

The Professor's Theological Home Page

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31)

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Understanding pride

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Pride seems like such a short and simple word, yet what the word actually signifies can be complicated. The world tells us that we should be proud of who we are, of our heritage, of our accomplishments, our gender, our abilities and such. Lack of prideful self-confidence is considered a character flaw by the world's standards. What does this mean for the born-again believer in Jesus Christ? Let's take a look at what the Bible teaches about the subject of pride according to Proverbs 16:18:

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. (KJV Pro. 16:18)

The pride in the context of this verse pertains to an arrogant attitude that is independent of God that will cause destructive results. Some synonyms for this type of pride would include an exaggerated self-esteem, being conceited or egotistical. Arrogance would be maximum pride. But how does pride destroy an individual and causes them to fall?

Pride not only corrodes relationships, but also burns your soul against correction and warnings. It can blind our minds to dangers and risks that will cause us to make foolish and destructive choices. Young people are especially vulnerable because they don't like to be corrected, since they tend to think they know it all. Pride is the reason young people, as well as some older individuals, have a tendency to reject any kind of authority. The rejection of authority is actually part of arrogance (2 Tim. 3:2).

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. (KJV 2 Tim. 3:2)

The word 'covetous' in this verse has a reference to loving money. This does not mean to appreciate money, but to sin in relationship to money, such as stealing to get it. This type of mindset has a distorted scale of values. It is quite obvious we need money to live; however we should not live for money.

We also see in 2 Timothy 3:2 that arrogant pride is being 'disobedient to parents'. We have to understand that being under the authority of our parents is the first system of authority that everyone is put under. Therefore, if we do not adjust properly to the authority of parents this will mean that we will not be able to adjust to any other systems of authority. We are all under some form of authority or another in life from that of our teachers or coaches in school, our boss at work, the police officer on the street, a judge in a court of law to even respecting the authority of traffic lights.

Needless to say, without any type of authority, rules or laws, we can conclude that chaos would reign in any society. The purpose of rules is to maintain order, so although we are free, with that freedom comes responsibility to respect the freedom, privacy, property and the life of others. Therefore, freedom and authority always go together. Lack of understanding of this principle makes for an individual with a distorted scale of values, as is the case with criminals. The criminal has the potential to end up in jail or dead since they are not in touch with this reality, and by definition, this makes for a psychotic individual who has a distorted view of reality. We don't have to look any further than the example of Satan for an illustration of this psychotic mentality. Scripture tells us that it was arrogant pride that cost the devil his place in heaven according to 1 Timothy 3:6.

Not a novice (recent convert), lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. (KJV 1 Tim. 3:6)

The condemnation of the Devil consisted of him wanting to be like God, which was not a very realistic goal at all (Isa. 14:14)! First of all, in order to be like God he would have to have the same attributes that God possesses. For the Devil to be like God would mean that he would have to be sovereign, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, present everywhere, completely truthful, perfectly just and righteous, unchanging and have an unlimited love. Although the Devil had the greatest attractiveness, personality and intelligence, he assumed to be as great as God. Not only would this be a total impossibility for Satan to achieve, but also for any other created beings such as us imperfect limited human beings. Satan's arrogance divorced him from the reality of these facts. Arrogance will always cause us to suffer from a psychotic state because it always divorces or distorts true reality.

Pride being a basic mental attitude sin always attracts other mental attitude sins. For instance, an arrogant individual will see others who have more of what makes the arrogant individual arrogant, such as more attractiveness, a better personality, or greater ability. This in turn will trigger the mental attitude of jealousy, which is always connected with pride. This type of mindset eventually brings pettiness in regards to their jealousy and, as a result, they also become stubborn and malicious. Arrogance never travels alone, but with other mental attitude sins that always trail close behind it. Not only does arrogance cause us to be miserable, but can ultimately bring corrective discipline from God because the Epistle of James tells us that it makes us an enemy of God. (James 4:4-6).

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain? The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy. But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (KJV James 4:4-6)

Friendship with the world is the intricate interlocking sinful desires that constitute the society of the unbelieving world. Unfortunately, many professing believers are immersed in many of the fleeting desires of Satan's world system of arrogance and this is why James is warning believers not to do this lest they become an enemy of God. The word 'resisteth' in verse 6 is translated from the Greeks word *antitassetai*, a military term meaning 'to battle against'. It is the epitome

of arrogance to want to go to battle with the Lord. No one has or ever will win a battle against the all-powerful God of the universe, who can destroy anybody by the word of His mouth!

This brings us to the question, what is the cure for pride? Simply put, the solution is humility, which is nothing more than to be free from any pride and arrogance. Humility does not and cannot exist in Satan's World system of arrogance. This is the reason we lose any genuine humility when we are out of the power of the Holy Spirit and are instead under the power of our sin nature. Remaining in fellowship by being under the power of the Holy Spirit is extremely vital to the believer's spiritual advancement.

By no means should humility be confused with humiliation, which is nothing more than reducing our view of ourselves to a lower status in our own eyes and that of others. Humility is not degrading oneself through some form of ascetic practice of some kind. Many times people will give up something they consider some pleasure in life or impose some sort of suffering on him or herself to show how humble they are. This type of practice is basically hypocrisy and/or ignorant foolishness and is actually a form of pride rather than humility. All forms of asceticism are related to very subtle types of arrogance.

Humility is a virtue for the born-again believer in Jesus Christ. As a system of thinking, humility is having poise as a function of our normal everyday life and having courage as a function under the abnormal circumstances of our life. This type of relaxed mental attitude recognizes that there is a greater power operating in our lives and thinks God's Biblical Truth at all times. Of course, in order to think God's Biblical Truth we have to first learn it in order to apply it. It is for this reason that renewing and rehabilitating our thinking consistently through Biblical Truth is critical to the Christian. When we become neglectful of accurately learning God's Word on a consistent basis under a qualified pastor/teacher, we are actually in a state of rebellion since Scripture mandates this of believers throughout Scripture. (Rom. 12:1-2)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (KJV Rom. 12:1-2)

To reject the mandates in these verses would mean the rejection of the authority of God's Word. Every day professing Christians neglect these mandates and make excuses why they don't abide to them through some excuse or another. As a result, they live confused about what is God's good, acceptable and perfect will for their lives. To these believers, the Epistle of James exhorts them to, 'humble yourself in the sight of God, and He shall lift you up' (James 4:10).

In conclusion, it is hoped that you realize pride is extremely harmful to our spiritual advancement and should be avoided at all cost. Arrogant pride will not only cause our reality to be distorted, but also cause us to be at war with the living God of the universe. The Epistle of James is clear on how we avoid going to war with God. We are commanded to avoid the sin nature lusts and pleasures that battle within us (James 4:1). We are to reject

Satan and not be preoccupied with his intricate world system in all its diverse forms of distractions (James 4:7). Humility is the key to building up the capacity that the Lord is looking for in every believer who advances to the higher ground of spiritual maturity.

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