

## PRIDE AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT

Solomon wrote: *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"* (Prov. 16:18). The Bible is replete with illustrations of the truth Solomon expressed. Cain thought he could sacrifice what pleased him and it would please God. It did not, and his pride led to the slaying of his brother. Pharaoh knew not the Lord, neither would he listen to His voice to let Israel go. The entire Egyptian army perished in the Red Sea. Nadab and Abihu thought a fire of their choosing would be as good as what God required. They died before the Lord. The illustrations could go on and on, but these are sufficient to prove the point; pride does indeed go before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

As the above examples show, pride is not a bad attitude reserved for those who are aliens from God. God's people can manifest a haughty spirit. Pride shows a lack of love, because love is not puffed up and does not seek her own (1 Cor. 13:3-5). The pride of life is of the world, not of the Father (1 John 2:16). The lusts of the flesh, including the pride of life, were no doubt part of the cause of some going *"out from us,"* as John said they did (v. 19). Pride is often a problem found in an inexperienced person, therefore a novice is not to be an elder in the Lord's church (1 Tim. 3:6). Jesus informed the scribes and Pharisees that pride fell into the same category as thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, and foolishness (Mark 7:22).

All people must guard against pride. Pride has no boundaries. It can strike the poor or the wealthy, the ignorant as certainly as the knowledgeable, a follower as well as a leader, and the uneducated as surely as the educated. Pride may more often strike those who are "higher up the ladder" in the foregoing pairs, but it can strike the less affluent and influential as well as those who are more so. That is because pride is the condition of a person thinking more highly of himself than he ought (Rom. 12:3), and no one is immune to that trap.

James wrote: *"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away"* (Jam. 1:9,10). That is true because these verses are sandwiched between those making the point that all things come from God. Whether it is wisdom (v. 5) or any other good and perfect gift (v. 17), the gospel, foreordained of the Father, and executed by the Son, makes all men spiritual equals. The gospel manifests the importance of the feeble in the eyes of God, and exposes the weakness of the strong, because he cannot save himself. Why then, should anyone glory in himself?

There is a growing problem in the brotherhood of both the presence of pride and its corruption. Some involved in works receiving financial support from individuals or congregations have come to believe they have no responsibility to give an account for what they do, or give an answer to concerns their brethren, including supporters, have. The bigger and better known the work gets, the less accountability they recognize.

When men persist in that attitude, are rebuked, yet refuse to repent of such pride, it is time for their works to fold or be taken over by others more humble.

What a contrast there is between men like the apostle Paul who considered himself the chief of sinners, because he **once** persecuted the church (1 Tim. 1:15), and many of our preachers today who persecute it **now**. There is nothing wrong with advanced educational degrees, as such. It may be a coincidence, but it seems the higher degree of education our preachers achieve, their pride increases exponentially, and their willingness to give account of themselves to their brethren all but vanishes. They speak over the heads of the rest of us, about what this or that theologian has written, informing us of logical inconsistencies of this or that human philosopher. They dwell on the psychological imperfections that trip us up on a daily basis, but the gospel and its requirements seldom pass their lips. They “pride” themselves on their tolerance to share podiums with those of questionable soundness. When challenged over their actions, they ignore it and pursue the path of stony silence or attack those who seek an explanation.

On the other hand, there is a necessary warning for the rest of us. We must be careful not to affix to another, the charge of a haughty spirit when it may not be there at all. None of us can know the hearts of others, thus we must not judge on the basis of appearance (John 7:24) and presume we can discern the motivation of someone else’s heart. Rather, as Jesus said, “*ye shall know them by their fruits*” (Matt. 7:16, 20). The words, deeds, and if he reveals them to us, his thoughts, tell us whether a man is full of pride and of himself, or if he is humble before God and men and full to overflowing with the truth of God and the goodness that accompanies righteousness with fear and trembling.

Jesus told a parable (Luke 18: 10-14) of a Pharisee and a publican who went up to the temple to pray. We know the differences between the two men and the prayers they prayed, but sometimes we overlook verse 9, the context of the parable. “*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*” One could hardly imagine a more complete description of this human fault of pride. We also notice the destruction that followed, when the Pharisee went down from the temple unjustified. The publican, on the other hand recognized he was a sinner. He manifested a spirit of humility, and was justified in his prayer. Men do not just need a good dose of humility, without it they will fall in judgment, and what a fall it will be!

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