

## Warnings and Encouragement

Sermons From Pastoral Rule, Book 3

July 17, 2016

- I. Exhorting and encouraging those who are humble and those who are prideful.
  - A. Scriptures
    1. James 4:6b . . . God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
    2. Matthew 23:12 . . . [Everyone who ] exalts himself shall be humbled; and [everyone who ] humbles himself shall be exalted. In other words, humility leads to exaltation – sometimes in this life but for certain in eternity, while pride leads to humiliation, sometimes in this life but for certain in eternity.
    3. Psalm 138:6 . . . For though the LORD is exalted, yet He regards the lowly, but the haughty He knows from afar. He keeps His distance.
    4. Proverbs 16:18-19 . . . Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. [19] It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.
    5. Proverbs 26:12 . . . Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
    6. Proverbs 27:2 . . . Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.
    7. Romans 12:16b . . . Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.
    8. Luke 18:10-14 . . . Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: “God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.” [13] But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” [14] I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.
    9. Finally, I want to remind you of Isaiah 14:12-16, which proclaims that the single sin that resulted in Lucifer being cast out of heaven, and on some future day being cast into the Lake of Fire, is pride. And for him it was the pride of believing he was worthy enough, or of such

importance, as to have the right to claim power, position, and authority equal to God's.

## B. Prayer

## II. Definitions of humility and pride

A. Humility is the quality of character and state of mind whereby you hold a modest estimation of yourself, your importance, and your worth, and this modest estimation is proven genuine in how you relate to God and the people around you.

1. Those who are humble have such an awe and reverence for God that it is natural for them to humble themselves in the presence of God.
2. The humble are aware of their own weaknesses and powerlessness, therefore they put their trust in God and depend on Him as their first and foremost source of security, provision, and protection.
3. Though the humble have an honest assessment of their intellect, education, personality strengths, and natural abilities, they do not use any of them in an aggressive, overbearing, disrespectful, arrogant, controlling, or self-serving way.
4. Those who are humble willingly set aside their rights for the good of others, or stay in the background so others can enjoy the spotlight or a position of importance.
5. The humble graciously submit to those in authority. They take responsibility and apologize for failure and wrongs done, and they quietly accept humiliation and embarrassment – whether self-imposed or unjustly forced on them by others.

B. Pride is the quality or state of having an excessive estimation of your superiority or worth in areas such as natural abilities, beauty, importance, intellect, position, wealth, and power – and is accompanied by an unjustified estimation of the inferiority or unworthiness of others around you.

1. Those who are proud are often dissatisfied with God – deeming His will occasionally irrational, His provision and protection inadequate, His blessings insufficient, and His love undependable.
2. When the proud appear to be serving the Lord, they are really serving themselves in that they are using the Lord and His work to gain some measure of respect, fame, power, and/or financial gain for themselves.
3. Those who are proud see themselves as superior. Therefore they look down on those they deem inferior, have an arrogant attitude toward them, and speak about them with contempt.

4. Finally, a proud person often acts haughty, over confident, rash, insolent, self-ruled, and domineering.

### III. Those who are humble

- A. Of all the ways humility affects us, its affect on how we think about and treat God is the most important.
  1. Humility treats God as the supreme being who is immeasurable superior to human beings who are, by comparison, immeasurably inferior. Humility gives God utmost respect, willing submission, cheerful obedience, and whole-hearted allegiance.
  2. Therefore, the scripture says that God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6); He give the kingdom of heaven to the humble (Matthew 5:3); He pays attention to the humble, considers their needs, and supports them (Psalm 138:6; 147:6); He rewards the humble with riches, honor, and life – if not in this life then in eternity (Proverbs 24:4); and in His own timing – He exalts the humble – just as He raised Jesus and seated Him at His right hand (James 4:10).
  3. Therefore, it is important to remember that any exaltation worth having comes from God as a reward for humility, while the rewards and glory produced by pride are shallow and fleeting, for they come from people who are, themselves, fickle and temporary.
- B. Humility toward our fellow man is equally important – just as the second of the two great commandments is equally important to the first.
  1. It is pride that feeds conflicts, while humility feeds forgiveness and reconciliation.
  2. Pride feeds unkind words, put downs, abusive speech, dissension, and broken relationships, while humility feeds wise words fittingly spoken (Proverbs 25:11), wholesome words that build up and encourage (Ephesians 4:29), unity (Ephesians 4:1-3), truth spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15), and love itself (Colossians 3:14).
  3. Therefore, humility is an essential ingredient and driving force for meaningful, mutually loving, and lasting relationships.
- C. There is no better example of humility than Jesus Christ, for He is not only the example of humility in general, He is the premier example of humility under difficult circumstances, and in the face of injustice, and under unjust attacks on His character, and in paying the cost of humility – but also in reaping the eternal rewards of humility.
  1. For example, in Philippians 2:5-11, we read that though Jesus Christ existed in the form of God, He did not regard His equality with God a thing to be clung to or fought for, but willingly humbled Himself

by taking on the form of a human being and the position of a slave, and He submitted himself to the authority of God – as if He were not God. But He did not stop there, He further humbled Himself by obeying God to the point of dying on a cross for sins He never committed. In response, God exalted Him above everyone else, so that one day, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

2. The scriptures affirm that Jesus is the eternal God, yet He is also meek and humble of heart. And to get a picture of this mix of deity and humility, we can turn to Luke 22:27, where Jesus said, “I am among you as the one who serves.” And who was He serving? At that moment, He was serving His disciples, yet in a fuller, universal way, He has and continues to serve all of us.
3. Now before moving on, I want to remind you that it was the devil’s pride that brought about our sin condition, while it was Christ’s humility that brought about our redemption. Therefore, when we humble ourselves, we are acting like Jesus, and when we raise ourselves up in pride, we are acting like the devil.

#### D. Final encouragement and warning

1. Before moving to the topic of pride, I want to encourage those who choose humility to keep in mind that though you lower yourself to the lowest level, you are aligning yourself with the highest being – Jesus Christ, which means that one day God will raise you up to a position of exaltation just as He raised up Jesus Christ.
2. But I also want to give one warning. Humility is not silent in the face of evil, and even when it is quiet, it never implies it approves of wrong doing. Therefore, in your humility, boldly yet graciously, honestly yet respectfully, stand for truth, justice, and the cause of Jesus Christ.

#### IV. Those who are prideful.

##### A. Of all the ways pride affects us, its affect on how we think about and treat God is the most evil. For example,

1. Many who are proud think there is no God, or treat the concept of a God with extreme irreverence and disrespect.
2. Those who think there is a God speak of Him as an inferior being who has been and continues be unjust and unloving in his dealings with humanity,
  - a. or as a God whose demands are excessive and unrealistic,
  - b. or as a God whose requirements are unclear and whose justice is erratic so that we are at the mercy of His whims.

3. Many who are proud are convinced they know more than God about right and wrong, fair and unfair, what is and what isn't valuable, what is essential for a happy life and what is harmful to a happy life. In other words, the proud generally believe they know more than God and are able to run their lives better than God.
  4. Therefore, pride is the enemy of seeing God, believing in God, and treating God as He is worthy of being seen, trusted, and treated.
- B. In our human relationships, pride is an evil that drives ill-will, hatred, unholy competition, division, and damaged or broken relationships.
1. Those who are proud focus on their successes and their aspirations for success, while focusing on the failures of others.
    - a. Regarding their own failures and wrong-doing, they either explain them away – as if they had done nothing wrong, or they point out those who have done far worse – as if the comparison should make us thankful their wrong-doing wasn't as bad.
    - b. In other words, the proud are often fault-finding, critical, and self-righteous. They look at other's faults as if they are not only heinous, but also intentional, while treating their own faults as good intentions that somehow didn't work out as intended.
  2. The proud are independent and self-ruled. They don't want to be told what to do, and they do not believe they should have to submit to any authority they deem unsuitable.
  3. Those who are proud believe they are right, and if you disagree with them, you are the one who is wrong. If you criticize a proud person, you will have a fight on your hands, because they will argue with you – almost endlessly – in an effort to get you to withdraw the criticism.
  4. The proud demand their rights while often treating others as if they have no rights. They expect to be served while rarely volunteering to be the one who serves. They expect to be accepted and approved while being stingy in extending acceptance and approval to others.
  5. Those who are proud are unhappy, and sometimes even angry when others are praised while they are overlooked. In fact, when another is praised and they are overlooked, they often explain why they should have been the one praised while the one who was praised should have been overlooked.
  6. The proud are quick to blame others, but slow to accept responsibility or confess their wrong-doing after being careless, or acting irresponsible, or doing something sinful.
    - a. In fact, you rarely hear a proud person say, "I was wrong for doing so and so, will you please forgive me?"

- b. This is because they are obsessed with having a good public reputation, and any admission of wrong-doing would tarnish it.
- 7. When a proud person is remorseful over sin committed, it is usually remorse over being caught – because being caught results in the loss of reputation and having to pay certain consequences.
- 8. Finally, proud people have a hard time keeping friends. The proud may have many so-called friends, but for them, genuine friends are a rarity.

C. The difficulty of teaching, exhorting, and warning the proud

- 1. The greatest difficulty when it comes to teaching, exhorting and warning the proud is that they are unlikely to honestly assess themselves, and so they neither see their pride nor the destructive effects of pride. Nevertheless, I do want to add three warnings.
- 2. First, pride sets you against God and sets God against you. This adds a degree of difficulty to life that no one needs, for life is hard enough.
- 3. Second, pride limits or even inhibits you from finding and enjoying mutually meaningful and lasting relationships.
- 4. Third, the benefits you long to obtain through pride are temporary, but the pursuit of those benefits will result in eternal loss – unless you repent and choose God’s way of humility.
  - a. If you do not repent in this life, then at the judgment seat of Christ, you will realize what you have lost by pursuing the shallow, fleeting benefits of pride.
  - b. But sadly, by then it will be too late to repent and change your ways.
- 5. Therefore, I urge those who are proud to humble themselves, and from that condition of humility, seek the treasures that are eternal.

V. Conclusion

- A. In summary, I will read from James 4:6b-10 . . . Therefore, GOD is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. [7] Submit therefore 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] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.