

The Few, The Humble

It's been said that pride is itself the essence of all sin. If you think about it for a moment, that isn't too big a stretch. Pride is the instigator of evil.

In checking several Bible translations, the word "pride" can be found in at least 50 places in each. We know that if God has something in the Bible multiple times it is important to Him and then should also be important to us.

It is interesting that God feels so strongly about pride. It is listed over fifty times and first among things He hates. That's a pretty strong statement. He doesn't just dislike it, He hates it.

Proverbs 6: 16-19

These six *things* the LORD hates; yea, seven *are* an abomination unto Him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

A heart that plots wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to evil,

A false witness *who* speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren.

Look at that list again. Why do you think God hates these particular six things? Each one shows an attribute of Satan the devil. Satan/Lucifer rebelled against God. In his prideful arrogant manner, he tried to exalt himself above the Creator God, and turned one third of the angels against God. He was in the Garden of Eden and corrupted Adam and Eve.

Pride gives us an overinflated opinion of ourselves, our knowledge and also our wisdom. We all want to help others. After all, isn't that what good Christians do? We help other people, the brethren and those in need.

The problem arises when we feel we have the solution to their problem. You know absolutely that you are right. You start off with the right intentions and try to show them where they are or where they went wrong. Good plan, unfortunately it has been tried a number of times with poor results. The most notable in the Bible is found in Job.

We are familiar with the story but let's quickly look at it again. Job was being tormented by Satan. His family was killed, his flocks destroyed, house burned all in an attempt by Satan to prove to God he could get Job to curse Him. Job did not curse God. (Job 1:1-22).

Then Satan was allowed to afflict Job physically, which he did. Job was struck with boils over his entire body. When Job's friends heard of this they went to him to comfort him. (Job 2: 1-13). Job still did not curse God but did curse the day of his birth. (Job 3: 1-5).

With this, Job's friends well intentioned as they were, told Job why he was suffering and what he needed to do.

“And Eliphaz the Temanite answered:

“Shall one try to speak a word with you, *or* will you grow weary? But who can hold back himself from speaking? ...”

“Remember now who *ever* perished being innocent? Or where were the righteous ever cut off?

Even as I have seen, the ones who plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His nostrils they are destroyed.”
(Job 4:1-2, 7-9).

His other two friends, Bildad and Zophar, were equally as helpful indicating that he must have done something and needs to repent. These three well intentioned friends did not know that God had permitted Satan to test His servant Job. The three friends went to great lengths to convince Job they were right.

In Job 42 after God humbled Job we see God chastise the three men for their misguided efforts.

“And it came to pass after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and your two friends. For you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job *has*.” (Job 42:7).

So, with the best of intentions, without all the information and without a reasonable amount of wisdom, they offered their best solutions and recommendations to Job.

Solomon wrote about man's attitude this way;

“There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof *is* the way of death.”
(Proverbs 14:12 see also Proverbs 16:25).

This is the attitude adopted by Adam and Eve in the garden after being deceived by Satan. It seems man has tried to convince himself it is a correct path since then. For most humans it is very easy to see the prideful attitude or faults of others but next to impossible for us to realize we too can be just as guilty.

All of us suffer from this from time to time. We feel we are right or, in fact, know we are right. Hopefully, as we grow in our knowledge of God's Word as He opens it to us, these times become fewer, we become more humble and we develop more wisdom.

Sometimes the best way to help a brethren instead of assuming we have the answers to their problem is to humbly seek wisdom from God through prayer.

However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him. (James 1:5).

This allows us to seek answers from God instead of relying on our fractured human reasoning, so our best intentions then have a better chance of succeeding. We become a comforter and helper rather than a hinderance.

Fulfilling Our Covenant Pledge

Benjamin Franklin once said, "There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond and to know one's self."

Each year we prepare for the Spring Holy Days we are to reflect on our spiritual condition. Our commitment, our attitude, the way we conduct our lives and our overall being as true members of the Body of Christ as we prepare to take the Passover. We have to know ourselves.

When we were baptized we buried our old selves in the watery grave and rose to a new life committed to God. We are part of God's family and as such we are to conduct ourselves much differently than we did in the world.

We were called by God and Christ is to be our example.

For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps

Who committed no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth;
Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; *when* suffering, He threatened not,
but committed *Himself* to Him Who judges righteously;
Who Himself bore our sins within His own body on the tree, so that we, being dead to
sins, may live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes you were healed.
For you were as sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and
Guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21-25).

“...so that we, being dead to sins, may live unto righteousness.” There it is, “may live unto
righteousness.” Is that what we do? Are we doing it to the best of our ability? Do we
project a favorable image to all around us? Will we hear, “Well done good and faithful
servant.”?

We can develop the correct attitude by working with the brethren. Treat each other with
love and respect and help each other. This can be the base or foundation we need to build
and strengthen so we have the resilience to deal with the coming struggles. In Galatian’s 5
the apostle Paul outlines a pathway for our conduct and what could happen if we don’t.

“For you have been called unto freedom, brethren; only do not *use* this freedom for an
occasion to the flesh: rather, serve one another with love. For the whole law is fulfilled in
the *commandment*: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour
one another, watch out *lest* you be consumed by one another.” (Galatians 5:13-15).

Jesus told us to “... love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and
with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt 22:37, 39. Also
Mark 12:30-31 and Luke 10:27). Paul then instructs us that if we do not do this, love one
another, we will end up devouring and consuming one another.

In Galatians 5: 19-21 Paul lists the works of the flesh;

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: adultery, fornication,
uncleanness, licentiousness,
Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strifes, jealousies, indignations, contentions, divisions, sects,
Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such things as these; concerning which
I am telling you beforehand, even as I have also said in the past, that those who do such
things shall not inherit *the* kingdom of God. (vs 19-21).

He then lists “fruits of the Spirit”. This is what we need to strive for. We were to have
buried the old self and live in newness of life. Here it is.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23).

Let's take a couple of these and explore their true meaning. I have used William Barclay's Commentary and Expositor's Bible Commentary for these.

Love:

“This is not a word which classical Greek uses commonly. In Greek there are four words for love. (a) *Eros* means the love of a man for a maid; it is the love which has passion in it. It is never used in the New Testament at all. (b) *Philia* is the warm love which we feel for our nearest and our dearest; it is a thing of the heart. (c) *Storge* rather means affection and is specially used of the love of parents and children. (d) *Agape*, the Christian word, means unconquerable benevolence. It means that no matter what a man may do to us by way of insult or injury or humiliation we will never seek anything else but his highest good. It is therefore a feeling of the mind as much as of the heart; it concerns the will as much as the emotions. It describes the deliberate effort—which we can make only with the help of God—never to seek anything but the best even for those who seek the worst for us” (William Barclay).

Longsuffering: (*makrothumía*):

Patience, endurance, slowness in avenging wrongs, forbearance. It is “the quality of putting up with others, even when one is severely tried. The importance of patience is evidenced by its being most often used of the character of God” (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

“Generally speaking the word is not used of patience in regard to things or events but in regard to people. Chrysostom said that it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath. The most illuminating thing about it is that it is commonly used in the New Testament of the attitude of God towards men. In our dealings with our fellow men we must reproduce this loving, forbearing, forgiving, patient attitude of God towards ourselves” (William Barclay).

Kindness: (*chrestótes*):

Moral goodness, integrity.

“Kindness and goodness are closely connected words. For kindness the word is *chrestotes*. ... The Rheims version of 2 Cor. 6:6 translates it *sweetness*. It is a lovely word. ... Old wine is called *chrestos*, mellow. Christ’s yoke is called *chrestos*, that is, it does not chafe. The whole idea of the word is a goodness which is kind” (William Barclay).

Goodness: (*agathosúne*):

Uprightness of heart and life; a goodness which benefits others.

“The word Paul uses for goodness (*agathosune*) is a peculiarly Bible word and does not occur in secular Greek (Rom. 15:14; Eph. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:11). It is the widest word for goodness” (William Barclay).

Gentleness: (*praótes*):

Mildness, meekness.

“*Praotes* is the most untranslatable of words. In the New Testament it has three main meanings.

“(a) It means being submissive to the will of God (Matt. 5:5; Matt. 11:29; Matt. 21:5).

“(b) It means being teachable, being not too proud to learn (Jas. 1:21).

“(c) Most often of all it means being considerate (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Eph. 4:2). Aristotle defined *praotes* as the mean between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness, the quality of the man who is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time. What throws most light on its meaning is that the adjective *praus* is used of an animal that has been tamed and brought under control; and so the word speaks of that self-control which Christ alone can give” (William Barclay).

Self-control: (*engkráteia*):

“Self-control’ is the quality that gives victory over fleshly desires and which is therefore closely related to chastity both in mind and conduct. ...As Barclay says ..., ‘*Enkrateia* is that great quality which ... makes [a man] able to live and to walk in the world, and yet to keep his garments unspotted from the world” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*).

We know that the New Covenant raises the standard of the law to the spiritual intent. If we use these as a guide this will put us in sync with that spiritual intent. We start by respecting one another in the fellowship and our efforts should extend outside. We can be the examples that God hoped the children of Israel would be to the other countries.

Pride can be a very destructive element. As we noted earlier, man can justify anything, but the end result is death. God does not like or respect the proud.

Everyone who is proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD; *though* joined hand in hand, he shall not be unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5).

“God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.” (James 4:6).

“For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,” says the LORD. “But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.” (Isaiah 66:2).

God wants us to be humble, not proudful. He called us to be sons and daughters in His family. If we follow His commandments and show Him we will love and obey Him we will receive an awesome reward, eternal life in His Kingdom.

Let’s all try and edify one another. Remove the pride and arrogance. Don’t lift yourself up above any of the brethren. We can enjoy and joke with each other but before we make comments on anything think about intent: yours and theirs. Remember, only “God is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12).

Remember what Paul told the Corinthians, it applies to us as well.

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For you see your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many who are wise according to the flesh, not many who are powerful, not many who are high-born *among you*.

Rather, God has chosen the foolish things of the world, so that He might put to shame those who are wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world so that He might put to shame the strong things.

And the low-born of the world, and the despised has God chosen—even the things that are counted as nothing—in order that He might bring to nothing the things that are; So that no flesh might glory in His presence.” (1 Corinthians 1:25-29).

Even though we are not the wise or powerful, God called us to be part of His Kingdom. If we Love and obey Him He will open our understanding and we will grow in grace and knowledge. He will prepare us to be wise and powerful if we follow His path and not the way of the world, Satan’s path. Also, look at the last line in the things God hates,

Proverbs 6:19, “... A false witness *who* speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren.

Let’s close in Galatians 6: 1-8. This will bring us full circle.

“Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in some offense, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he is deceiving himself.

But let each one prove his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another;

For each one shall bear his own burden.

Let the one who is being taught in the Word share all *his* good things with the one who is teaching *him*.

Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh. But the one who sows to the Spirit shall reap eternal life from the Spirit.”

