

The Fall of Pride, The Blessing of Humility - Acts 12

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[0 : 00] Moses, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel. Brothers of the fraternity of the dirt.

What I mean by that is that in a pivotal moment in each one of these men's calling, God shows Himself in all of His glory.

And each one of these men falls prostrate on the ground. And we've learned in the past few weeks that there's a man who joins this fraternity, whose name was Saul.

As Pastor Jay shared, God shines His glory on this man, gives him a glimpse of who He is, and Paul falls. And it is this morning that we're going to be looking at Acts chapter 12, and we're going to be learning what is the reason that God drives these men to the dirt on their faces.

He's preparing them for ministry. He's preparing them for a life of service. And then we're going to see in Acts chapter 12 this, that the means to a God-glorifying life is the reverence of a humble heart.

[1 : 29] The means to a God-glorifying life is the reverence of a humble heart. This passage is going to show us some things, and in this narrative we see stark contrast from every part.

We see the church, and we see an oppressor. We see a man in prison. We see a man taking a seat on an exalted throne.

We see an exaltation. We see a bringing low. And this chapter Acts 12 is all about this contrast. And it's the same contrast that all of Scripture has spoken about to this point in the contrast that Scripture clearly lays out for us.

It's pride and humility. So we're going to look at this contrast. We're going to see it in context of all of Scripture, but in Acts chapter 12 we're provided by Luke with a narrative that illustrates well the wiles of pride and the blessings of humility.

So let's pray. God, I pray that as we look at this text, we see this story play out that you would prove to us, show us, reveal to us that, first of all, you're calling us to live for your glory.

[3 : 01] And then second of all, God, that you are working and asking in our hearts that we might be humble before you, that we might give you the reverence of our hearts.

And in so doing, using our lives as a tool and a sacrificial offering of glory to you.

Thank you for your example of Peter in the church in this text, and thank you for the warnings that we see of pride. And I pray now, Lord, that you would convince us that our lives are meant to be lived, that we might enjoy you and glorify you.

Teach us how to do that and what that means. In your name we pray. Amen. Acts chapter 12, verse 1.

About that time, Herod the King laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James, the brother of John with the sword.

[4 : 05] And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now this was during the days of unleavened bread, and when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. So here's our setting of our narrative this morning.

There's multiple characters, major characters of Scripture that come out, and we see this man named Herod, and we see two other men, James and Peter.

Opposite sides of the cosmic battle that's reigning and ruling in the world, but specifically in the known world, the church of Christ and the persecutors of Christ.

And what we know about Herod here is there's a lot of Herods in Scripture as we read, and we see the narratives play out in Jesus' day, and in the book of Acts, we see Herod, Herod, Herod.

[5 : 20] And I want to lay out something for us that will help us understand this man. Now this man is Herod Agrippa. Herod Agrippa was the nephew of his uncle, Herod Antipas.

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. And what's really important for us to understand is that the lineage of this man is one of pride.

It's one of selfishness, haughtiness, abuse of power, privilege, role, status.

So let's work our way down the list. We'll start with grandpa, Herod the Great. His lineage that we know from Scripture, he committed infigenocide in the greater Bethlehem area in order to find, locate, and murder Jesus, the Christ child.

He was so nervous at the end of his life, at the end of his reign, that there's a prophesied king coming. That instead of addressing his concerns and his anxieties and his worries, he was so insecure that his solution was a bloodthirsty one to let's just kill all of the male children, all the male babies.

[6 : 55] So that's Herod the Great, that's his lineage. Then we have his son, Herod Antipas, and here's Herod Antipas, this is his lineage. There's a man named John the Baptist who was preaching and preparing the way for Christ, and we know the story.

Herod takes Herodias, an incestual relationship, as his wife, John, comes and preaches against this man, rebukes him in the power of the Spirit, and Herod Antipas gives in to a call for beheading.

The story is a lot longer, but we'll just say this for now. He gives in and he beheads John the Baptist. And then later on in the Gospels, the same Herod is ruling Herod Antipas.

In Luke 23:11, as Jesus is sent from Pilate to Herod, Jesus stands before Herod, we know the story, and Herod asks some questions, and Jesus is very quiet.

And as Herod sends him back to Pilate, here's what he says, the text says it says that they mocked the Lord Jesus. So Herod Antipas, here's his legacy, behead John the Baptist, try and mock the Messiah.

[8 : 12] Now the nephew of Antipas, the grandson of Herod the Great, is Herod Agrippa, who's in our story today. And here's what we know of Herod Agrippa. He's a persecutor of Christians in the first century.

And as we see in the text here in verse 2, he kills the apostle James and intends to do the same to Peter. Now although we're not going to focus heavily on the character of James, I do want to take a second for us to understand the context of this story and where we find ourselves.

If you will, let's imagine that I'm going to pick two Christian leaders of the day and age now that we all may know and respect and look up to, at least I do, let's pick Timothy Keller and let's say John Piper.

And Timothy Keller and John Piper, they're leading, they're leading ministry here and let's imagine that, let's pick Piper is taken by a ruler and beheaded for all the Christians to see.

So he's dead and then Keller is arrested and the intention is that he will be killed the next day. And all the churches watching, their churches specifically are watching.

[9 : 26] Oh my goodness, our leaders have just been taken, our leaders are being killed and the next one's about to go. Except for that context isn't even enough.

Because at this point in church history, there's only so many Christian leaders, so many apostles. And when verse two says that he killed James, the brother of John with the sword, we need to remember Jesus inner circle, if you will, Peter, James and John.

That when James the apostle is beheaded, we must remember this is a man who is incredibly good friends with Peter.

And when Peter hears this news, the sorrow that must overcome him. And then Peter is arrested, he sees and says he's put in prison and if this Passover, this feast was not about to happen, Herod would have killed him.

But instead here's what the context is, it says that four squads of soldiers were handed over to guard Peter. Now what this means is that Herod, a grippa, clearly has anxiety and paranoia about Peter, about taking an apostle of Christ and putting him in jail.

[10 : 56] And why is this the case? Because we already saw in Acts five, the apostles notoriety and fame for being broken out of jail at night was obviously on his mind.

He knows, he's heard, he's seen, these men find their way out of jail. So I'm going to put four guards, four squads of four soldiers, that's what this means, four squads of four soldiers, 16 soldiers in our guard, guarding Peter in jail.

And there were four watches in the night, which means four squads, four watches, each watch was about two to three hours. And of the four soldiers, how would a breakdown is this?

Two soldiers would be in the jail, chained to the prisoner himself. And then the other two would stand outside the jail with the door locked, guarded and armed.

And those four, after a couple hours, would switch out. And a new four would come to ensure that there's no way that guards could fall asleep or lose their focus.

[12:03] This is the highest of security possible. And I love this. Because Peter has no control.

He is locked, he's seized. There's nothing he can do. But we see this. Verse five, so Peter was kept in prison after just hearing of the beheading of his dear beloved friend James.

He's in prison, he hears about the beheading, and he knows, my death is surely coming. Let's read verse six. Now, when Herod was about to bring him out on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers.

Now, I don't know about you. The fact that Peter is in jail has just heard of the beheading of James and knows the intentions of Herod, sees the security around him.

I would not be sleeping. I would be at the very best praying earnestly, shaking, and the very worst in the fetal position, anxious, scared, sweating, but Peter is sleeping soundly.

[13:24] Down with two chains and sentries for the door regarding the prison. Verse seven, and behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him in a light shone in his cell. And he struck Peter on the side, woke him saying, get up quickly, and the chains fell off of his hands.

And the angel said to him, dress yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so, and he said to him, wrap your cloak around you and follow me. And he went out and followed him.

He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city.

Now, this iron gate, these things don't open on their own. Heavy, wrought iron, and here's what it says. And it opened for them of its own accord.

And when they went out and went along the street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, now listen to the response, he's saying this to himself, to reassure himself, speaking in his heart and in his mind.

[14:28] And obviously, Luke connected with Peter at some point and got his firsthand account of what happened. But here's what Peter, this is what I said to myself as I walk out of the prison and I'm like, what in the world? Here's what he says to himself.

I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting. Verse 12, when he realized this, he went into the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl came, Rhoda, came to answer, recognizing Peter's voice.

In her joy, she did not open the gate, but ran and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. And they said to her, you are out of your mind.

But she kept insisting that it was so. And they kept saying, it is his angel. But Peter continued knocking.

[15:33] This is meant to be a little bit humorous. And when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But in motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of prison.

And he said, tell these things to James and to the brothers. Then he departed and went to another place. Now, James here is not James the apostle, but James the brother of Christ.

We'll look at his letter in a minute. Now, when the day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter, which is Luke's narrative way of saying no little disturbance means there was a massive disturbance.

Can you imagine? There were 16 of us. All we had to do for two hours was watch this dude, and he's gone. So I'm sure there's accusations, there's yelling, there's arguing happening.

In verse 19, and after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries in order that they should be put to death.

[16 : 44] The bloodthirsty legacy of the Herod's lives on. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there. Now, let's break down what we just read a little bit.

First, there is a mystery involved in the way God works, obviously. And one of the mysteries we see in this text is there's two faithful apostles of Christ, James and Peter.

Both are serving the church. Both are preaching Christ. Both are fulfilling the great commission. But God and His sovereignty with His good purposes in mind, not ours, He says to James, Welcome home, you will die for me.

And He says to Peter, Get up, get out, I'm not done with you. In the book of Hebrews chapter 11, there's a long list of saints that live by faith.

And in this chapter, it says in verse 33 that through faith, referring to all of them, if you will, through faith, and there's a long list of things that they have done, that all these men and women of the faith have done, have endured.

[18 : 12] And in this list, verse 34, it says this, that through faith, by walking in faith in God, some escaped the edge of the sword.

But also through faith, in the same passage, verse 37, it says, some were killed by the sword. And I want us to just take a second.

Let us recognize that to choose a life of faith is to choose a life that is wholly surrendered over to God, in His sovereignty, and His perfect will.

That to live through faith means that I will choose Christ. And I will choose His commission. I will choose His joys and His pleasures and His glories all of my life.

And I will leave what happens to my external body, my self to God.

[19 : 15] And let us not busy ourselves with judging God based on what we perceive to be fair. He deals with each of us as He wishes and for His glory and for our good.

Resist the temptation to see the affliction of your current situation and compare, contrast, complain when we see the providence of someone else's situation.

Press on in faith, regardless of what God is doing in your life. And this reminds me of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine right now.

I was going to take a time to pray real quick, but my brother Jerry has already done that. I just want to affirm his prayer. But I read an article this last week about a pastor, Vasily Osrei, who has decided to lead his church well and in faith in this time.

Here's what he says. We as a church have decided to stay. And they're right on the outskirts of the warfare right now in Kiev.

[20 : 22] Both as a family and as a church, when this is over, the sense of Kiev will remember how Christians have responded in their time of need.

And this pastor has taken his church and they have prepared by learning basic medical practices, how to bandage, how to care for wounds. They've prepared food, they've prepared water, they've opened their church, they've moved pews out of the sanctuaries that they could have room, and they're there.

Amazing. Faith, regardless of the circumstance. Faith may lead some of us to brutal death and may lead others to divine deliverance, as we see in the text, but in either regard, the focus must transcend external circumstance by spotlighting Jesus, which is why in the next breath the author of Hebrews says this beautiful section, therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Set your eyes on Jesus, look to him, regardless of the circumstances of your life. Now, in this text we see the fall of pride and the blessing of humility, and there's a book written called Humility by a man named Andrew Murray, and as I've read this book recently and studied it and talked about it with friends in the church, there's a great ethic that he's brought from this book, and I want to share it with you as we talk about humility this morning.

He says this, that humility is the seedbed out of which all other Christian virtues grow. Peace, faith, love, joy, kindness, on and on.

[22 : 20] All Christian virtues that were called to embody, they grow out of a seedbed that is planted with humility.

I want to also remind us of the opposite though, which is this. So too, pride is the unformed substance out of which all sinful behaviors, thoughts, and actions morph out of and take their unseemly shape.

That every sin we know that is within our hearts, our minds, or our hands, every sin has morphed out of pride.

Which is why early in the Bible we see a picture in the garden of a man and a woman who have been placed there and have been given promises of God, the presence of God, the blessings of God, the love of God, and they're in the garden with him in this unified relationship with him and their Creator in beautiful, beautiful creation.

And I truly believe that in the moment where the serpent tempts them, did God really say that? He knows that if you eat of this fruit that you become like him, what he's baiting in Eve's heart and in Adam's heart is pride.

[23 : 43] And they bite that fruit as we all have bit that fruit. And the garden of Eden God wasn't enough in that moment for Adam and Eve.

That there's something else I can have other than God, more than God, I want it. And we bite. And this is pride.

But what's beautiful about the early church here is as we talk of the means to a glorifying life is the reverence of a humble heart. We see the contrast in the church in this section. They are humble. Look with me at the section again. I'm going to point out some pieces here. It says first that Peter was sleeping. This suggests Peter was at peace enough to get a good night's sleep even though he was scheduled to die.

So peace, humility of Peter in the early church that we've seen throughout this entire series, this entire book so far, is one of peace. The church has peace in taking the gospel even though it may mean death.

[24 : 50] That they're humble enough to follow the Great Commission regardless of the consequences. He's sleeping. He knows. He knows who his God is.

Second, we see obedience. I love this. It says that Peter thought he was seeing a vision. An angel nudges him. He wakes up and this must be a dream. And here's the praising part. How many of us have subconscious obedience?

Peter is so obedient. He's so in line with God's will this moment that even though he's convinced it's a vision, it's a dream, he obeys. He listens. He submits. Yeah, okay. I'm going to follow the angel out of here even though I'm not really sure this is real.

I love that. Obedience. Next is praise. It says this that when he gets out, he's talking to himself and he praises the Lord. He gives him the glory. Let's do his name. Now, I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me.

Peter acknowledges the power and working of God in this miracle immediately upon getting out. This is the Lord. He's done it. I believe it.

[26 : 02] Solo Deo gloria. Faith. We see faith. It says this that the church as he's imprisoned after seeing one of their leaders, James, be beheaded. They see now Peter who's about to be beheaded and it says that they were praying earnestly in verse five, which implies they truly believe that the prayers they're offering up can and will be answered.

Ernest prayers different than prayer. Ernest prayer expects of the Lord. And I've had to ask this question of my heart. Are my prayers reflective of a heart that's expectant or are my hearts is my life defined by a surprised heart?

Here's the thing about the church here. They embody both. Talk about God's grace. They are expecting that God will act. But when Peter actually comes, okay, let's debate angelology a little bit. They get, it's an angel. Thank you, but it's an angel. It can't be him. Even they are the praying earnestly still have this part of them that's surprised when God answers.

But God still works through that. And next, lastly, I love this when we see joy that of the humility of the church and of Peter, we see peace, obedience, praise, faith, but joy.

[27 : 34] And this little girl named Rhoda. Thank you for the example of Rhoda. Lord says this, that as she recognized Peter's voice in her joy, she went.

That implies what church? That as they're locked in a church, says there's an outer gate, so they're double secure because they know that they're being hunted. That as she goes, she hears Peter and goes, that's my friend Peter. I don't need to even see. I know that's Peter. I'm going to go tell

the church.

You talk about faith. You talk about joy. Peter is out of prison. I don't even need to see his face. Amazing. And she goes and tells the others and they keep insisting. No, no, no, no, no, what you saw is not what you think.

But it says this, but she kept insisting it was so. Rhoda, all right, she's the one that's used by God to bolster the faith of the praying church, even though she never knew exactly by seeing Peter's face. We see the church in this text that they're humble, that they're listening, they're patient, they're expectant that God will work, they're reverent towards him. They know their place as the created, the loved by God, and they know God's place as rescuer, rescuer, answer, deliverer. That's humility to know my place before my God. The means to a God glorifying life is the reverence of a humble heart. Now, there's a contrast that we need to look at now to finish the chapter, verse 20.

[29 : 15] Now, Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon and they came to him with one accord and having persuaded Blastus to King's Chamberlain, they asked for peace because their country depended on the king's country for food.

So our context here, it's kind of, it's a big shift, a big jump, and now we have to explain some historical things going on at the time. We know this that Herod became angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. There's a lot of arguments on why he became angry with them, but it doesn't matter a whole lot, but what does matter is that out of his anger for them, he withheld food to them. That as a ruler who has, God has given some authority and some rule to promote generally good in his kingdom, he has abused this authority, he has stewarded it poorly, and he has neglected to give them food.

So these people are quite literally starving slowly because he's mad at them. It's like a toddler keeping a toy away. And here's what it says, verse 21.

Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne and delivered an oration to them. In other words, hey, let's have him come in and we will flatter him a lot to make him give us our food back. That's what's happening here.

[30 : 36] So he puts on his royal robes, he takes his seat upon his throne. Look at the picture. And he delivered an oration to them. We don't know what he says, but I can only imagine.

Verse 22, and the people were shouting, the voice of a God and not a man. Talk about false flattery. They might as well have just said, the voice of the one that can give us our food back. Okay? But here's the thing, in his pride, Herod, in his pride, here's this, here's the people roar. And what does he do? He hijacks. Sovereign glory, that's due only one.

Or should I say he attempts to hijack that glory? No one takes God's glory. We see pride here. He withholds food from his citizens. He wears royal apparel on his majestic throne in the scholar Josephus.

A Jewish historian records this, who has the witness account of the scene, that his royal apparel consisted of a robe of silver pieces that would glitter in the sunlight to make his appearance like that of a deity.

[32 : 00] He intentionally wears this in the sun to look like a God. And then he hijacks God's glory, which the text points to, and all of Scripture points to, is the most dire offense to take God's glory or to attempt.

So, I've got to answer a question here. What is pride? There's so many ways we could define it, so many ways we could talk about pride. We see an example of pride.

But at the end of the day, pride is self-reliance that makes God unnecessary. Self-reliance that makes God unnecessary. And this definition applies to the worst of the worst and us.

With one sinful decision we might make in a day, we are choosing to rely on ourselves for that decision. So, pride can be in the heart of every person, it is in the heart of every person, but specifically in the heart of those who do not know God, who cannot know humility, who cannot know true faith, joy, love that comes from the Savior.

Psalms 10, 4 says this, listen, in the pride of his face, the wicked man does not seek him, and all his thoughts are, listen to this, this is everything about pride, biblical pride, here's your definition.

[33 : 40] In his heart, all his thoughts are, there is no God. Self-reliance that makes God unnecessary. And its core pride is the true, honest, heartfelt belief that there is no God. I do what I want, I don't need God.

Imagine what life decisions you would make if you truly believed that God does not exist. And this is why we go to the world. This is why we go on mission. This is why we share the good news of Christ.

Because there is a world right now that we all are a part of and attached to that lives their lives with, I don't need God. Every day, for non-believers and for us, there is a decision that needs to be made.

That decision is this, who is sitting on the throne of your life today? Two options, we can make ourselves king. The natural posture of my heart, when I coordinate my sinful, greedy, diabolical, power-mongering self, when I coordinate that part of me, I become prideful.

But the other option is to acknowledge God's on the throne. There is only one posture that is appropriate in the presence of royalty. Moses, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, again, God, oh, you are on the throne, I am going down.

[35 : 22] That's the example in Scripture. Bow your knees, yes, your physical knees, bow them in prayer, yes, but more importantly, bow the allegiance of your heart to King Jesus every single morning when you wake.

And you will slowly discover the power through the Spirit to kill pride. This happens through intentional quiet time prayer and reading that produces a life of truth and love in the church and in the world.

Which is why Ephesians 3, 8 to 14, Paul says this to me, though I am the very least of the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone that is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages and God who created all things. Listen to this. So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be now made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Verse 14, all of that. In other words, Paul, because God's on the throne, because he's ruler over any and all authorities, because the gospel is true and I believe it and I preach it. Verse 14, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father.

[36 : 44] Because God's on the throne, I bow my knees to the Father. And when we gather with the church, when we do this privately, when we bow our hearts and we bow our knees privately, we gather with the church, we find solidarity and encouragement in the church and the fact that others are also bowing before the King along with me.

We are humble servants of His majesty, all spread before His throne as He sits. We all bow in allegiance and servitude to Him together.

So where does pride lead? Pretty clear. Proverbs 16, 18, pride goes before the destruction and the haughty spirit before a fall. All Scripture points to this, that the humble will be exalted or lifted up and the prideful will be brought low or destroyed.

And that's exactly what happens in this text. It says this, that Herod was eaten by worms. And that's a fascinating picture that as a child, I remember hearing this taught in my Christmas, in my Scottish school class, he was like, whoa! He's eaten by worms?

Now we can ask this question, we can spend tons of time on this, but did Herod die of a literal worm buffet on the spot? Or did he die of a disease of internal worms that led to a painful, agonizing death over a five-day period like Josephus suggests?

[38 : 14] I'm going to tell you this. I care little about the physical way he died. But I do care about the symbolism that Luke is using.

Just this last Tuesday, as a young adult group, we studied Mark chapter 9, in which Jesus talks about it's better to cut your arm off than to go into hell with it.

Leg on and on, don't go to hell is basically what he's saying, cut off the part of you that's keeping you from full servitude of God. And at the very end of that, you know, here's a statement he uses, Jesus.

And he says this, hell is the place where the worm will never die. And this is a brutal statement, and we need to understand.

He is quoting from the very last verse of the book of Isaiah. That in all of the hope and promise of Isaiah, that the Redeemer is faithful and true, that Dr. Vreeland read that the suffering servant is coming, he's the Messiah, he's going to redeem us, he's going to be faithful to us forever.

[39 : 24] The very last word in this book is actually one of warning. The worm will never die in hell.

And the picture, this is going to get in the theology of worms, they apologize. But the picture, it's important, the picture is this. 66, 24 of Isaiah, they will go out and look on the dead bodies of men who have rebelled against me for their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched and they shall be in horens to all flesh.

Isaiah, close. Listen, listen. In the hope of the gospel and the beauty of the truths of this word that our God is faithful, he is true, he will redeem us.

We don't have to fear. There is a staggering truth here in this word that is being contested everywhere I look right now. That hell isn't that bad. God will annihilate everyone. He couldn't leave them to suffer forever.

Maybe hell is just, you get what you want and you're living without God, but the fire, gnashing, weeping, gnashing of teeth and the worms eating dead bodies in hell.

[40 : 43] Sorry, that's not my God. That's what I hear a lot. No, that is your God. He delivers the punishment of wrath fully because he must because he is holy because he is true.

And he loves us enough to send him a savior to the demons and to free us. But we choose destruction and fall because of pride.

And so hell, the term Gehenna in the New Testament as Jesus uses it is referring to the Hinnom Valley, southwest of Jerusalem, where in the Old Testament, human sacrifice to the God Molech took place.

It's a horrible evil dark place using scripture to symbolize hell. And in the New Testament, it was continually burning fire pit of garbage and dead animals. And the worm, the image here is a maggot that does not die because there's never comes a time when carcasses aren't aplenty in Gehenna. So they just keep eating. The worm is a symbol of degeneration, rottenness and eternal torment, so much so that a secular philosopher, Maximus Tyreus, said this about worms in ancient day Greece, that they're used in poetry and writing as a symbol of degeneration, rottenness and eternal torment.

[42 : 02] This is a secular philosopher. In other words, finally what I'm saying to you is that the picture of Herod here is a description of being eaten by worms that has much less to do with the biological, technical manner of Herod's death.

And much more about the symbolism Luke is likely conveying about the eternal punishment of those who die in pride.

Herod's fall by worms conveys the power pride has to destroy your life eternally, but also on this earth.

He has been eaten by worms in this life and he will be eaten by worms in the next. But here's the beauty, verse 24 and 25.

But the word of God increased and multiplied or refrained, that's all throughout the book of Acts. Constantly God is proving himself faithful to a persecuted church that trusts in him.

[43 : 10] And it says that the word of God increased and multiplied even amidst these seemingly horrible circumstances, the church remains humble and trusts in their God.

And here's what he does. He increases them and multiplies them. And then it says verse 25, and Barnabas and Paul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John whose other name is Mark.

So what is humility? According to the text, humility is a recognition of inadequacy. First, pride is self-reliance. I don't need God. Humility then is by some measure the opposite.

It's a recognition of inadequacy that I'm not enough. I can't do it on my own. I need help externally, not from within, from beyond me.

I need help. So first, humility is a recognition of inadequacy. And secondly, it is a reliance on God.

[44 : 09] And those two go hand in hand with the gospel message. I cannot do it. I cannot fulfill your laws demands. I am inadequate. I need help from beyond myself.

God, would you save me? This is faith. And the person, work, object of that faith is Jesus, His work to save us.

So how do we replace pride with humility? If we see in ourselves, yes, I'm saved. Yes, I'm not going to hell. And I know my Savior. I know He lives. I know He's redeemed me. How do I live a God-glorifying life through reverence of a humble heart?

How do I do that? My answer is by a gospel-saturated heart. A gospel-saturated heart. There is only one outcome of someone that pours the gospel in.

Gospel in, gospel out. Gospel truth in, gospel living out. That is Scripture.

[45 : 17] I remember my brother, Jeff, and he was always doing magic tricks. He always was trying to get our attention and our imagination going. He loved this. He was a performer. I remember one time when I was like eight or nine, he took this cup and it was a big white cup and he's holding it up and he said, Eric, do you see this grape juice?

And I'm like, yeah, yeah. He pours it in. And I'm like, oh, okay. And I don't know where he's going with this. He flips it over and nothing comes out. And I'm like, oh my, Jeff, you need to make money doing this.

Oh my, that's crazy. Oh, and he's like, yeah, thank you very much. Okay, then later he goes, okay, Eric, actually I'm going to tell you the trick. I'm going to let you in on the secret. I'm like, oh yeah, yeah.

He pulls out this sponge. He rings it out. And it all goes right back into the cup. And I look at the cup and I'm like, I'm an idiot. But I remember this, like it was yesterday, because just the picture of he pours all this in, he takes the sponge, he rings it out, and all the juice is right back to the level that it was.

And I'm like, Jeff, it's brilliant. Now I'm going to tell you a trick and impress your friends. But it's that picture.

[46 : 27] We pour the gospel in. What Jesus has done, his love for me, we pour it into our hearts. And then we can take our heart and we can ring out the love that comes. I want to live my life for Christ.

I'm going to meditate on His Word. I'm going to memorize the gospel. We used to memorize Romans wrote as kids. The reality is pride in our hearts starts with bowing before the one who's really on the throne, acknowledging I'm not on the throne, but then going to his grace and feeding off of it.

Pride seeks its own glory. Humility seeks God's glory. Glory is temporal, and I would offer even useless on this earth, unless it is God's first.

Isaiah 43.6-7 gives us the meaning for our life, out of which we get the Westminster Catechism, which I'll read in a second. But Isaiah 43.6-7 says, Bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who's called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made, I created them for my glory.

And the Westminster Catechism says this, What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And that only happens through a humble heart, and those things are tied.

[47 : 52] Notice that glorifying God and enjoying God are connected. As we seek to glorify Him with our hearts, with humble hearts, we will naturally find enjoyment in Him.

We live for His glory, not for mine. I'm going to be satisfied in His glory, not mine. I'm going to love my Savior so much more. Pride seeks its own well-being.

Humility seeks the well-being of others. Jesus shows us this, and as Paul elaborates in Philippians 2, pride is overconfident in its abilities. Humility is confident in only Christ's ability.

Pride rejects the need for help. Humility is dependent on God and others for help. And we see in this short section that God is sovereign. He's in complete control.

He allows James to be killed and Peter to be in prison. But he also strikes down Herod, the enemy of the Christians, which gives the Christians freedom to then further spread the gospel, multiply as we see in the text.

[48 : 55] Here are the contrasts laid out, and then we'll wrap up here. All the contrasts from this text. First, both Peter and Herod were struck. Did you notice that?

Peter's sleeping, and it says the angel of the Lord struck him. Herod is struck down. And the term here is pitasso, which is a physical strike or blow.

And all we're given is that pitasso is a strike, like a punch. And the only way to determine how strong the punch is is by the context. So there's a gentle punch to wake Peter up, and there's a death, destructive punch to take down Herod.

Secondly, Peter goes from laying down, sleeping to standing to walking out of prison. Down to up and out.

Herod goes from sitting atop a royal throne to on the ground. An angel of the Lord both delivers Peter and destroys Herod, the same angel of the Lord.

[50 : 01] And then Herod falls. His reign, his rule, it all falls, and the Jerusalem church rises and multiplies. You see the contrast here? Pride, humility. This is how God deals with his people. Peter both recognizes and proclaims God is the hero of his deliverance throughout the whole story.

God saved me. God saved me. The church tells James and the other apostles, God saved me from prison. Don't tell them that I'm released. Tell them God released me. And Herod absorbs false praise and attempts to rob God of glory.

So where does humility lead? Well, pride is the root sin of unbelief. Humility is the root posture of faith. You can read some verses throughout all of Scripture to end.

Job 22, 29, when men are brought low and you say, Lift them up, our God will save the lowly. Psalm 138, 6, though the Lord is on high, He attends to the lowly.

But the proud He knows from afar, Proverbs 29, 23, a pride's man. A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor. Matthew 23, 12, whoever exalts himself will be humbled.

[51 : 14] Whoever humbles himself will be exalted. And then James 4.

What causes quarrels and fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war? You desire and you do not have, so you murder. You covet and you cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have because you do not ask.

You do not ask, you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people. And here's what James says, therefore it says, in other words, what is the source of all of that pride?

We bring on our own problems through hidden vile pride. But here's the gospel in the book of James. Our brother Martin Luther, who I love, he's done a lot of great work, but I rebuke him for this.

He used to rip James out of his Bibles. He didn't like the book of James. He could not reconcile James with the grace of the gospel. And I'm telling you, the grace of the gospel is so clearly evident in James 4, it's astounding.

[52 : 15] Listen, but he gives more grace. God gives more grace. Therefore it says, God opposes the proud, but it gives grace to the humble. And here's how we receive that grace.

It is not by works. It is by grace. Listen, the solution that's offered for our big problem, our prideful hearts, when we don't acknowledge God as king, here's his three-fold approach.

First, submit yourselves therefore to God. Submit. Second, draw near to God, and he'll draw near to you. And third, humble yourselves before the Lord.

And he will exalt you. Here's what James says. Submit, draw near and humble yourselves. Here's the gospel. He doesn't mention Jesus, he doesn't mention the cross. He doesn't mention substitutionary.

The gospel starts with a place of humility that I recognize by inadequacy, and I come to the only one who can lift me out of that. And that is Jesus Christ.

[53 : 15] James, half-brother of Jesus, he knows his Savior. He calls him Lord at the beginning. Christ lifts us up when we go low. He gives more grace. One of my favorite movies of all time, Indiana Jones in The Last Crusade.

And one of the scenes in that movie that just keeps coming back to me. At the very end, when Indiana Jones is going to go into this temple, and everyone's died, that's tried, and he's walking up, and he's holding this little book, and he says these words, Only the penitent man shall pass.

And Dad, who's dying from a gunshot wound, keeps saying, Only the penitent man shall pass. Only the penitent man shall pass. Only the penitent man shall pass. And just as the blades are coming to cut off his head, what does Indiana Jones do?

Only the penitent man says, That means bow! And he comes down, and the blade misses his head. But this is what I love. This is so Indiana Jones. Harrison Ford. Once he gets by the blades, he's like, Oh my goodness.

He looks back, and what does he say? I'm through! As I thought about this scene, I'm like, Okay, thank you. Thank you for the gospel.

[54 : 22] There it is. As cheeky as they were when they made that movie, and they made that scene, it's actually true.

That Jesus saves us from death when we recognize in humility, he is king. We come down.

He gives more grace. The means to a God glorifying life is the reverence of a humble heart. Lord, we pray that this morning you would affect our hearts.

That the very gospel that we have been saved by would be the very gospel that we live by. Pray that as we think about, Lord, the ways in which we have relied on self. The ways in which we have relied on ability and strength that is of us. I pray that we would repent. I pray that we would recognize your strength, your power.

[55 : 32] And that every morning as we wake up, we would think about the decision that needs to be made. Will I sit upon my vain throne this day? Or like knowledge there is already one who is on the throne?

God, help us with this. Help us to trust in your working, in your power. And give us hearts of true, genuine spirit, wrought humility.

We love you, Lord. Amen.