved, but underlying your salvation is His glory. ... If you and I were not to receive any more in this life, He has already given us far greater than we deserve,

When I survey the wondrous cross  
 On which the Prince of glory died,  
 My richest gain I count but loss,  
 And pour contempt on all my pride.

Why do you think James and John came forward with this request? Well, they were the kind of people who were quite brash, - they wouldn't have hesitated to tell you what they thought of you! They spoke their mind ... and they probably thought, - as some people think, - that is an endearing quality. I'm not so sure it always is, though, for with some people sometimes the mouth drives off before the mind is in the right gear! ... And I think James and John would have been better to have thought about what they were going to say before they said it ... for when you say it, you cannot take it back.

However, what they said to Jesus obviously showed they were being motivated by self-ambition ... or perhaps it would be better described as *selfish* ambition. But there is no place for that among God's people because it goes against how our ambitions ought to be in the Lord. ... We are all the same in Him, - *He* is the One Who deserves the glory ... *we certainly don't!*

And this request was exacerbated, - Matthew tells us, - by *the mother* of James and John, **Mt. 20:20** Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping [*προσκυνέω*] him, and desiring a certain thing of him. **21** And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. ... Should they not have been mortified, - their 'mummy' brought them ... in front of everybody! *What kind of men were they?!*

Yes, but when you study who was at the cross, Matthew, Mark, and John tell us three women were there, - Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and a third woman. Matthew tells us the third woman was the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Mt. 27:56). Mark called her Salome, so that was her name (Mk. 15:40). John called her the sister of Jesus' mother (Jn. 19:25), which means she was Jesus' aunt. In other words, whether she meant it or not, she was asking Jesus to keep all the high seats of the Kingdom 'in the family'.

*Is that not pride?!* ... and remember, the Lord hates pride. It has no place in His work. He is against pride, and His people ought to be against it too. In fact, their pride made fools out of them for they asked something you would have been likely to hear a young child arguing about ... "Let me sit there ... I want to sit there". That is not maturity ... that is immaturity! Remember how Paul wrote to the Corinthians, - who were doing all kinds of things Christians shouldn't be doing, - and he told them, **I Cor. 3:1** And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. **2** I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

Imagine if the Pharisees were watching just now ... What a 'meal' they would have made out of this 'show'? Jesus, are these the kind of men You have for your disciples ... If that is how they turn out, I'm glad I don't follow You! ... It was a bad advertisement for Christianity, wasn't it! Their pride produced such an ugly scene. On one hand, Jesus was preaching to the crowds about

humility, and on the other hand, His disciples were asking for the opposite! ... It was really very ugly ... and sad.

It was also brutal and unloving because James and John wanted to be better than the rest of their brothers in the Lord. ... And then you could imagine if *they* got their way, all the other disciples would have been clambering, - like spoiled children, - looking to get their way too! It could have 'steam-rolled' into an absolute nonsense, and detracted all the attention away from Christ. It could have undone all the good He had achieved among those vast numbers of pilgrims who were following Him on His way up to Jerusalem.

And something else this would have produced ... if James and John would have gotten their way ... They would have been 'nearly' as good as Jesus, as far as they would be concerned ... and they would have been happy to take some of the glory. We have to commend them for one thing though, - they believed in Jesus as the Messiah and they believed His Kingdom was coming and He would reign in glory. ... But they spoiled it with their own agenda ... by wanting to 'push their way to the front and get a good seat'. ... They thought they were entitled, **38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? ...** Do you know what you are asking for? Of course, they didn't, - they hadn't thought that far ahead, so Jesus told them.

Drinking the cup and being baptised in this context was another way of referring to how they would suffer for Jesus ... Are you able, - He asked them, - to be elevated in the Kingdom if it means you have to face hard and difficult times? Oh yes, they said, **39 And they said unto him, We can.** They kindof passed it off in a somewhat arrogant dismissive 'we can', but Jesus went on to explain, **And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.**

They did not realise it, but that was Jesus prophesying how they would die ... because James was to become the first martyr (Acts 12:2), and John would be the last martyr. But even at that, said Jesus, **40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. ...** And Matthew explains in more detail, **Mt. 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. ...** This is a beautiful example of how Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant, and how He

submissively bore His humility in coming into this world. He elevated His Father, and He humbled Himself ... **Phil. 2:8** being found in fashion as a man.

Who will be on the right hand or the left? Jesus had previously told them, that when He returns to earth, **Mt. 19:28** ... ye also [*the disciples*] shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ... Surely that should have been good enough for them! ... Does it matter? They will be there, seated with the Saviour ... is that not good enough?! ... I don't know who is going to sit where, and it does not matter ... What matters is that I will be there, and I will be there because of God's grace demonstrated towards me in that Jesus died for me on Calvary. The fact that I will be there at all is far more that I deserve.

And then the other ten disciples 'rounded' on James and John (v.41) ... Is that not a wee bit hypocritical, bearing in mind this was the same subject they had *all* been discussing previously ... As 'the man' says, we're nothing if we are not inconsistent! ... They were annoyed with James and John because they were not included in James and John's calculations, - they had been left out.

What a 'crew'! What would you have done with them? ... I think if it was you and me, we would have started all over again with a different group of men ... and maybe even include some women ☺

It is sometimes hard to take such people seriously, but Jesus did for He loved them, and He had a purpose for each one of them. They had a hard time coming to grips with humility, but Jesus did not give up. Aren't we grateful to Him that He never gives up on us? ... He continued, . **42** But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them ... In other words, that is the way the world acts and thinks, - they 'climb over the top' of each other to get to where they think is the best place, no matter who it affects or hurts ... **43** But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister [*δούκονος*]: **44** And whosoever of you will be the chiefest [*πρώτος, first*], shall be servant [*δοῦλος*] of all. ... If you want to push ahead of everyone else, for your own advantage, you will 'end up at the back of the queue'.

You know, that is not decrying Godly ambition, for Godly ambition renders the faithful child of God as one who presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). That is different altogether for we

are not doing it for *us*, but we are doing it for *Him* ... as Paul wrote, **21** For to me to live is Christ, and he continued, **27** Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. He wrote similarly to Timothy, **II Tim. 4:7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

And Who is the model for all this? ... The answer is in Mk. 10:45, **45** For even the Son of man came not to be ministered [*διακονέω*] unto, but to minister [*διακονέω*], and to give his life a ransom for many. ... He is not like other king for when He entered this world He came as a servant, **Is. 52:13** Behold, my servant shall deal prudently [*he will prosper*], he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. ... Someday soon, that Servant-King, - who, at His first coming, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, - ... the next time He comes He will enter this world as Sovereign, **Phil. 2 9** Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: **10** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; **11** And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To Whom was the ransom paid? It was paid to God for He was the Judge Who had to be satisfied. He was the Executioner of His own Son at Calvary, and His Son freely **Mk. 10:45** [*gave*] his life a ransom for many. ... You see how They both worked together in the Divine plan ... And every precious drop of the Saviour's blood was accounted for ... and none went to waste,

Oh! precious is the flow  
That makes me white as snow;  
No other fount I know,  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The folly of pride ... The lesson Jesus was teaching His disciples was simply this ... the path to greatness is not the world's way, but God's way. ... As He had said to His disciples during the Sermon on the Mount, **Mt. 6:33** seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

As we shall see, the next person He was to meet was one of the lowliest in society, - the blind man in Jericho ... But it is the reason Jesus came ... to save sinners from their sin. Amen.