

In addition to our hereditary qualities, the advantages or disadvantages that our environment has provided vary tremendously, and none of us deserve credit for either of these facts. We have no reason to be bloated with pride; we have no reason to be abased and filled with embarrassment. God wants us to step out, using all the energy that we can muster in order to accomplish what He desires. He has a plan for each of us. When we come to the end of life it will not be important whether we accomplished a little more or a little less than someone else did. It will be tremendously important whether we accomplished the utmost possible with the abilities and opportunities that the Lord provided us.

Once I heard the prominent evangelist, Dr. R. A. Torrey, relate that a certain man had said to him, "Torrey, you and I are the two outstanding men in Christian service in America." Dr. Torrey said he turned to the man and said, "Don't say that! Don't even think that. If one of us begins to think that he is tremendously important to God's work, God can easily put him on the shelf." Dr. Torrey went on to say that within two years after that conversation something resulted in the other man's being completely cut out of Christian work. Five years later few Christians even remembered his name. We offend God when we allow ourselves to become bloated with any kind of pride.

The opposite of pride is lack of confidence. In our desire to avoid the pitfalls of pride we can easily go to the opposite extreme and adopt an attitude that keeps us from developing our natural potential. Paul said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." God desires us to do the best we can to serve Him and not to be greatly concerned about what other people think of us. He also desires that we never underestimate our abilities to the point where we fail to step out and do our best to serve Him. Fear of failure and lack of confidence is one of the most pernicious forces today in keeping Christians from accomplishing what they should.

Let us imagine that all the people in the world were placed in lines according to one type of ability or accomplishment, and then according to another. At one time they might be arranged from the ugliest to the most handsome, at the next from the dullest to the most brilliant, at the next from the poorest speaker to the most effective orator, and so forth. If this were done, most of us would be very far from either end of any of these lines.