

Laws that Govern the Universe



Pride vs Humility (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week. The theme for my talks this week will be, "Pride vs. Humility."

Behind this title there lies a law that operates throughout the universe, a law that affects every one of us, a law that operates in every one of our lives. You see, there are various kinds of laws that operate throughout the universe. There are physical laws, but there are also spiritual laws.

Now many of us are acquainted in some degree with the physical laws that govern our lives and govern the physical universe. For instance, the law of gravity. No normal person today would step out of a fourth floor window into nothing and expect not to fall. We know the law that dictates the results of such an action and we do not expect to break such a law and get away with impunity. As a matter of fact, we really don't break God's laws whether they're physical or whether they're spiritual. If we go against them, they break us. This is true of the law of gravity. The man who steps out of the fourth floor window into nothing doesn't break the law of gravity, the law of gravity breaks him.

And the same is true, but many people do not realize it, also in the spiritual realm. There are spiritual laws that govern what happens to us; what happens in our individual lives and what happens in the universe at large. It's one of these universal spiritual laws that I want to talk about in this week's talks.

The law is stated for the first time in the New Testament by Jesus Himself. In Matthew 23:12, Jesus says:

> "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (NIV)

This same law is repeated twice more in the New Testament. Each time it comes to us from the lips of Jesus Himself. So we see that this is a law to which Jesus attached particular importance. He laid special emphasis upon it.

He continually reminded His hearers there's a law at work in your lives, a law that governs the universe. And this law

relates humility and pride, and it says this: "Whoever exalts himself [whoever exhibits pride] will be humbled; whoever humbles himself [whoever exhibits humility] will be exalted." This is universal. It applies anywhere, to any person, any time, any situation. I've summed it up once or twice in the phrase, "The way up is down; the way down is up." If you want to go up, start by going down, but if you start by going up, you'll end by going down. That's a universal law. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

We note there that it's our responsibility to humble ourselves. Jesus always says, "He that humbles himself." He places the responsibility on the person concerned. Humility is not a nice religious emotion. As a matter of fact, humility really doesn't operate primarily in the area of the emotions. Sometimes we try to feel humble and we almost pinch ourselves to see if we're really feeling humble enough. That's a mistake. Humility is not in the area of the emotions. Humility is in the area of the will and it's expressed in action. We can humble ourselves by decision of our wills. No one else can do the same that we must do for ourselves. This is stated more than once in the New Testament. For instance, in James 4:10:

> "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." (NIV)

You notice again, the same law is at work: the way up is down. Start by going down, you'll end by going up. "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." Notice there, humble yourselves. Don't ask somebody else to do it.

And again, in 1 Peter 5:5 and 6:

> "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (NIV)

Again, the same emphasis, "humble yourselves"—you have to do it. And again the same guarantee that if you do humble yourself, God will lift you up. Peter uses there a metaphor from putting clothes on. He says, "Clothe yourselves with humility." That's a vivid metaphor because it expresses the fact that normally a person clothes himself. He does not expect somebody else to do it for him, so we are required to clothe ourselves with humility.

In Phillips' translation, he brings out a very important point. He says, "Wear the 'overall' of humility in serving one another," because that word that's translated "clothe yourselves" refers to a particular garment, a particular type of apron which in the time of the New Testament was a distinctive garment worn only by slaves. So, what Peter says is put on the garment that indicates you're a slave. Put on the overall that indicates you're there to serve, and that is clothing yourself with humility. So you see that always, it's a decision of our will that's expressed in the way that we behave.

Now, God can create circumstances in order to help us to humble ourselves, but only we can make the right response.

Notice what is said here in Deuteronomy 8:2 and 3, about the way that God dealt with Israel in the wilderness after He had brought them out of Egypt.

> "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." (NIV)

So, because God needed to deal with pride in Israel after they'd been redeemed out of Egypt, He created a special situation. He put them in the wilderness and He made them dependent upon Him in the most clear and obvious way—for their water that they drank, for their food that they ate. He showed them their total dependence upon Him. In this sense, He humbled them. He created a situation in which the reasonable response would have been for them to humble themselves, to acknowledge their total dependence upon God. But, an interesting historical fact is this, that the majority of the Israelites never really learned that lesson. So though God humbled them, they did not humble themselves and that's something that we all need to lay hold of. God can create the situation and the circumstances, God can help us, but only we can really humble ourselves. It rests with a decision of our wills.

Humility, then, is a decision of the will. This decision, having been made, must be expressed in the appropriate action. Jesus gives a vivid example in Luke 14:7–11, where he speaks about how people conducted themselves when they'd been invited to a wedding feast and he gave each person who received an invitation two alternatives, two different ways they could act. This is what He says:

> "When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (NIV)

You see, Jesus returns to that law that we've already looked at, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted," and He illustrates it with the example of the guests at the wedding feast.

What He is saying in effect is, when you are invited to a wedding feast, there are places of honor and there are places of less honor. When you enter that feast, don't seek out the most honorable place, seek out a humble place and sit there. You see, humility is expressed in the appropriate action. The appropriate action is take a low place. Don't promote yourself, wait to be promoted. This principle applies in your life and in mine. It applies today. It can be the key to your promotion. How do you get promoted? By humbling yourself. What is the way up? The way down. For instance, there are a number of different situations. You may work in an office. You can act as if you were the manager, the boss, or you can take a very humble position. You can be lowly. If you're lowly, you'll be exalted. It may be in your relationship in your family. Don't be arrogant. Don't be proud. Don't be self-seeking. Be willing to serve. Put on that overall of humility—the garment of the slave. God will see to it that you're exalted. There are countless other situations in which this principle applies.

Let me close by quoting a little poem I love from John Bunyan:

> "He that is down need fear no fall,
> He that is low no pride;
> He that is humble ever shall
> Have God to be his guide."

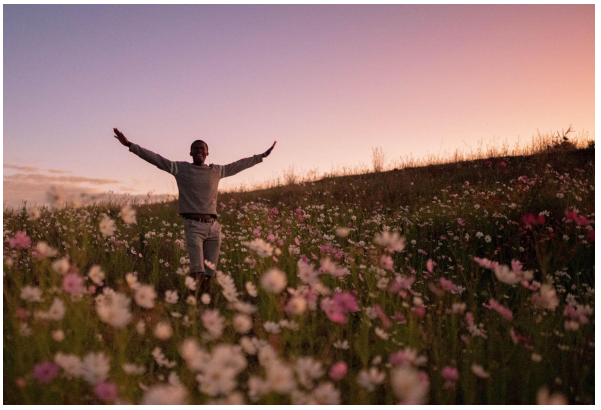
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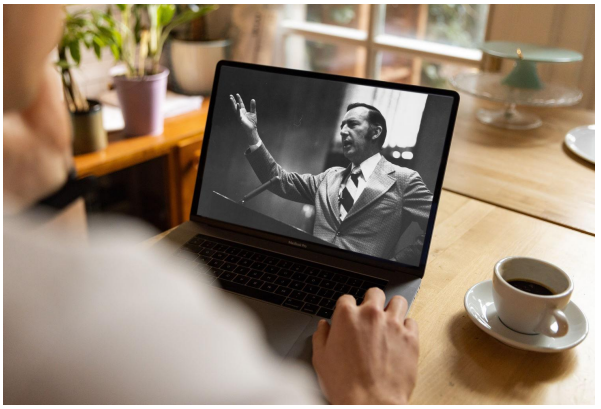
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