

11. Pride

December 13, 2009

This morning we are going to study the topic of pride from the Book of Proverbs. You need to be especially sensitive to the person sitting next you. It is the problem of pride. And we are all aware that someone else has this problem, not us. We all laugh at that, because when it comes to the pride issue for Christians, we tend to think that we are always right. That is far from the truth.

A. THE ORIGINS OF PRIDE

Isaiah 14:12-15 How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' 15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

Pride is the first recorded sin of mankind and angels in the Bible. It started with Lucifer. He thought of himself too much and he wanted to be worshiped like God.

Ezekiel explains to us a little more about Lucifer who later became satan:

Ezekiel 28:12-15 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. 14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. 15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.

Indeed Lucifer was a stunning angel and the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. This got into his head. But after he was cast down to the earth and he realized that his end is coming up, he wanted to manipulate the first two people's minds so that the rest of mankind would be cursed as he was. He knew very well that it would hurt the heart of God, since he also knew how much the Lord loved the humans.

How did he approach them? By lifting up the pride of Eve who, in turn, would tell Adam what to do. Husbands, don't feel bad. The first wife already started that trend long before your wife tells you what to do:

Genesis 3:1-8 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes

of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Desiring to be a god is the ultimate form of pride. Let's make it very, very clear. Nobody will ever become a god no matter what New Age gurus or Mormon Tabernacle head honchos say. The original man Adam came from dust of the earth; when we die, our physical bodies will turn to dust. Our spirits will go to either heaven or hell depending on how we respond to salvation through Jesus Christ.

B. THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL – PRIDE

2 Timothy 2:25-26 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

What is the snare of the devil? We find an answer from this:

1 Timothy 3:6-7 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The devil started his rebellion against God with his pride. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned because of their pride in the Garden of Eden, we are born with a depraved sinful nature. We don't become sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners from the beginning. In our depravity, pride dominates.

Within the context of pride and the devil, when we lift up our pride, we are siding with the devil and standing against God. It is no wonder the Lord our God despises pride. Look at the list of things the Lord hates. Note what is on the top of the list:

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

There is nothing more sickening than to see a man or woman of God with a lot of potential to live for God and serve Him, but they become prideful and ruin their future. Their effectiveness and testimonies have been ruined because of pride. Pride is the problem that grips us all.

While a rich man can be proud of what he has, a poor man can be proud of his "honor" in having less; while a talented woman can boast about what she can do, a woman with no talent can boast of her hard work; while a religious man looks down on others with his religion, an unbeliever pushes out his chest in pride for his unbelief.

There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in rich people's tuxedos and evening gowns. Pride is a strange creature, it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a huge mansion, and it will live equally at its ease in a ghetto.

Pride can be especially dangerous among the people of God. Once a man came to John Bunyan, the author of a profound Christian classic "the Pilgrim's Progress", after

a sermon and told him what a fine sermon he preached. "You're too late," Bunyan answered. "The devil already told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit."

Satan can entice the praying sister to be proud of her ability to pray, the growing brother to be proud of his growth, and even the humble brother to be proud of his humility.

C. THE GROUND WHERE ALL THE OTHER SINS GROW

Pride is the ground where all the other sins grow. Embezzlement, robbery, murder, adultery, deception, rape and all the other sins have their base on selfish pride that makes people think that they deserve other people's stuff at any cost.

James 4:1-10 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

The proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve. Some demand what they deserve. I say it is empty pride. Because I know that we all deserve hell and the full wrath of God for all the sins we have committed. But by the grace and mercy of God, He forgave us through the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.

One lady who was visiting our church a couple of years ago, told me after the service, "I know what the Bible says about going to heaven. But I disagree." I had just explained about the salvation through Jesus Christ during the service. I was rather stunned by her ungodly boldness, but I responded to her, "That means that you are wrong and you are against God." I don't think she was happy with what I said. She never came back.

When we say, "I don't need to live in God's way. I will do what I want to do when I want to do it," that is pure pride. Rejecting salvation through Jesus Christ reveals one's spiritual ignorance, and it shows that person's defiance that is rooted in pride against the Lord.

D. THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRIDE

Daniel 4:28-33 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" 31 While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts

of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” 33 That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

A young woman asked for an appointment with her pastor to talk with him about a sin of pride about which she was worried. When she saw him, she said, “Pastor, I have become aware of a sin in my life which I cannot control. Every time I am at church I begin to look around at the other women, and I realize that I am the most beautiful woman in the whole congregation. None of the others can compare with my beauty. What can I do about this sin?” The pastor replied, “Miss, that’s not a sin of pride, you just have a serious delusion!”

Unlike that young woman, Nebuchadnezzar had not only an extreme case of delusion that he thought he was more powerful than God, but also the sin of pride. Everything was about him and for him as we can see in v30.

God had given the king twelve long months to repent from his pride and wickedness. What did he do? He walked around the roof top like a peacock and boasted about what he had. It was time for God to pull the royal rug out from under this haughty king. God didn’t have to hear the entire sentence to come out of his mouth. God took him out and the king’s mind snapped.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Many church conflicts within the ranks of Christianity start from individual’s pride. They strongly believe that what they want for their personal preferences in the church is more important than God and the sound doctrines of the Word of God.

Proverbs 16:5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.

Proverbs 13:10 By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 15:25 The Lord will destroy the house of the proud, But He will establish the boundary of the widow.

Pride is spiritual cancer which eats up love and contentment. It is actually a sign of our own insecurity and feelings of inferiority. The great British preacher Charles Spurgeon poetically warned us not to be proud of race, face, or place.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride is the only known disease that makes everybody sick except the person who has it. Unless cured, pride is a sickness that leads to one’s spiritual and emotional death. Great theologian Gary Hurley once said, “Pride is like a hemorrhoid. It flares up often and it is painful afterward.” A very colorful illustration.

E. ISN’T GOD PRIDEFUL?

Some biblically challenged people might interject and argue, “Isn’t God prideful, because throughout the Bible, He demands worship from people, He constantly talks about what He had done to the Israel people.”

No, God is not boastful at all. He is simply making a statement of the truth. He is the One who provides everything for us and He deserves our worship as our God; yes, He is the One who holds our lives together.

Colossians 1:17 He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. (NLT)

Then the same people would say, "Wait a minute, How come God can do that and it is OK, but if I tell others how good I am and it is pride?" The difference is that God is the One who made everything from scratch as the Creator of the universe and we are nothing more than creatures of His creation. He is the One who gives us life, resources, insights and talents to get the job done. We can not even exist if He chooses not to hold our lives together.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) We need to remember who the Lord is in our lives and what it would be like without Him. This will keep us humble.

2) We need to remember the fact that whenever we try to justify our own sins instead of a prompt and truthful repentance, it is the same as we are rebelling against the Lord with pride.

3) We need to remember that the false humility that takes the lowest place among men for the sake of other people's acknowledgement is just as hateful to God as the pride that takes the highest place.

God is not impressed by our status in society or in the church. He is not a Respector of person's intelligence or wealth. He is not influenced by what people say or think about us, because He sees the thoughts and motives of the heart.