

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 9- Luke 9:46-56

187- The Nature of True Greatness- Part 4

November 25, 2012

Luke 9:46-56

46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.

47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,

48 and said to them, "**Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.**"

49 John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

50 But Jesus said to him, "**Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you.**"

51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

54 When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "**You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;**

56 **for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.**"] And they went on to another village.

To the Glory of God

Now over the last few weeks- we have been focused on an issue that most people try to avoid at all costs- and that is the issue of human pride and arrogance. And even though many people are gearing up for the Holidays this time of year- and are busy thinking about food and family and gifts- and are certainly *not* dwelling too deeply on the issue self-righteousness- this is nevertheless the place in our Journey through Luke that God has Providentially brought us to during this time of the year. So we don't dare miss any of what the Lord is speaking to us in this powerful passage here in **Luke 9**.

In this Passage- we see the 12 Apostles who are struggling openly in their fallen human pride. And as we see this unbelievable manifestation of sin on the part of these men- we need to take great heed to our own hearts because we are made of the same flesh and we come from the same father Adam who fell and we are tainted with the same rebellious nature and the same black heart that these men had.

And that is why one of the focuses in our Prayer Meetings on Wednesday Evenings over the last several months has been to wage war against pride. And for help- we have looked again and again at what God's Attitude toward pride is and we have done that so we can become aware that our own hearts today in the 21st Century are deceitful and that none of us can ever truly know our own hearts and so we must be relentlessly vigilant in the fight against pride.

And as we have seen over the last several weeks in our Journey through Luke- God fights against and is opposed to human pride and will eventually bring it all down. **Isaiah 2:12-17** says:

12 For the LORD of hosts will have a day *of reckoning* Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.

13 And *it will be* against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, Against all the oaks of Bashan,

14 Against all the lofty mountains, Against all the hills that are lifted up,

15 Against every high tower, Against every fortified wall,

16 Against all the ships of Tarshish And against all the beautiful craft.

17 The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,

And then the Promise of God comes to us in verse 18 which says:

Isaiah 2:18

But the idols will completely vanish.

So we see that pride was a huge issue under the Old Covenant and it is a huge issue under the New Covenant as well. Ever since Adam willfully and premeditatedly rebelled against God in the Garden and sinned- human self- righteousness has replaced godly humility in the heart of Man and we will wrestle against our arrogance until we are clothed with that new body that is promised to us in the Resurrection that is coming or when we die.

Everything song you listen to; every book you read; every movie or video or TV show you watch; every conversation you have and every activity you engage in is either promoting godly humility or it is propagating sinful pride. And the hope of our ongoing and progressive Sanctification is to struggle against that part of our unredeemed flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to minimize expressions of pride and maximize expressions of humility for God's Glory and our Good. And we have found out that this struggle will continue in the mind and heart of every believer until Jesus returns or until your body goes back to the earth.

And we have learned in our Study that pride is not something that troubles *some* people while others have been set free from it. But that every son and daughter of Adam has been imputed the very same rebellious nature and sinful guilt of Adam and so therefore- we deal with pride and arrogance and self-righteousness on some level. It is the single greatest threat and the single greatest issue that any believer can ever or will ever confront.

And one area of pride that is not so easily recognized is when we take credit ourselves for what God has done. Listen to the words of the same prophet Isaiah as he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to pen down these words from **Isaiah 10:12-15** that describes this kind of manifestation of fallen human arrogance:

12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness.”

13 For he has said, “By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did *this*, For I have understanding; And I removed the boundaries of the peoples And

plundered their treasures, And like a mighty man I brought down *their* inhabitants,

14 And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest, And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened *its* beak or chirped.”

15 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it? *That would be* like a club wielding those who lift it, *Or* like a rod lifting *him who* is not wood.

We must take to heart that everything we have is a gift of free grace from a merciful Father who desires to redeem us infinitely more than He desires to destroy us. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote about this from **1Corinthians 4:7**:

For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

We were born with nothing and it is certain that we will take nothing out with us when we die. And so every good and perfect gift that we have- every good quality that we possess; every noble action we carry out; every single act of obedience to God; every ounce of love that we have for God and for Truth and for one another – all of those things are gifts to us from God. The Apostle Paul wrote this insulting and humiliating confession in **Romans 7:18**:

For I know that nothing good dwells in me...

Human fallen pride and arrogance insists that we are really not that bad. That even though most of us are willing to admit that periodically we do bad things- most people- even in the Church- will insist that deep down in some crevice in our heart of hearts- that even though we are fallen- we insist that we still possess an internal “goodness” and “nobility” about ourselves that somehow was miraculously left untouched by The Fall. Now we cannot prove that by Scripture- in fact- Scripture teaches just the opposite but the belief in the basic inherent goodness of Man is one of the single most important and sacred beliefs among the overwhelming majority of those who occupy the modern Church.

And so in the face of incontrovertible Biblical declarations- there are only two reasons why any thinking human being could honestly believe in the basic goodness of Man- and that is because:

- A. They don't know what the Bible teaches about The Fall and Human Depravity
- B. They don't believe what the Bible teaches about The Fall and Human Depravity

And whether their insistence to hold on to a patently pagan and humanistic and unbiblical doctrine stems from their lack of knowledge of Divine Truth or their unwillingness to believe Divine Truth- the fact remains that believing that Man is inherently "Good" is contrary to the fundamental Teachings of the Holy Bible and born again Spirit filled believers should reject that out of hand.

God has to Sovereignly fix their unbelief but we can and we should fix their ignorance by teaching what the Bible actually says about this issue.

So it is correct to substitute Human Depravity or Radical Ruination with Human Pride and Arrogance. The terms are interchangeable. To be fallen is to be arrogant and to be prideful is to be radically ruined by The Fall. And so everybody on earth is plagued by pride and arrogance and every other expression of evil and wickedness and rebellion that human beings manifest on the earth comes from the self-righteousness of our fallen condition.

The Bible clearly and repeatedly declares in both the Old and New Testaments the insulting reality that there is not a single human being born after the Fall that possesses any "good" or "noble" quality about himself. No one can lay claim to having any *inherent* righteousness or holiness about himself; none of us were born with any good qualities; none of us has work to obtain or earn them and none of us can lay claim that God owed them to any of us.

So to whatever extent we do possess any goodness about ourselves; the degree to which any of us has any love; or demonstrates any faithfulness; or manifests any desire and ability to love and serve God; any disposition that we may have to believe and obey the Truth of Scripture- I tell you- we have been *granted* these qualities from a Good

and Sovereign God. None of these qualities rose up from within us *internally* all of them came to us *externally* from God.

The Apostle Peter exhorted us to:

... humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

So we must trust God to exalt us in due time. And we must remember that the true and full Revelation of God comes only to the humble. Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 11:25:**

I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

And we must realize that entering the Kingdom of God depends on humility. Jesus said in **Matthew 18:3&4:**

3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Now last week- we saw that there are at least five elements of pride that Dr. Luke is showing us here in this passage.

1. Pride Destroys Unity
2. Pride Seeks Superiority
3. Pride Reveals Depravity
4. Pride Rejects Deity
5. Pride Alters Reality

But there is yet another even more hideous aspect that shows out in us when pride is manifested that we need to look at and that is that:

Pride Reacts with Exclusivity

Let's read **Luke 9:49&50** again together:

49 John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you."

Now why did John jump into this thing like that? I'll tell you why. He's feeling conviction. He's thinking to himself, *"O boy, we could be in some serious trouble here."* And John remembers an occasion- not too long before this- when the 12 Apostles self-righteously rebuked a man who was casting out a demon in the Name of Jesus. And they all ganged up on this poor guy because he wasn't in their particular group.

And now John feels the sting of being rebuked because he has virtually gone out there and said, *"Hey, buddy, you don't rank with us, what are you doing?"*

"You see, Jesus- there was a guy- and we really don't know anything about him- but this guy was casting out demons in Your Name. He was out there and he believed in You and He was out there 'doing good' in Your Name." In other words, this man wasn't violating anything.

Now it is true that there are people who speak in the Name of Jesus but they don't truly represent Him. And that's like it was in the days of Jeremiah- where the weeping prophet says that there were so-called "prophets" who spoke in God's Name but they weren't giving the people God's Message.

And we've got people like that all over the place today. They are on television; and on the radio; and on the internet; and sadly they are in the pulpit of many Churches- everywhere in the cults; and all the "isms" and the rest of the things that go on in the "name" of "Christianity".

So we've got all these people today who say they represent God and they speak in Jesus' Name- but they give another Message other than what Jesus gave. They do not speak Jesus' Words. They add to what Jesus said and they take away from what Jesus said and they just make stuff up and invent things and so even though they go in Jesus' Name- they really do not speak for Jesus at all- they are frauds and liars and deceivers.

But the man that John is talking about here in verse 49

apparently really *did* go in Jesus' Name- in the right way. In fact, over in the John Mark's Account- in **Mark 9**- Jesus taught an amazing lesson- so let's go there and read that together- **Mark 9**- beginning at verse 39 – look what Jesus said in **Mark 9:39-42**:

39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me.

40 For he who is not against us is for us.

41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as *followers* of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.

42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

So my assumption is that this man was actually able to do what he was attempting to do in the Name of Jesus Christ. The Lord actually empowered him to do it. And this would be something of an anomaly because at this point- it was only the Twelve- according to **Luke 9:1** who had been given the power to cast out demons and heal diseases. But here is another man- who was not among the Twelve- who was also out doing things in the Name of Jesus.

Now it is very possible that he could have been among "the 70" who were commissioned later on with that same Authority that we will see when we get to **Luke 10:1**. You see, in order to propagate the Gospel even more quickly throughout the land before His death- Jesus empowered and sent 70 other men into the villages and towns- two by two to do these same kinds of miracles.

So maybe this man was a preview of "the 70". But however it was- it was certainly important for the Lord to let this man do this- in order to teach this lesson of humility to the 12 Apostles who needed to learn.

So the point here is that pride tends to drive people toward exclusivity. And if this man had been a false prophet or if this man had misrepresented the Name of Jesus in some way- Jesus never would have answered the way He answered. Let's read again **Luke 9:50**:

50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you."

In other words- Jesus was saying, *"John- this man is for you- he's with us- he's with Me"*. So I really think John was being convicted here about his debate earlier about which one of the Apostles is going to be the greatest and so in his guilt- he just blurts out. *"Lord, we might have done something terrible in our little pecking order argument about who's the greatest because we already know that we're greater than anybody else and nobody else can do what we can do."*

And so the Lord just allowed this unnamed guy to be roaming around- who had the same power that the Apostles had- to show them that they didn't rank any higher than anybody else- or at least they didn't rank as high as they thought they did. And by doing this- the Lord was showing that He could give the Authority and Power to do these amazing things to anybody He wanted to- even a stranger that wasn't in their group.

So this arrogant pride drives people into thinking that they are the only ones who have the Truth; the only ones who have any power; the only ones who are doing it right; the only ones who understand; the only ones who God is using and blessing.

Listen- I will not embrace those who may name the Name of Christ but who don't preach the Words of Christ. I will separate myself from them all day long. And I'm supposed to do that and God is honored and pleased when I do that. But I am required to embrace all those who both name His great Name and preach His precious Words- even if they hold to some personal preferences or methods that I might not like or agree with. And separation from those people for those reasons would be sin.

We must know, dear friends, that it is very easy to simply separate yourself from everybody you don't like or that is different from you or that you are uncomfortable with in the "name" of being pure and holy when in reality it isn't purity and holiness that promotes that kind of separation at all- it is nothing more than a manifestation of your own self-righteousness and pride and arrogance and it is sin.

Ranking people within the Body of Christ- among genuinely saved people- is carried out all the time and every time it is carried out- Jesus Christ is dishonored and the Church suffers. We have no right- beloved- to pick and choose whom we are willing to associate with based on personal preferences and individual situations that have nothing to do with Salvation and Biblical Truth. That isn't following Jesus and

guarding against false teaching- it is fallen human pride- plain and simple.

And this effort to rank one another comes not only with individual believers against individuals, but also groups and churches against other groups and churches. And when that is done- it is always sin and it is never right. That is exactly what Jesus is teaching here.

Now that doesn't mean that we don't assess what people teach and discern truth carefully and hold people accountable to being in accord with Scripture- and if they are at odds with the Bible and will not repent- we should separate from them. We can and we should do that and we are wrong if we do *not* do that. There are false teachers out in the world; there are false prophets- John said that there were many antichrist- even back when he wrote that. There is heresy and apostasy and real bad teaching that is destructive and detrimental to the Cause of Jesus Christ. And we are not to be associated with them and we are to reject what they teach.

But once we know that someone is struggling to be faithful to the Truth- then we are commanded to embrace them and love them and encourage them and stand by them- even if they hold to some personal preferences and individual aspects that we might find objectionable or unnecessary. Please turn with me to read what the Apostle Paul said about this in **Philippians 1:15-20**.

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

16 the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;

17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

So even if they preach Christ out of contention; even if they preach Christ hoping to add affliction to my chains; even if they're anti-Paul; even if they're unkind to me; even if they speak evil lies about me- Paul said,

... Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

So Paul never participated in the personality conflicts that are so rampant in the Church in our day. Jesus told the Apostles in **Luke 9:50**:

"You shouldn't have done that. You're right, you're right to bring it up. I'm glad you felt convicted enough to say that. You shouldn't have done that."

And then He gives that powerful statement at the end of verse 50,

"He who is not against you is for you."

Now I just want to end with this. There is so much more that could be said about this- but I want to end with this thought. I want you to listen carefully to that little statement that Jesus said here:

He who is not against you is for you

This is really a very powerful statement. And Jesus said something similar to that many times, Another way Jesus said this was:

"He who is not with us is against us,"

And this thought appears in a number of other portions of Scripture. But this is what I want you to remember about this. There is no middle ground here. You're either for Christ or you are against Him. There is no middle ground. Nobody is neutral about Jesus. You either love Him or you hate Him; you either obey Him or you are a rebel. You either have it right or you have it wrong. There is no middle ground between the Truth and error. There is no middle ground between sound

doctrine and heresy. There isn't anything in the middle- what you believe and what you teach is either true or it's not- it is either Biblical or it is Man-made; it is either inspired or it is flawed; it is either Divinely initiated or it is humanly engineered.

And that concept is lost to most people who are alive today and sadly it is lost to far too many in the modern Church. There is a big push today to have unity at the expense of Truth; that somehow all doctrinal disputes are bad or wrong or that we are supposed to accept everybody as brothers and sisters- no matter what they believe and no matter how they live their lives and the Bible simply doesn't teach that.

Truth matters, dear friends and what we believe and what we teach matters. The souls of human beings rest in the balance. So this is not a game; this is not a hobby; this is serious business. This far more serious and infinitely more important than eating and sleeping and politics and money. If I do not warn you properly and Biblically then your blood will be on my hands. And so those are genuinely redeemed should read and study and learn and be taught and examine and meditate and ask questions and struggle to know Truth and to preach and teach Truth and to defend Truth against all attack- both foreign and domestic.

People who say they are saved should live as though they are actually saved and genuinely saved people run to the Light so that their deeds can be seen so that they will know that they are wrought in God. False and deceived converts hide from the Light and hope that nobody sees them and do not want what they do to be known- precisely because they know good and well that what they are doing is sinful. So we are correct to hold people accountable to the Authority of Holy Scripture and truly redeemed people have no problem with that.

But I do think some people are wound too tight and need to loosen up because they separate over things like which version of the English Bible we use or how much hair they can stack on top of their heads or what name was spoken over them when they were baptized- and Jesus condemned things like that.

As I told you in the first Sermon in this series- there is a pseudo-humility at work today in the modern Church where people believe that it is arrogant to know Truth and that false humility dictates that we never really know anything for sure. These people teach that anything black and white is naïve and simplistic while true humility always lives

in the shaded grey areas where tolerance is king and where nothing is sure; nothing is certain; and everything is relative.

But Jesus utterly destroyed notions like that and put forth a clarity and a certainty and a sureness and an absoluteness. And he purposefully divided between those who are for Him and those who are against Him.

So there is no middle ground here- you are either with Jesus or for Jesus or you are against Him. There is either genuine Spirit and Truth worship of the one true living God through the acknowledgment of the Truth, or there is blasphemy of God through the failure to acknowledge or an outright rejection of the Truth. And this is so basic and so fundamental that it bleeds over into every aspect of life so that everything we say and everything we do and everything we believe is either right or wrong. It is either truth or error; sound doctrine or heresy- so there is no neutral ground- there's nothing in the middle.

Now many times, people criticize me and say, *"But Brother Blair- you're way too doctrinal and real life isn't that black and white. There are more grey areas to life than what you portray."* But my response is that I live on earth too and I face life just like everybody else does and I don't just talk about the absoluteness of Jesus Christ- this isn't just theory for me- this isn't just good material to preach about on Sunday Mornings- but I live this as well as I'm asking you to.

And this is the reason why I say what I say and do what I do. Jesus said right here that you're either for Him or against Him and there isn't anything in the middle. And Jesus said this, as I noted for you, in a number of different places in a number of different ways. Look quickly down to verse 23 of the eleventh chapter of Luke and read with me what Jesus said there.

Luke 11:23

He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.

So there's no middle ground here. And I'm not the One Who set things up like that, dear friends- Jesus did. I didn't say this- Jesus did. I didn't write this in the Bible- Dr. Luke did. And so the only way we can look at this is that if you're not *in* the Truth- then you're *out* of it. If you're not walking *with* God- then you're walking *away from* God. And

if your gospel and your beliefs and your theology isn't right- then it's wrong- because there isn't any middle ground- there isn't a third position of being kinda- sorta with Jesus and kinda- sorta with the world. And this fact about Jesus needs to be affirmed loudly and often.

So we need to be clear about this- I want the entire world to be saved and I want everybody to love and serve Jesus Christ and I want everybody on the face of the earth who names the Name of Jesus to be my brother and to walk hand in hand with me. And I don't care where you've been and I don't care how much sin you've been involved in and I don't care how bad you have lived your life- if you are saved and you believe the Bible and you want to follow Jesus- then you are welcomed in this place.

And that is the kind of diversity that God promotes- people from every walk of life; from every skin color; from every language and nation on earth- who have had a myriad of experiences- but who all come together and unite over the integrity of God's Word and the Deity of Jesus Christ and the Salvation that comes from Christ's finished Work.

So the only people that we embrace in the diversity of humanity are those who are faithful to be "for" Christ. We do not embrace everybody in the world simply because they lay claim to know Jesus. That isn't enough- Jesus said it wasn't enough. They have to be "for" Christ; they must be "with" Christ; they must be gathering together "with" Christ or they are "against" Christ and they are scattering abroad.

So there is no middle ground. And when people are faithful to Christ- we praise God that they are because God always has His faithful people in every generation and we want to love every one of them and we want to embrace them and we want to wrap our arms around them because Jesus said,

He who is not against us is for us.

And even though we might not agree with certain methods they use and even though we may not agree with their style- if they're "for" Christ- then we must be "for" them- but always with the proviso that they're must really be "for" Christ and are committed to the Truth.

So pride is a terrible thing. It is so pervasive in our world and so pervasive in our fallen hearts that we need these lessons repeatedly

taught. And may God help us by the grace of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives in understanding these truths to pursue humility to His glory and His honor.

And to that effort I want to offer some practical ideas that I pray will be a blessing to you as you and I struggle together against the horror of our pride. Here are ten things that we all can do to minimize our demonstrations of pride and maximize our manifestations of Biblical humility:

1. Openly confess repeatedly and publicly that we are not self-existent; only the triune God is self-Existent. Only God is absolute. But we are contingent. We must remind each other that we are utterly dependent on God for our origin and for our present and for our future existence. And we must talk about this and ponder its depth.
2. We must confess repeatedly and openly that we are- by nature- depraved sinners and that, in all our sinning- we have treated God with contempt- seeking to rob God of His Glory. We must discuss among ourselves the fact that we have never done a good deed for which we don't need to repent. Each good and noble effort we engage in is flawed because absolute perfection is commanded and expected. Therefore we realize that we have earned and that God owes us nothing but pain in this life and damnation in the next.
3. We must confess repeatedly and openly that our condition is so desperate that it could only be remedied at the cost of the agonizing death of the Son of God to bear all of God's correct and just punishment against our sins and to provide all of our Righteousness. And therefore- we rejoice and celebrate and revel in the Forgiveness and Righteousness that is ours in Jesus Christ.
4. We must confess repeatedly and openly what the Scriptures teach from Jesus and Peter and James and Paul and others like **"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"** And **"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,"** (1Peter 5:5-6; see James 4:6-10). And,

“He who is least among you all is the one who is great” (Luke 9:48; Mark 9:35; Matthew 20:26) And “For I know that nothing good dwells in me,” (Romans 7:18)

5. We must repeatedly and openly pray that the eyes of our heart would *see* these Biblical Truths for what they really are and that our lives would be impacted greatly by them.
6. We must repeatedly and openly beg God to make us not just see them but also *feel* them with a sense of the meekness and lowliness and brokenness that corresponds to their true weight.
7. We must repeatedly and openly renounce all desire for praise and notoriety and esteem and when we see these things rising up inside us- we must resist them and turn our minds afresh with prayer toward the beauty and truth and worth and value of the Lord Christ.
8. We must struggle to receive all criticism—from friend or foe—with the assumption that there is almost certainly some truth in it that we can benefit from. **“Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19).**
9. We must strive to cultivate a joy and satisfaction and delight in Jesus Christ and His Wisdom and in His Power and in His Justice and in His Love that is more satisfying than the pleasures of human praise- with the goal being that by the Power of the indwelling Holy Spirit- we would be granted the miracle of “self-forgetfulness” in the admiration of Christ, and in love toward people.
10. And finally, we must turn often to men who came before us for help and encouragement and instruction. Powerful men who knew God at depths and heights which is almost unheard of today. For example- I turn today to Jonathan Edwards whose descriptions of humility awaken the deepest longings in me, as, for example, when he wrote to Mrs. Peperell on November 28, 1751, concerning Christ and said:

“He is indeed possessed of infinite majesty, to inspire us with reverence and adoration; yet that majesty need not terrify us, for we behold it blended with humility, meekness, and sweet condescension. We may feel the most profound reverence and self-abasement, and yet our hearts be drawn forth sweetly and powerfully into an intimacy the most free, confidential, and delightful. The dread, so naturally inspired by his greatness, is dispelled by the contemplation of his gentleness and humility; while the familiarity, which might otherwise arise from this view of the loveliness of his character merely, is ever prevented by the consciousness of his infinite majesty and glory; and the sight of all his perfections united fills us with sweet surprise and humble confidence, with reverential love and delightful adoration.”
(*Works*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), p. cxxxix)

Amen. May God be pleased to help us to walk humbly before our God.

Let's pray