

# PRIDE

*The Great Sin*

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## SOME REASONS WHY GOD HATES PRIDE

"There are only two safe places for a Christian—in the dust and in heaven. And of the two the dust is safer, for Satan fell from heaven," said a wise man.

Pride was the first sin to destroy the calm of eternity. It was pride that cast Lucifer from heaven and it was pride that cost our first parents their place in Paradise. Pride is the first sin to enter a man's heart and the last to leave. No sin is more offensive to God than the sin of pride. Pride has been referred to as the "complete anti-God state of mind." It militates against God's authority, God's law, and God's rule. This is why the Bible equates rebellion with witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23). Pride assaults God's throne and asserts its independence in an attempt to dislodge God as the Sovereign of the universe.

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God and pride are like oil and water—they don't mix! Pride is dogmatic in its antagonism to God, and God is absolute in His opposition to pride. The Creator never has—and never will—compromise with pride.

Humility is the foundation of all virtue, but pride is the essence of all sin. The world system operates on the basis of pride for all that is in the world is lust and pride (1 John 2:16). Pride and lust are root sins from which all other sins spring. Pride is the mother of evil.

God detests pride. He even hates a proud look (Prov. 6:16-17). God's loathing of pride is unalterable, for "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 16:5). But why does God hate pride so fiercely?

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## PRIDE IS SATANIC

Never forget that God did not make the Devil—Lucifer only became the Devil when he arrogantly became infatuated with himself. Yes, Lucifer is a created being. God said, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezek. 28:15). This beautiful, powerful, intelligent, and gifted cherub fell from his perfect estate when his heart was lifted up because of his own beauty and brightness (v. 17). No longer was he willing to be subservient to the Creator. Staggering pride was to blame for the tragedy in heaven.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne.... I will sit also upon the mount.... I will ascend above the heights... I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:12-14).

Self-will displaced God's will, and the Devil emerged. It has been said, "Man is never more like the Devil than when he is full of self-will." The Bible strictly forbids placing a novice in leadership, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). It was pride that caused Lucifer's fall and subsequent condemnation. The snare of pride is a deadly peril to which new converts should never be willfully subjected. Nothing does more to set a person out of the Devil's reach than humility.

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## PRIDE SPAWNS PRAYERLESSNESS

Once Solomon had completed the temple, the Lord instructed Israel on the proper way to approach Him in times of judgment. If the heavens withheld rain on account of their sins, or disobedience caused God to send pestilence among His people, then they were to pray toward the Lord's house. But even before they prayed, turned from their wicked ways, or sought the face of God, they needed to first humble themselves (2 Chron. 7:14). God required the people who were called by His name to humble themselves before they prayed or repented. So why does humility precede prayer? Why does humility come before turning from wicked ways?

Humility precedes prayer because there can be no real prayer without humility. Proverbs speaks of the man who brazenly turns his ear from the law, "Even his prayer shall be abomination" (28:9). Prayerlessness is the very first sign of pride. It has been said, "God's power will never fall until we do." Proud people don't pray. In fact, the only people who pray are those who need God, know they need God, and can't go on without God. Humility is the altar on which God wishes us to offer Him sacrifices.

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## PRIDE BRINGS CONFLICT

Why are there so many splintered relationships, so many broken marriages, and church splits? The Scripture gives us the short answer, "Only by pride cometh contention" (Prov. 13:10). Just as surely as pride erects a barrier between us and God, it also builds a wall between us and others. Whereas love seeks to build a bridge, pride seeks to erect a wall.

Pride can keep you from apologizing when you've been wrong. Pride can cause you to defend yourself. Pride can cause you to look down on others. If you allow it, pride can rob you of the most treasured relationships in life. "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife" (Prov. 28:25).

Humbling ourselves is the only way to get the roof off toward God and the walls down toward our fellow man. Once offences have been committed, whether intentional or unintentional, they must be dealt with. "I was wrong. I am sorry. Will you forgive me?" These are healing words that only a humble soul will use. Whenever you find a man willing to humble himself before God and man, you have found a man who will be exalted, because "humility comes before honor."

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## PRIDE RESULTS IN GOSSIP

"Thou shalt hide them ... from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them ... from the strife of tongues" (Ps. 31:20). Evil speaking, slander, and gossip are the direct result of pride. This comes as no surprise since the word "devil" comes from the Greek word "diabalos" which means slanderer. One of the Puritans said, "He that receives a slander carries the Devil in his ear and he that commits a slander carries the Devil in his tongue." Where Satan doesn't go personally, he sends a critic.

Once a Sunday School teacher gave a lesson on the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself thanking God he was not like other men: "adulterers, extortioners, and publicans." The teacher really blasted the Pharisee because of his proud, condemning attitude. He—the Pharisee—was glorying in the fact that he was better than common sinners: "not as other men." As the class ended the teacher said, "Students, let's bow our heads now and thank the Lord we're not like that Pharisee!"

Before a man can look down on another he must first assume he is better than the person he is speaking against. A proud man is suspicious of everyone else. A humble man is more suspicious of his own heart than anyone else. The proud heart will detect defects in others before detecting them in himself. A humble soul sees the evil in his own heart before he sees evil in others.

Wesley said, "Gossip is anything you would say about someone that you wouldn't say if that person were standing in front of you." The only reason for character assassination, or making an unfavorable comparison, is to exalt one's own self. Before speaking against a fellow human being a person must first establish himself as a judge. This maligning of character can only be explained in terms of pride. The connection between pride and slander is clearly seen in Psalm 101: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer" (v. 5).

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## PRIDE IS DECEPTIVE

A young man responded at the invitation and told his pastor that he had come to rededicate his life to the Lord. The pastor replied, "Wonderful! Just kneel there at the pew and confess your sins to God." To which the man replied, "Pastor, I can't think of any sins to confess." The pastor then said, "Son, just guess at it." And you know what? The young man got it right on the first try! Pride is not just thinking we are better

than others; it is thinking we are better than we are.

Pride is the disposition to exalt self, get above others, and conceal defects. Ever since the fall man has had the tendency to confess someone else's sins instead of his own. This is hardly surprising since the heart of man is "deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9). And the reason man's heart is so deceitful is because of inborn haughtiness. "Thy terriblest hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart" (Jer. 49:16). Contrary to popular thinking, we are not good people who happen to do bad things—we are sinners through and through. And it is the deceptive nature of pride which brings such reluctance to admit our sins.

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## **PRIDE MAKES A FALSE BOAST**

Samson killed a lion with his bare hands and didn't even tell his parents. Spurgeon commented that if a modern Christian so much as killed a mouse he would publish it in *The Gospel Gazette*! Men may be reluctant to acknowledge their wrongs, but most are quick to publicize their accomplishments. "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness" (Prov. 20:6).

The Bible warns us about thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. No man has a right to an inflated view of himself. Under the influence of pride, a man takes on the air of a master. He is more likely to instruct others than inquire for himself. A humble Christian wants help from everybody, but the spiritually proud thinks everybody wants his help.

The proud man believes he has accomplished what God and others have accomplished in him. He seeks credit in regard to things for which he cannot rightly take credit. Talent, intellect, abilities, health, and life itself are gifts from God.

The Bible says it is of God's mercy that we are not consumed. It is of God's love that we have been drawn to Him. It is because of His everlasting arms being under us that we are kept. It is by His faith that we are saved. It is by His blood that we are cleansed. It is in His righteousness that we are clothed. It is by His power that we are kept. It is by His grace that we are sustained. It is by His intercession that we are delivered. It is by His goodness that we are led to repentance. It is by His indwelling Spirit that we are filled. All that God has for His people is from the Father, all is through the Son, and all is by the Holy Spirit. Of what can we boast?

Once Spurgeon had preached a powerful sermon. As soon as he had finished his message the Devil whispered to him, "That was a fine sermon. You preached magnificently!" For a moment he agreed with the Devil. Leaving the pulpit, a deacon met him and said, "Pastor, that was a masterpiece." Spurgeon interrupted him and said, "You're too late. The Devil told me that a few moments ago."

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## **PRIDE BRINGS SHAME**

Culture is the externalization of religion. So when a culture calls good evil and calls evil good, it indicates how corrupt religion has come to dominate that society. Never doubt that all people worship something; if not the true God, then they will worship something else, or themselves. A former United States President proclaimed June as Gay Pride Month. In biblical terms, it should have been dubbed Gay Shame Month. Our society glories in things of which it should be ashamed.

Three factors contributed to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness" (Ezek. 16:49). Note carefully that pride was the foundation from which homosexuality sprang. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame" (Prov. 11:2).

After his journey through the valley of humiliation Nebuchadnezzar realized, "Those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan. 4:37). He surely learned the proverb, "A man's pride shall bring him low" (Prov. 29:23).



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## PRIDE PRECEDES A FALL

Those who built the Titanic pronounced the great ship unsinkable. With boldness and confidence they boasted of the great safety this vessel afforded. But on its maiden voyage the unsinkable ship sank. The Titanic mentality of invincibility sets the stage for collapse. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty" (Prov. 18:12).

Repeatedly, the Scriptures warn of pride precipitating a fall. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted" (Isa. 2:11). Uzziah was greatly blessed and marvelously helped, "till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction" (2 Chron. 26:15-16). He transgressed by entering the temple to offer incense on the altar. When confronted by the priests, Uzziah became furious. While he was holding the censer in his hand, God smote him and leprosy rose up in his forehead. He lost the throne and was a leper the rest of his life.

God not only dwells in the high and holy place; He also dwells with him "that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15). The man who sits nearest the dust sits nearest heaven. It is the valley of humiliation that leads to the mount of transfiguration. He that is low need fear no fall. No wonder Andrew Murray said, "Welcome everything that helps you on toward humility."

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## TOWARD HUMILITY

Listing the sins of pride could go on and on. Its pervasiveness cannot be overstated. Haughtiness, arrogance, conceit, inordinate self-esteem, and vainglory are as common as the air we breathe. Pride is a sin to be hated, a sin to be confessed, a sin to mourn over, a sin to flee, and a sin to fight against. William Law commented, "Pride must die, or nothing of heaven can live in you." God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble (see James 4:6).

Humility is the royal insignia that marks God's true people even though it is the saint's hardest conflict. The first step toward becoming humble is realizing we are proud. Then we must take the witness stand against ourselves and plead "guilty as charged." We must continually bring pride to the foot of the cross to be washed away by the blood of Jesus. Surveying the wondrous cross surely makes it easier to pour contempt on all our pride. Even though pride is hateful to God, the powerful blood of Jesus can cleanse it.

If pride is the evil of evils, then humility is the virtue of virtues. Like the pearl of great price, it is worth selling all to obtain. Humility is our responsibility. Humility is a choice, and so is pride. How do you plead?



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- Harold Vaughan

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