

PRIDE

March 8, 2006

Posted by [JP](#)

Pride. The scriptures talk much about it don't they?

Pro 16:18 tells us: *Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Pro 29:23 agrees and tells us: *A man's pride will bring him low, but he who is of a humble spirit will obtain honor.*

We are warned against pride and told that it leads to destruction. But how? Why? Look at Pro 11:2 *When swelling and pride come, then emptiness and shame come also, but with the humble (those who are lowly, who have been pruned or chiseled by trial, and renounce self) are skillful and godly Wisdom and soundness.*

... *Then emptiness and shame come also...* what does this tell us about our nature and pride? I truly think that everything scriptures tell us to do, or not to do, has more than just a relational aspect to it. Scriptural admonitions address medical issues, psychological/emotional issues, societal issues, etc. Everything the Bible tells us to be wary of has some type of 'real world' consequence which can be taken in and of itself, even for those who do not believe in God.

In this sense, if we look at pride we see a sound psychological element involved in the dangers of a prideful stance.

First, let me explain that the sin of pride is my own personal demon. I struggle with pride in so many forms I am just beginning to understand the depths of the infection. It was this morning, as Proverbs 16:18 popped into my mind quite unexpectedly, that I started wondering "Why does pride go before destruction?" and is my nature? I began to think about pride in its practical, physical dimension and what is involved when one is proud, or should I say; Self-important, and how that leads to a fall.

The dictionary defines pride as such:

1. A sense of one's own proper dignity or value; self-respect.
2. Pleasure or satisfaction taken in an achievement, possession, or association.
3. Arrogant or disdainful conduct or treatment; haughtiness.
4. A cause or source of pleasure or satisfaction; the best of a group or class.
5. An excessively high opinion of oneself; conceit.

Our first inclination, when thinking of pride is to consider it as conceit, an exceptionally high opinion of oneself. I think the danger here is not considering the truer concept of pride, a subtle pride, as demonstrated in the first definition: A sense of one's own proper dignity or value. Here, I think is the true danger of pride.

In my life, this is the truer element of pride. I like to be recognized. I need, or rather, desire to be recognized, acknowledged for those things I do well, or believe that I do well, and am often disconcerted when that recognition does not occur.

Actually, if you are reading this, take a moment to consider the whole idea of Web logs. The idea of revocation and acknowledgement is much the driving force behind them, is it not? Why do we, why do I, have a blog? So people will read what I have to say, to see me and add some value to what I think I have to offer.

In school I liked to excel, I liked to be first in the class, score highest on tests, give the best presentations, offer the most valid comments during discussions, and when I came in at less than first, or had my commentary dismissed as inaccurate, incorrect, or of little importance, I felt, I feel, a sense of hurt. I feel diminished in some way. My pride puts me in a position where I allow my sense of self to be discounted, and that leads to emotional and psychological distress.

I know I am not the only one in the world in this situation. If you go to any bookstore and look through the 'self-help' section you will find a plethora of books addressing self-esteem. In fact, much of what is going wrong in relationships, and the working of the world in general, can be tracked back to the idea of one's self-worth.

Heck, our country was founded upon this very principle. If you look at the Declaration of Independence it says: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights...*" that truly is a declaration of self-worth.

It is our nature to want to be considered of value, to be recognized for that value, and when we expect the recognition of that value (pride) we unwittingly set ourselves up for injury.

So we understand that scripture tells us of this danger, tells us that this 'sin of pride' will lead us to ruin. More so for those who place an inordinate amount of emphasis on external recognition, who strive to achieve in order to be recognized, and to be 'valued.' It tells us of this danger and warns against it.

I remember when I was younger I wanted nothing more than to be a preacher, a traveling evangelist actually. I loved God with all my heart and wanted to preach His Word to churches across the country. I thought 'How cool it would be to travel around, preach moving and exciting sermons and touch the lives of Christians everywhere...'

As I grew older, and after a long and exhausting battle with life and faith (a testimony I may post about at some time), I came back to 'the Church' and once again thought about preaching. I recognized though, the element of self-importance which was at the kernel of this desire to minister. I recognized that my motives for wanting to preach were not as much led by the desire to spread the Gospel, as by the desire to be a great preacher. I avoided this ministry knowing that I would not stand and speak only for the glory of God, but for the glory of JP as well.

The sad part of this self-realization is that, while I recognized my own shortcomings, I did not recognize the pervasive nature of the subtle pride with which I am plagued. I understood enough to seek humility in the Lord, but not enough to understand that I sat myself in the background secretly desiring for people to recognize my contributions and validate my worth through their recognition. And each time I did something well, without drawing attention to myself, without ‘blowing my own horn’, I set myself up for, and received, emotional injury when I did not get that recognition, the *emptiness and shame* came.

1Co 15:10 *But by the grace (the unmerited favor and blessing) of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not [found to be] for nothing (fruitless and without effect). In fact, I worked harder than all of them [the apostles], though it was not really I, but the grace (the unmerited favor and blessing) of God which was with me.*

[The Cure for Pride: Humility Through Recognition of God’s Grace](#)

PART 1

March 12, 2006

Posted by JP.

In my earlier post on [PRIDE](#), I mentioned that I would attempt to offer a cure for pride. I should have said rather that I would offer a take on **God’s cure** for pride, which is humility.

We can see the cure for pride expressed simply in 1Peter 5:6-7:

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully. [Ps. 55:22.]

But do we truly understand the full force of this passage? Before we discuss the cure, let us look again at pride. Here are ten Biblical observations about pride (obviously humility is the opposite of these):

1. Pride is self-satisfaction

God says to Israel in Hosea 13:4-6:

Yet I am the Lord your God from [the time you became a nation in] the land of Egypt, and you shall know or recognize no God but Me, for there is no Savior besides Me. I knew (recognized, understood, and had regard for) you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled [when they fed, they grew full], and their heart was lifted up; therefore have they forgotten Me.

2. Pride is self-sufficiency and self-reliance

Moses warns the people of God in Deuteronomy 8:11-17 about what will happen when they have rest in the Promised Land:

Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His precepts, and His statutes which I command you today, Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and live in them, And when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all you have is multiplied, Then your [minds and] hearts be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, but Who brought you forth water out of the flinty rock, Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. And beware lest you say in your [mind and] heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.

Although Moses warned about God's goodness being turned into self-sufficiency, we know that it happened anyway.

3. Pride considers itself above instruction

In Jeremiah 13:9-10 God says to the people of Judah:

...After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. These evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall even be like this girdle or waistcloth, which is profitable for nothing.

Pride stubbornly refuses to be taught the way of God, and makes its own wishes, its own way, the measure of truth.

4. Pride is insubordinate

Psalm 119:21 says: *You rebuke the proud and arrogant, the accursed ones, who err and wander from Your commandments.*

When the commandments of God are spoken, pride turns away and will not submit. It rejects the right and authority of God to command.

5. Pride takes credit for what God alone does

One of the most vivid illustrations of this is the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon in Daniel 4:30-32:

The king said, Is not this the great Babylon that I have built as the royal residence and seat of government by the might of my power and for the honor and glory of my majesty? While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, And you shall be driven from among men and your dwelling will be with the living creatures of the field. You will be made to eat grass like the oxen, and seven times [or years] shall pass over you until you have learned and know that the Most High [God] rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He will.

Then, after his season of humiliation grazing in the fields like an ox, Nebuchadnezzar is restored and confesses:

And at the end of the days [seven years], I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding and the right use of my mind returned to me; and I blessed the Most High [God] and I praised and honored and glorified Him Who lives forever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion; and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

6. Pride exults in being made much of

In Matthew 23:5-7 Jesus indicted the religious leaders in Jerusalem:

They do all their works to be seen of men; for they make wide their phylacteries (small cases enclosing certain Scripture passages, worn during prayer on the left arm and forehead) and make long their fringes [worn by all male Israelites, according to the command]. And they take pleasure in and [thus] love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, And to be greeted with honor in the marketplaces and to have people call them rabbi.

7. Pride aspires to the place of God

In Acts 12:21-23 we read the story of Herod's pride:

On an appointed day Herod arrayed himself in his royal robes, took his seat upon [his] throne, and addressed an oration to them. And the assembled people shouted, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man! And at once an angel of the Lord smote him and cut him down, because he did not give God the glory [the preeminence and kingly majesty that belong to Him as the supreme Ruler]; and he was eaten by worms and died.

8. Pride opposes the very existence of God

Psa 10:4 *The wicked one in the pride of his countenance will not seek [inquire of, and yearn for] God; all his thoughts are that there is no God [for He never punishes].*

Self-sufficiency, the very core of pride is indeed dependent upon the non-existence of God.

9. Pride refuses to trust in God

Proverbs 28:25 provides us a contrast arrogance and trust: *He who is of a greedy spirit stirs up strife, but he who puts his trust in the Lord shall be enriched and blessed.*

Pride cannot trust God. The posture of trust is too weak, too dependent. It calls too much attention to the strength and wisdom of another. Trusting God is the heartbeat of humility, the opposite of pride. When we are proud there are two possibilities: one is that we feel a false security based on our own imagined power and shrewdness to avert catastrophe. The other is that we realize that we cannot guarantee our security.

10. Pride is anxious about the future In Isaiah 51:12-13, God says to anxious Israel that their problem is pride:

I, even I, am He Who comforts you. Who are you, that you should be afraid of man, who shall die, and of a son of man, who shall be made [as destructible] as grass, That you should forget the Lord your Maker, Who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and fear continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he makes ready to destroy or even though he did so? And where is the fury of the oppressor?

God basically is asking them “Who do you think you are to be afraid?” It sounds strange but that is the subtlety of pride. Our self-sufficiency, our feeling of self-worth is such that it keeps us from trusting in God to take care of us and builds in us fear and anxiety.

Now we can see clearly and feel the force of 1Peter 5:6-7:

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.

In what way should we humble ourselves? By “*casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.*” (v. 7). The most humble thing in the world is to “...*entrust your soul to a Faithful Creator.*”(1Pet 4:19), casting our anxieties on God and trusting in the promise that He cares for you and has the wisdom and power to put that care to work in a glorious way.

Easier said than done? I thought it was... In the beginning of this I said that humility is the opposite of pride – of the ten biblical observations of pride. Truly though, the trust in God described in 1st Peter is the opposite of pride. **It is the essence of humility.** It’s the confidence that the mighty hand of God is not over you to *crush* you but to *care* for you, just like the promise says. Don’t be proud, but cast your anxieties on him because he will care for you.

The Cure for Pride: Humility Through Recognition of God's Grace

PART 2

March 15, 2006

Posted by JP

*Phi 2:1-8 So by whatever [appeal to you there is in our mutual dwelling in Christ, by whatever] strengthening and consoling and encouraging [our relationship] in Him [affords], by whatever persuasive incentive there is in love, by whatever participation in the [Holy] Spirit [we share], and by whatever depth of affection and compassionate sympathy, Fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention. Do nothing from factional motives [through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends] or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility [lowliness of mind] let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves]. Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others. Let this same [attitude and purpose and humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus [Let Him be your example in humility]: *Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped [or retained], But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant [or slave], in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!**

This passage is the most succinct explanation of humility which I can offer: "...*let the same attitude, purpose, and mind be in you which was in Christ...*"

Jesus is God, yet He willingly stripped Himself of that position of Glory and power to live as a man, as a servant to all men, ultimately subjecting Himself to unimaginable humiliation and torture, giving His physical life in order to give us the greatest gift of all – salvation from sin and eternal death.

That is the example of humility to which we should aspire. A willing subjugation of our self; our self-focus and our will, and taking second seat to the will and purpose of God, to His glory, through His grace.

What is the humility in practical terms? Biblically there are several facets to humility, but first let us focus on that aspect that deals with our relation to God: humility is the right understanding of who you are before God. Humility is that quality of a Christian that demonstrates a right relationship and position before God. This demonstration is manifested in attitude, words, and deeds.

John the Baptist was humble: *“And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals,”* (Mk 1:7). He knew who he was in relation to Jesus. Remember the parable of the tax gather in Luke 18:9-14 where he said, *“Lord have mercy on me a sinner”*? Jesus called him humble. He knew that before God, he was a sinner.

This past Sunday my Pastor mentioned relational comparisons; He stated that he could jump as high as a professional basketball player (yes, we all laughed). He went on to explain that if he compared himself to an NBA player jumping to a 10’ rim, it would be ridiculous to think his vertical leap would compare. However, if he and that NBA player were jumping to the moon, then relationally he could jump just as high – for the difference of 2’ to 6’ is meaningless in the scope of distances of hundreds of thousands of miles.

Think of who Jesus is, His holiness, His greatness, His majesty, His love, His sacrifice, etc. Who are we compared to that? Our ‘good deeds’, our supposed ‘love’ for one another, etc. We are truly insignificant in such a comparison. Then remember that Jesus humbled Himself by becoming one of us, *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross,”* (Phil. 2:8). Think on this comparison, then ask yourself if you are humble or not.

Romans 12:3 says, *“For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith,”* (NASB).

God does not want us to think too highly of ourselves. Instead, he wants us to think soundly. Whenever I start getting prideful and begin thinking that I know a lot about the Bible, or how effective I am at work, or whatever else I can boast about, the Lord reminds me of how utterly pompous I really am. Does God need me to carry out His will on this earth? Not at all. Does He need me to answer tough questions for people? Not at all. Does He need me to “get things done”? Nope, not at all. He doesn’t need me at all. That is why it is really amazing that He uses me in spite of what I am inside. Now **THAT is grace!** What I need to do is listen to Him, look to the cross, love God first, love my neighbor second, and not think more highly of myself than I ought.

1Pet. 5:5 tells us; *“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* I don’t want God to oppose me. I suspect you don’t want Him to oppose you either. It is good to be humble before people and to be thought of as nice and kind and not proud; but our humility before God is where we need to start, not with people. We need to start with our relationship with Him that can only come through a proper relationship with Jesus. We need to be humble before God and dependent up Him, seeking His will. Therefore, prayer, the place of dependence upon God, is the practice of humility before God. When we let our souls bask in the presence of God, we find out who we really are: sinners, saved by grace, and kept by His love. And, as Moses’ face shined because of being in the presence of God, so too will your heart reflect the humility and love of Jesus as we spend time with Him in prayer. Seek Jesus and you will find perfect Humility.

God has told us at least five things about humility:

1. Humility begins with a sense of subordination to God in Christ. “*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master*” (Matthew 10:24). “*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*” (1Peter 5:6).

2. Humility does not feel a right to better treatment than Jesus got. “*If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!*” (Matthew 10:25). Therefore humility does not return evil for evil. It is not life based on its perceived rights. “*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps... While suffering, He uttered no threats, but handed [his cause] over to Him who judges righteously*” (1Peter 2:21-23).

3. Humility asserts truth not to bolster ego with control or with triumphs in debate, but as service to Christ and love to the adversary. “*Love rejoices in the truth*” (1Corinthians 13:6). “*What I [Jesus] tell you in the darkness, speak in the light... Do not fear*” (Matthew 10:27-28). “*We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake*” (2Cor 4:5).

4. Humility knows it is dependent on grace for all knowing and believing. “*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?*” (1Corinthians 4:7). “*In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls*” (James 1:21).

5. Humility knows it is fallible, and so it considers criticism and learns from it; but it also knows that God has made provision for human conviction, and that he calls us to persuade others. “*We see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known*” (1Cor 13:12). “*A wise man is he who listens to counsel*” (Proverbs 12:15). “*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men*” (2Cor 5:11).