

# How are the Mighty Fallen?

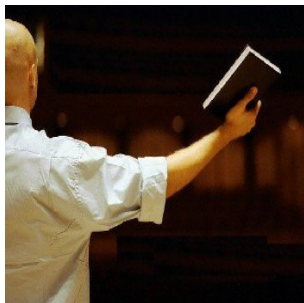
By George Davis and Michael Clark

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!" (2 Samuel 1:19 KJV)

Recently, we have witnessed the fall of many prominent "ministers." They were exposed for a number of sins ranging from adultery to homosexuality, drunkenness to pornography and least we forget, fraud. If anything, the situation is getting worse as time goes on. Someone said that it is a sign of insanity to do the same thing over and over again, expecting a different outcome, but this is exactly what is happening in today's institutional Churches. Remarkably few, if any, think to ask, "How are the mighty fallen?" How indeed? Why are so many of the supposed mighty Christian leaders of today falling?

The scriptures are not silent on this subject.

"Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18-19 ESV). A haughty spirit always goes before a fall. Few argue against this fact. The problem is that men define pride and haughtiness differently than God does. How so? God created every living creature to dwell within certain perimeters and boundaries. When those boundaries are breached, pride is the result and rebellion is soon to follow. The classic case in point is Lucifer. He was not content to stay within the limits of His first estate, but instead cast his covetous eyes upward to the throne of God, saying in his heart, "I will set upon the mount of the congregation. . . I will be like the Most High" (see Isaiah 14:12-15). Jude described this event in the following words. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6).



We see, then, that pride is the refusal to keep your first estate. The Greek word translated first estate is *arche*, "a beginning," the origin or original purpose for which one was created. Humility then is to live within the habitation God has placed us in. The moment we seek to be more than this, we are walking in pride and rebelling against our Creator.

In recent years we have heard much about "covering" and being "under the authority" of church leaders from those who seek to bring others under their control. These would-be overlords have been teaching that those who refuse their authority are prideful and guilty of rebellion. Paul the apostle taught that men were to only follow him as he led by his godly example, not by him wielding overt control over them and flaunting his title and position, asking men to follow him regardless of his lifestyle. He wrote to the church in Thessalonica, "[For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us. For we did not behave ourselves disorderly among you. . .](#)" So what are the traits of a leader who walks disorderly among the saints? Let us look at the context of what Paul wrote:

[For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us. For we did not behave ourselves disorderly among you neither did we eat any man's bread freely, but we worked with labor and travail night and day, so that we might not be heavy on any of you \(not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example to you, to imitate us\). For even when we were with you, we commanded you this, that if anyone would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk disorderly among you, not working at all, but being busybodies. Now we command and exhort those who are such, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that they work with quietness and eat their own bread. \(2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 MKJV\)](#)

It would seem then that disorderly leaders in the church 1) freely eat food that belongs to the saints, 2) do not work with their hands supporting themselves, 3) are a burden on those they lead, 4) do these things as bad examples unto the saints and, 5) are busybodies among the saints. (Of the word busybodies Thayer writes, "Used apparently of a person officiously inquisitive about other's affairs.")

So, with all this in mind, Paul writes that the saints should *not* follow those who do not lead by the example of Christ. We are not to come under the leading or control of these covetous, lazy, burdensome, and nosey bad examples in the church. Our allegiance to follow church leaders depends on whether they walk as Christ. To the Philippian believers Paul wrote:

[Brothers, be imitators together of me, and mark those who walk this way, for you have us for a pattern. \(For many are walking, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose](#)

god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, those who mind earthly things.)  
(Philippians 3:17-19 MKJV)

False leaders do not lead by the example of Christ, who lived among the poor and humbled Himself as a servant of all--the same Jesus who not only did not take up offerings from the poor, but fed them when they came to Him. This is very different from those "whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, those who mind earthly things."

One of the favorite passages of those who teach false doctrines and lead by bad example is 1 Corinthians 11. In it we find these peculiar words, ". . . for neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this cause the woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels." (1 Corinthians 11:9-10 WEB). Commentators are more than divided over this passage. Perhaps the only honest one among them is the Geneva Bible Notes, which says regarding the phrase because of the angels, "What this means, I do not yet understand."

Let us consider the context. Though it has to do with women, it applies to both men and women. Paul begins by telling us the reason that the woman was created, which determines her place. She was created as a helpmeet for the man. For this reason she ought to have the power or authority of her husband upon her head. And no, we are not speaking of a woman wearing a hanky on her head. We don't think angels are impressed with that. "Because of the angels" could be a warning, a reminder of what happened to Lucifer when he did not keep his first estate. Paul was clearly issuing a warning to men and women alike to keep their first estate and not to forsake the habitation in which God had created them to dwell in, as the fallen angels did.

The principle of covering has to do with finding the reason we were created and dwelling within the perimeters set by the Creator. Micah prophesied, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does Yahweh require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8 WEB). We understand what it means to act justly and mercifully toward our fellow man. This is why our courts were established, to insure that justice is kept and mercy is guarded. But what does it mean to walk humbly with our God. First it means that we are creatures before our Creator and as such we cannot say to the Creator, "Why have you created me so?" When we

abide within our habitation, the place or station where God has purposed that we abide, we are safe from pride and the strife and anxiety that it brings.

Jesus was perfect God and perfect man, and as the perfect man, He said of Himself, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30 WEB). Christ modeled what it means to walk humbly with God. Rest can only be found in His gentleness and lowliness. Strife and ambition--that satanic desire to climb and set in positions of power over the mount of the congregation--is pride and the fruit of corrupted wisdom (see Ezekiel 28:17). Unlike Adam, Jesus (the last Adam) did not fall, but kept his first estate and as a perfect man, walked humbly with His God. He humbled Himself, took on the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, praying, "Not my will, Father, but thine be done." The first Adam sought to be like God but Jesus, who was God, became a man and resisted the temptation to eat of the forbidden tree of self-exaltation. Instead He progressed downward to greater and greater service--greater and greater humility. When the world would have made Him a king, He hid Himself. In the Last Adam, it is unlawful to promote yourself. How could we? To do so is to live in rebellion, resist the Spirit, and reject the example of Him who came to serve (See Mark 10:45).

We have more than just Christ's example to go by, since He was not silent on the subject. Speaking of the Pharisees, Jesus said:

For they bind heavy burdens that are grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not lift a finger to help them. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad, enlarge the fringes of their garments, and love the place of honor at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi, Rabbi' by men. But don't you be called 'Rabbi,' for one is your teacher, the Christ, and all of you are brothers. Call no man on the earth your father, for one is your Father, he who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for one is your master, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:4-12 WEB)

To be higher than a servant is to be set up for a fall. Service is the highest function allowed in the kingdom. The greatest are servants. This is as high as it goes. Anyone who takes a title above servant is prideful and will meet the resistance of God.

## So How Are the Mighty Fallen?

Let's be very, very clear here. We can blame the Devil all we want, and he may encourage us to seek exaltation, but it is God who humbles those who exalt themselves. Jesus forbids the use of honorific titles and hierarchy. After saying to us, "You will not be called. . . rabbi, father, master, for you have One Teacher, Father and Lord," He shows us our proper "habitation" or rightful place before God the Father and the rest of the household of God. "All of you are brothers." Christ's chief argument against the ambition to put oneself above his brother was to remind them that they are siblings--adelphos--literally, from the same womb, or having the same parentage.

Siblings are equal regardless of their age and level of responsibility. Even a two year-old objects to his fellow sibling bossing him around. It was my brother's habit to ask me, whenever I interfered in his affairs, "Who died and made you God?" If you assume a position other than that of brother or sister, you are not keeping your first estate and you have cast your eyes upward to the most sought after throne--the throne of God. As surely as God cast Satan down from the heavens when he exalted himself, so will He resist those consumed with this kind of pride.

In 1 Peter 5, Peter tells us that humility is a safeguard against Satan. He explains that prideful people have two enemies, Satan, who seeks to destroy them, and God, who sets himself in battle array against those who try to put themselves above others.

Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder. Yes, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to subject yourselves to one another; for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. (1Peter 5:5-6 WEB)

Kenneth Wuest wrote, "The word *proud* [in the above verse] is the translation of a Greek word which means literally to show above, and thus describes the proud person as one who shows himself above others. The word *humble* is the translation of the Greek word rendered *lowly* in Matthew 11:29, where it describes our Lord's character. The word is found in the early documents where it speaks of the Nile River in its low

stage in the words, 'it runs low.' The word means 'not rising far from the ground.' It describes the Christian who follows in the humble and lowly steps of his Lord."

In his *Fuller Translation*, Kenneth Wuest translated 1 Peter 5:5 as follows:

Moreover, all of you, bind about yourselves as a girdle, humility toward one another, because God opposes himself to those who set themselves above others, but gives grace to those who are lowly.

Contrary to popular opinion, Peter is not asking the believers to submit to a hierarchical rank and file, for Wuest points out, "the words 'be subject to' are not in the best Greek texts." Nor is Peter, as some suppose, accusing those who refuse to submit to ecclesiastical overlords of being rebellious or proud. Pride is *not* the act of non-submission to a hierarchy. Pride is the act of ignoring Christ's lowly example and exalting yourself above others. The imagery that Peter uses here is powerful. He wrote of the girdle of humility- *egkomboomi*, which was a slave's apron.

Peter was writing from the experience of the upper room (the last supper) where Jesus girded himself with the servant's towel (*lention* - also apron) and washed the feet of His disciples. From His knees, he asked them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" Even though Jesus was God, He did not seek to rise above men but made himself of no reputation.

Pride has many ways of finding its satisfaction. Lording over others is just one of them. Where men seek to lord-over and exalt themselves, forsaking the image of Christ, sexual sin, abuse of drugs and alcohol, greed, financial corruption, and raw ambition will not be far away. "Pride comes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. Take heed when you think you stand lest you should fall."

Satan is always there, looking for any area of weakness in us that has not gone to the cross so that he can use it at a strategic time to damage us, others and the church. These areas are like so many terrorist sleeper cells waiting to spring forth and do great damage. The enemy enjoys seeing a man or woman become famous and powerful in the eyes of the church, if that person has not had a deep work of the cross in their lives. Satan knows that he can elevate a person on a pinnacle of success before all, and then knock the blocks out from under him and achieve far greater damage than to him alone. Expect many more high profile "church leaders" to fall. As long as we exalt

men through the unbiblical clergy - laity distinction, God is obligated to humble them. We keep setting them up, God keeps knocking them down and the roaring lion keeps devouring. When will we ever learn?

The cross working deep in our hearts is our only hope. We, as mere flesh, should always be praying to the Father to show us if there be any wicked ways within so that we can cry to Him for help--never covering up our sin, but rather exposing it to the light. David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24 KJV). This is the secret path to eternal life. David was surely a man after God's own heart.

Christ, the Pattern Son, thought it not robbery to be equal with His Father, but rather He took on the form of a slave. Satan tempted Him with every self-seeking, self-elevating, and self saving scheme he could. He even used Jesus' trusted disciples to tempt Him. Yet, Christ took the low path of servant-hood all the way to the cross. What makes us think that our Father will accept any other way as His called-out sons and daughters? Honestly, can you see the pattern of the life of Christ in the lives of these men who seek notoriety and fame among men?

As long as we keep justifying the rise of men who desire to show themselves above others by the use of honorific titles and posturing over the people of God, we will continue to see men fall. For we have an exceeding great a precious promise, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."