

P Pride

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[0 : 00] Thomas Brooks said this, humility makes a man richer than other men and it makes a man judge himself the poorest of men.

! The Christians are right. It's pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.

Other vices may sometimes bring people together. You may find good fellowship and jokes and friendliness amongst drunk people or amongst unchaste people. But pride is always enmity. It is enmity. And not only enmity between man to man, but enmity, war to God.

The Christians are right. That's C.S. Lewis' words in his essay, wonderful essay on pride called The Great Sin. The reason of course that everyone else in the world, whoever they may be, is wrong. The chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began is well or what? What's the chief cause of misery? Lack of education? Lack finances? Non-and-equal opportunities? The coalition?

[1 : 33] What kind of things do you hear all the time, all day long from our media pundits? If only we have this. If only we have this. If we have this one thing, the world would be really the greatest problems we face.

And so here tonight we come, I think, to the big difference between the gospel's diagnosis and the diagnosis of those who lead our world.

The Bible says the chief cause of our misery is in here and not out there. It's what we do to others. It's how we act towards others. Not how we are acted upon, which is the greatest cause of all our pain.

And the name for that cardinal sin, the name for that original and greatest sin is pride. We're familiar only with the seven deadly sins. Anger, envy, sloth, lust, vainglory, gluttony, greed.

But pride, traditionally, is not listed as one of the seven deadly sins. But actually it's the source of all seven. In each and every one of those voices, the person committing them is pursuing in order to have incredible attention upon themselves.

[2 : 47] Now we're not saying we're under stuff. Not all pride is wrong. So the child who enjoys being praised by their teacher for doing something well is right to be praised. I hope you will praise the children afterwards if they've learnt those ten commandments.

I hope you'll say, well that's really good, you should feel a bit proud of yourself. The problem comes when we slip into thinking this. I please somebody, so all is well, to thinking what a wonderful person I must be.

What a wonderful person I must be to have pleased them in that way. That kind of pride, the wrong kind, is the desire to enthrone ourselves and dethrone God.

So think of Eve's sin in the garden. She listened to the serpent. She reached for the fruit. But that was not the first, or the foremost disobedience, although it was that.

That was the outward action. Taking what was not meant to be taken. But what fuelled it? What caused Eve's sin? What drove it was pride, was it?

[3 : 50] What drove it was the desire to be like God, to have His power, to know His knowledge. So homicide is the sin of killing another homosepian.

Fras-reside, which I learned this week, is the sin of killing a brother. And so on. But do you know what pride is? Pride is deicide.

It is the ultimate sin. Because pride desires to kill the deity. Pride is self-deification. It is the attempt to put myself out of the universe and control the world.

To control the world. To control the world around me. To suit my needs. To achieve my goals. I deceive my own desires and realise. Pride makes a man or a woman or a boy or a girl feed of

themselves in the search for satisfaction.

And so yes, it happily says that pride is the one vice of which no human person is ever free. So somebody once said, they struggle very soon.

[4 : 59] And they've dealt with that. I've only ever met one person who might likely say that. And they said, what do you think? And they said, well I think you struggle with pride.

And they said, how dare you? I said, how dare you? I said, how dare you? I said, how dare you? I said, how dare you? It's the one vice, isn't it? Everyone in the world, we loathe it most, don't we?

We loathe it most when we see it in other people. But hardly any of us see it in ourselves. And it's so hard to see, isn't it? It's so hard to see. Usually, because it's a symptom.

Not a presenting complaint. It's hiding beneath the surface of the argument or the lust or even the sadness or the joy. And it's just as hard to admit it when we see it.

So, Jesus again says this, I think people admit that they are bad tempered. Or that they cannot keep their heads without girls or drink. Or even that they are cowards. But I do not think I've ever heard anyone who is not a Christian accuse themselves of this vice.

[6 : 05] So why are we, as Christians, happy to accuse ourselves of this vice? We need vice. We need to be. And we should be. And Proverbs says to us, happy the follower of Jesus who accuses themselves of pride.

By staring the greatest sin in the eye, we embark on a road to heaven, which is the pathway to glory and all that.

Proverbs does some diagnosing for us tonight. It adds some exposing. It helps us to see our pride where we might not have looked for it before. And it begins to take the layers off it so that we can see ourselves before we are to God.

Now, what is the opposite of pride? The virtue which contrasts with pride is humility. And Proverbs so often puts them side by side. So that's what I'm going to do.

I've got five clear contrasts, rest the night. I want to put the points on the optimism right. I've got some. I'll give you the references as I give you the points. Pride deceives humility and lightness.

[7 : 08] Pride deceives humility and lightness. And if you're taking notes, that's 14, 12, 16, 2, 28, 26, 13, 12. 14, 12, 16, 2, 28, 26, 13, 12.

And in all three of those Proverbs, a person is deceived. And what they are deceived about is their own evaluation of themselves and their circumstances.

So, if we look at them. Somebody is dirty, but they think they're clean. Somebody thinks they are the wisest person that they know. Someone else is just always completely sure that the way ahead is the right path to travel.

So, 14, verse 12. I am my own guide. Chapter 28 and verse 26. I am my own security.

And chapter 30, verse 12. I am my own moral standard. And so the worst kind of pride tonight is not to know that you are proud.

[8 : 15] It's like the man who said I'm going to write a book on humility. And when I do, it will be the greatest. Very interesting. The last book that I saw written by somebody on humility.

I had a photo of them with Bono in the front camera, which we thought was very funny. But, Bono, you two. You two. If I use the great sin, then the greatest sin is to be deceived about that sin.

And to look in the mirror each morning and never see a proud man or a proud woman staring back at you. There is no hope for a proud man or woman who will not admit that they're proud.

So that the first step for acquiring humility tonight is to recognize I am proud. And to ask for help outside of myself. So the contrast is there so strongly, isn't it?

Chapter 28 and verse 26. Whoever trusts in his own life is not full, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. When I say that I don't want to trust myself, but instead put my hand inside someone else's hand, I'll walk the road which they say best, well that humility will enlighten you.

[9 : 25] It will lead you to wisdom, to be wise. And that will keep you safe in every part of life. So in chapter 3, if we go back to chapter 3, a life of Christian character and depth of maturity comes about through a long process of unselfing.

An increased awareness and devotion to someone else. Somebody who is higher than me.

Somebody who is more authoritative than me. Someone who is more good than me. The selfing, which we all do naturally, is there in that phrase in chapter 13 verse 12, isn't it?

That phrase, in their own eyes. You read that before, if you go back to chapter 3 verse 7. Do not be wise in your own eyes, but fear the Lord. It's a wonderful phrase. It's a way of saying, isn't it?

That our physical eyes are always looking outwards at the world. We have a kind of internal screen though, that is constantly at work all day, where we're looking at ourselves.

And most of the time, those internal eyes are giving us a constant printout of what we think is real.

How I feel about this must be right. How I see things must be the right way to see this.

[10 : 45] So being wise in your own eyes, does not mean that you're always the sort of person who thinks that you're better than other people, or more intelligent than other people. You might be, you very well might be the kind of person who inside your head is like, when you're internalised looking at yourself, you think you're useless, you think you're worthless, and you think that you're no good compared to anyone else.

And Proverbs says to you, that is as much a form of pride as a self-confident person.

Because what you are doing there, is you're trusting your own view of yourself. And you think, what I feel must be right.

No, says this father to his son and to us, turn things around. Always, always be suspicious of yourself. Always be suspicious on your own take on things.

Especially when it's to do with yourself. Instead, believe what God says is true. Trust the Lord, doubt yourself. Trust the Lord, doubt yourself.

[11 : 56] Because pride deceives and humility enlightens. Because humility is not thinking less of yourself. But it's thinking of yourself less.

Do you get that? Humility is not thinking less of yourself. But it's thinking of yourself less. Humility inspects the heart, but does not linger there, and does not live there.

Humility looks upward to God, and outward to others. And pride turns a person in on themselves. It folds the soul in on itself.

Carefully cherishing and nurturing myself as my own private kingdom. But humility turns a person outward. And in the act of taking our eyes on ourselves, and looking at God and others, light floods the heart.

And suddenly we see ourselves in ways we've never known before. So pride has changed humility and lightness. Pride competes, and humility learns. Pride competes, but humility learns.

[13 : 06] First slide 13 verse 10. By insolence, by pride comes nothing but strife. But those who take advice, are true and are excellent. There are people that claim an argument where you forget where you are and are the most. And you end up arguing about something completely different.

Or arguing about how you started arguing. Or something like that. Why do some quarrels like that? Why do some quarrels last for days? Kind of like little volcanoes where they can go soft and then erupt again?

Why do some quarrels become long-standing family rents? And the prophet says, when you weigh the complexity of who said what to whom, and where they said it, and how they said it, and why they said it, and miscommunication and all of that.

Take the peel of skin. Take the skin of the onion away. And what you have at the heart of it is pride. My stubborn desire to be right and first and to be seen to be so.

And of course, pride breeds quarrels, doesn't it? Let me remember what pride is in essence. One writer said this, pride is our contending supremacy with God.

[14 : 25] And if we're contending with God, trying to replace Him, well then of course we're going to contend with each other. Listen to Lewis. The point is that each person's pride is in competition with everyone else's pride.

It is because I wanted to be the big noise of the party that I am so annoyed at you being the big noise. Two of a trade can never agree. Pride is essentially competitive by nature.

Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich or clever or good looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer or cleverer or better looking than others.

My first time in preparing the season of Proverbs, I may not to look at Usain's Twitter feed. It's changed it. But this is what was written until about six months ago. Here is his tagline.

Usain Bolt is a sprinter. He didn't know that. And it says this on his Twitter feed. The most naturally gifted athlete the world has ever seen. Now of course, it's all sporting bravado is great fun.

[15:37] But what's the giveaways words displaying pride? It's not the word naturally or gifted or athlete. For all those things are undeniably true. It's the word most, isn't it? The most naturally gifted athlete the world has ever seen.

I believe the world has ever seen better than all the others. Pride is essentially competitive. But humility learns. This is chapter 13 verse 10. But those who take advice is wisdom. Here's the word for it. The humble person is the teachable person. And we all know the difference, don't we?

The person who's taking the advice because they simply have to but inwardly resenting it. You know, isn't it when my father helps me at DIY? And I have to take it.

But inwardly I resent it. And recoil at it. And the person who stands towards God and the world and others is so free, so open, so unintimidated by others.

[16:43] And they're always sure that there's more truth out there. They're truly teachable. Is it a contrast, compassionate or teachable? I wonder if we have any surprise what those closest to us would say in this area.

I've got doubts, but why don't you ask someone? Ask your wife, your husband, your mother, your son. Am I teachable?

Pride deceives, humility enlightens. Pride competes when humility learns. Pride despises our humility respect. Pride despises our humility respect.

Chapter 13, verse 13 and 15 and 32. The proud person despises in two ways. Look at this in 13 and 13. Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself.

Chapter 15 and verse 32. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself. The proud is scorned or ignoring somebody else giving a special discipline.

[17:51] It's like the disgruntled teenager. When mum and dad try to show them a better way of doing something. Or ask them to change their behaviour in some way.

You're stupid, mum. You know what you're talking about, comes the response. Now, of course, I should say this is not all teenagers. I might ask before the teenagers come and talk to me afterwards. But proud people despise those trying to teach or instruct them.

But observe how double edged they are. Look at chapter 15, verse 32. The despised person, they despise the self-olives.

To be proud is the very worst form of self-harm and self-hatred. Because you leave yourself to your own devices. So let's imagine a teenage man who goes through it.

And he skips school and thinks that a whole lifetime, round in their base house, playing on the Xbox, will surely be the best life for them in every possible way. What are they doing?

[18:55] They're despising themselves, aren't they? They are bringing destruction upon themselves. They're too young to see it, you want to understand why. What they need to do is grow and flourish. To be instructed in discipline and commands.

And the truly humble person realizes that you never outgrow that. He who respects a commandment. You see the other thing? Chapter 13, verse 13. He who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.

And it's clear that the command there in verse 13, there's not any other command, like put your shoes on, put your socks on or something like that. No, it's more like whoever respects their commandment, whoever respects God's word, God's law, will be rewarded.

So there is no greater sign of pride than somebody's attitude to the Bible. Yeah, yeah, I've been there.

I've done that. I've heard it all in Sunday school. I know it all. That kind of attitude isn't just there in the person who's never ever comes to church anymore, and who's turned their back on it.

[20:01] But I think it's there for many matters, isn't it? It's present any time we ever want to put one part of the Bible off to one side and leave it alone.

Because we either don't agree with it, or we find it too difficult, or we think it truly can't be true, or what it exposes is just too painful. You see, the litmus test for our view of the Bible is not what we say about it when it ticks all our boxes, but what we say about it when it confronts us.

And when we read our Bibles or hear it taught, and we think, I just don't like that. I don't like that. But I believe it. And I'm going to do it anyway.

That is, I think, 13-13 respect for command. That is reverence of God. And Proverbs says, ultimately, that is the best and right kind of self-love. For it puts myself in the back seat, and it puts

God in the driving seat.

And the Bible in the driving seat. And that is what we're all meant to be. Fourthly, pride conceals and humility confesses. Pride conceals and humility confesses.

[21 : 09] And the eighth verse of the team. Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always. But whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

One of the main tasks that we give ourselves to each day is to cover up and make over. Covering up what we're really like. And making ourselves to be different than we are.

We conceal ourselves from others. And from God. And we conceal our sin from one another and from God. And it's always highly dangerous. We have a split personality. The realest that nobody sees or knows.

And the presentablest that we relate to others. And the constant concealment in it exhausting and draining we find ourselves trapped. Along with our guilt which we're too scared to share about or speak about.

And I think we do it because we are not sure what we all find when we confess and renounce our sin. And that's natural when it comes to us and other people.

[22 : 22] We are scared aren't we? We really are scared to confess our sin to one another. Let's be honest. Because I am one proud person confessing sin to another proud person.

And I do not know what they will think of me or how they will react. Now let's be honest about that. We find out don't we? I struggle with that. And you struggle with that.

That is part of church life. We've got to be honest here. But isn't chapter 28 and verse 13 absolutely beautiful? He who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

There is always mercy. There is always, always, always mercy for confessing. There will be people in a gathering like this tonight and there will be things that you are desperate to confess and yet you are terrified.

And yet look at that verse. The word of God says to him, He who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. So why does God never ever hear your confession with pride?

[23 : 41] I love the contrast between that and that proverb. It is remarkable. Whoever can see no sin of the expression will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Do you see that? Hiding and seeking. Over there. Hiding and finding. If you try to hide sin so that no one else will find it or see it. Well, then you will not prosper.

But if you let God find your sin, then what you find from him is not his judgment but his mercy. And I think this is probably the clearest sign of a proud heart.

But there is very little confession of sin. It doesn't have to be in front of others. Often. Or much.

Or serving on any kind of lavish display. It really doesn't. But it needs to happen before God and to him. A proud person wants everything to look better than it is.

[24 : 48] While a humble person wants God to know the truth as it is. And he is happy with that more than anything else. This is the Jonathan Edwards. A great theologian.

Not the triple jumper. Whatever. Spiritual pride tends to speak of other persons' sins. With bitterness. Or with laughter.

Or with an air of contempt. But pure Christian humility rather tends either to be silent about those problems. Or to speak of them with grief and pity. Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others.

But a humble Christian is most guarded about himself. He is as suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart. The proud Christian is apt to find fault with other believers.

That they are low in grace. And to be quick to note their deficiencies. But the humble Christian has so much to do at home. And sees so much evil in his own heart. And is so concerned about it.

[25 : 50] That he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts. He is apt to esteem others than himself. Basically. Basically. Basically. Basically. Basically.

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Basically. Basically. disgrace, punishment, destruction, downfall, broad to low.

But humility leads to wisdom and it leads to honour. And both these ends, humiliation for our pride, honour for our humility, both of them are journeys. We embark on this life, but they actually become

our ultimate destination of the next.

[26 : 56] And a person's pride may be their undoing. You think of a career in tatters, a marriage in ruins. But because pride is the attempt to do away with God, it can lead them to be away from God forever in hell.

So look at chapter 16, verse 5. Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Be assured, he will not go unpunished.

A humble person may experience honour and glory in this life. And that is often so true. Although we like success in our athletes and our heroes, we just like them if they carry themselves too arrogantly, don't we?

Or with contempt for others. From Proverbs, by 1533, the fear of the Lord is in destruction and wisdom and humility comes before honour.

Or 1812, before destruction, a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honour. Or also showing us this biblical, invalid, bigger pattern, which is this.

[28 : 01] The way down is the way up. To put it in the New Testament, the cross comes before the crown. The only way to be lifted up is to be brought low.

The only way to be exalted is to be humbled. So the classic passage is Philippians 2, isn't it? Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature with God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

Shaking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, he did death on the cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name.

You see, a humble God. A humble God. We lift ourselves up, but Jesus swoops down.

A humble God loves proud sinners. We are the people for whom nothing is too good for us. He was the one for whom nothing was too low.

[29 : 21] We make ourselves into a big deal. He made himself nothing. I'm true. Humility starts here. Seeing Christ who was rich, make himself poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

And if you do not know you are poor, then there are no riches ahead. And if you do not know that you are bankrupt, then there's no honour in store.

I found the story this week and we finish with this of the funeral of Otto von Habsburg of Austria. He was the last of the Imperial European Empress and he died on the 4th of July 2011, aged 98. He was entombed in the Imperial crypt in Vienna, but as part of his funeral ceremony, there was an ancient rite known as the knocking ceremony.

The procession of mourners and von Habsburg's coffin arrived at the closed door of the crypt and a herald knocks three times larger loudly on the door.

[30 : 34] And what happens at the ceremony is this. A priest on the other side of the closed door asks, who desires entry? The answer comes, Otto of Austria, once crown prince of Austria-Hungary, royal prince of Hungary and Bohemia, of Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Galicia, Lodoviria, and Ilyria, grand duke of Tuscany and Crac, duke of Moray, Salzburg, Styria, Carithia, Carliola, and the Bergwina, sorry, I can't pronounce it, you shouldn't grand prince of Transylvania, Margrieve of Moravia, duke of Atman, and Loa Silesia, and many more titles, and the priest answers, we do not know him.

The herald knocks the door again three times, who desires entry? Dr. Otto von Hatsberg, president and honorary president of the Pan-European Union, Menda and Kvondon, Kvondon, president of the European Parliament, honorary doctor of many universities, honorary citizen of many cities in central Europe, member of numerous venerable academies and institutions, recipient of high civil and ecclesiastical awards and medals, which were given him in recognition of his decade-long struggle for the freedom of peoples, for justice and right.

The priest from the other side of the door says, we do not know him. The herald knocks three times again. Who desires entry? says the priest. Otto, a mortal and sinful man.

The priest replies, then let him come in. It's a very moving picture of the kind of person who hears Christ's welcome. This is the one I esteem, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles on my word.

Hell is full, hell will be full of people who sincerely believe they deserve heaven. But heaven will be full of people who sincerely believe they deserve hell.
[32 : 54] And there's the difference between pride and humility. One trusts in himself and the other says, God be merciful to me.

I say that. I'm sorry.