

PRIDE vs HUMILITY

2021

Recently, I was reading Psalm 139:23-24, and made it my personal prayer to God. "Search me, God, and know my heart: test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." It didn't take long for Him to show me that secretly hidden in my heart was PRIDE. Ouch! Really, God? I pondered over His answer for a while... Being somewhat of a perfectionist, it became obvious that pride could be the reason behind some of my behaviors. The fact that I lose peace of mind over some typos or errors I didn't correct prior to mailing a letter such as this one; or that I never like being put on the spot to pray or speak in front of an audience, made me realize that my response to these situations had one thing in common: fear. Fear of what people might think which, I reluctantly had to admit, was some kind of pride. It was certainly not easy to accept that God was right after all!

I also understood three things. First, that I'm not perfect!.. In fact, humanly speaking, we're all imperfect people living in an imperfect world, aren't we? Therefore, to simply do my best with the talents God gave me is what I should aim for; not perfection. Second, even with all my good intentions, mistakes can, and will happen. Consequently, as long as God uses my letters to accomplish His purpose in my life, and in the lives of the people who read them, why fuss over those details? Furthermore, when I'm being asked to pray in public, my attention should be on God, not on myself! Actually, God is more interested in hearing our heartfelt and sincere prayers than on how well we express ourselves. As for public speaking, well, I was asked once, did it only to please that person, and promised myself I would never do it again... but who knows God's plans?☺ Third, fear is not always the result of some traumatic experiences we go through in life. Fear is sometimes evidence of pride, and our reluctance to let go of our control. Pride is also driven by what we fear might happen.

You probably heard the expression, 'to be proud as a peacock'. It means to be excessively proud of one's appearance, possessions, or accomplishments, to the point of arrogance or boastfulness. It also means to have a very high opinion of oneself, filled with or showing excessive self-esteem. I believe we've all met such people in our lifetime. However, if we honestly analyze ourselves, we discover that even if we don't fit into these categories, we all display some pride. Obviously, it varies in kind and degree for each individual, but it subtly seeps into our hearts, and manifests itself in various ways. Among others, it could be to deny that we're wrong even if we know we are; to refuse to ask for forgiveness or to forgive someone; to be so opinionated that we force our opinions on others; to put the blame on someone else when we know we're the one to blame; to lie about someone or to discredit someone's reputation for our own benefit. Anyway we look at it, pride is behind broken relationships, quarrels, and conflicts among family members, friends, and co-workers. On a broader scale, pride is at the very source of wars between nations, as well as evil, hatred, anger, and dissensions among people all over the world.

I came across these relevant comments on bibleone.net. "*Pride* is the root of all sin. It percolates every conceivable evil within and throughout society today. No matter the level or the nature of man's existence or involvement, it is pride that spawns that which corrupts all of man's originally well-intended efforts. And one needs not be a keen observer to see the truth of this. Even a cursory examination of society today reveals that in all facets of its structure, e.g., politics, business, sports, religion, etc., the ample evidence of pride is apparent on every hand. Indeed, it was *pride* that prompted Eve to disobey God's instruction in the Garden of Eden as she, desiring to "*be like God*" (Genesis 3:5), took and ate of "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" in violation of God's order regarding the matter. She then subsequently involved her husband in the action, which caused their spiritual death. From that time on man has stooped to the sin of pride, an attitude so abysmal and egregious to the Creator, that it occupies the supreme position on His list of most hated sins." In fact, the Word of God says, "The Lord detests all the

proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.” (Proverbs 16:5) This scripture certainly leaves no doubt as to how God feels about people that exhibit pride, thus leaving me with this important question in mind...

Why is pride a sin so hateful to God? Because it’s essentially self-worship while only God is to be worshiped. (Exodus 34:14) We need to realize that anything we accomplish in this world would not have been possible were it not for God enabling, and sustaining us... We read in 1 Corinthians 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?” Unfortunately, pride has kept many people from committing their lives to Jesus as Savior. Admitting sin, and acknowledging that in our own strength we can do nothing to inherit eternal life is a constant stumbling block for prideful people. The apostle Paul writes, “For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” (2 Corinthians 10:18)

Throughout Scripture, we are told about the consequences of pride. Proverbs 16:18 tells us that “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Satan was cast out of heaven because of pride (Isaiah 14:12-15). He had the nerve to attempt to replace God Himself as the rightful ruler of the universe! But Satan will be cast down to hell in the final judgment of God. As for the ones who fear to show they are believers in Christ, Jesus has a warning for them. “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. *But* he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:8-9)

There is, however, a difference between the kind of pride that God hates, which is self-righteousness or conceit, and the kind of pride we can feel about a job well done or over the accomplishment of loved ones. The apostle Paul explains these differences. “Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.” (Galatians 6:4) And, “I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.” (2 Corinthians 7:4) These scriptures certainly make us look at pride from a different angle, don’t they? However, at the end of the day, God will do whatever it takes to get rid of our prideful attitude, and instill in us humility. The apostle Paul expressed this very well when he said, “In order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

What is humility? Obviously, it is the very opposite of pride. It is an attitude of the heart, not an outward demeanor, and we are called to be humbled. However, are we aware that we can be proud of our humility?.. The Word of God describes humility as meekness, lowliness, and absence of self. “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, *humility*, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12) Jesus said that those who are ‘poor in spirit’ would inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3), which means that only those who admit they’re spiritually bankrupt will inherit eternal life. In Philippians 2:5-8 we read, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

These comments from John McArthur, pastor and teacher, give us such a powerful description of what true humility is all about.

“When we serve God, we serve Him in an inferior way. And never do the humble imagine that they have served God so well as to somehow have impressed Him, and obligated Him to give us some special honor, as if He is in our debt. It’s ludicrous. And so, Jesus is calling for a kind of life that is just so far

away from the Pharisaic example. And we are called to this life today. Humble, so as to always submit to Scripture in doctrine and practice, never then to lead anyone into error or sin. Humble so as to always forgive those who sin against us, no matter how many times. Humble so as to be aware always of our own weakness, and have a growing dependency on the power of God. Humble so as always to recognize that even our best service falls far short; and we are unworthy servants who have only done what we have ought to have done; and hardly even that, ascribing all God's gifts then to grace. Humble yourself like this, and you will manifestly demonstrate that you are a true child of God; and one day God will exalt you, and the Lord will seat you at His table, and serve you.”

Are we there yet? No doubt, our spiritual life is a work in progress, isn't it? Paul understood this, and the reason why he said in Philippians 3:10-14, “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

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