

Spiritual Pride

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3 John 2, “Beloved I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” Psalm 103:2, 3, “Bless the Lord, oh my soul and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.”

We bring to your attention that words bring thoughts to our minds, whether these words be written or given orally. For instance, let us suppose that someone begins writing on a blackboard before us and they write the word love to begin with, then joy, then peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. Each one of these words would bring a thought to your mind, and you would also recognize them, as a group, as being the “FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.” Gal. 5:22, 23.

We would also recognize words that were opposite to these fruits of the Spirit: hate as opposed to love, sorrow as opposed to joy, trouble as opposed to peace, etc. There is one word, describing a characteristic, which is in opposition of itself to all these fruits of the spirit. Now someone writes the word “PRIDE” on our blackboard—EVERYONE PROUD IN HEART, IS AN ABOMINATION, IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD. (Prov. 16:5) The dictionary contains more than one definition for the word “pride.” It can be described in our own words, as being the by-product of cultivated selfishness. Selfishness is the chief product—as this chief product is cultivated, pride comes as a result, as a by-product. If the chief product were not there, then the by-product would not be so apt to be there. In the sugar beet industry, beets are harvested and processed mainly to get the sugar. Sugar is the chief product. After the sugar is removed, certain fibers are left over that are ground up and used to make soap—soap is the by-product.

All mankind have inherent selfishness; and in each individual it varies, some have it more, some have it less. Any who would cultivate selfishness would be sure to have its by product—PRIDE. This is an ugly word to the Christian! When we refer to the expression, “cultivated selfishness”, it is well to get the thought behind the word “cultivated.” If we plant tomatoes in our garden, and we cultivate them, we foster their growth—we promote their growth. Selfishness was planted in the human race through the fall of Adam. If this is cultivated, if it is nourished or promoted, the end result is a proud heart.

Speaking of the selfish spirit that exists in the world, we are aware that this spirit seeks after those things that it regards as valuable and gratifying. For instance, nearly all in the world seek after wealth—monetary values. It is true that it may not be attained, but it is sought after. Many seek for fame and distinction amongst men. To the extent that an individual attains any or all of these things, the tendency is to feel superior to others—imagined importance!

It somehow seems gratifying to the fallen human mind to notice in their fellow-man, an inferior condition to that of itself. Seldom does an individual appreciate to any great extent, one who is superior to himself. Yet it works both ways—one may indeed find another inferior to himself, but, in the course of time, if he be honest with himself, he will also find one superior to himself.

The fall of Adam has affected each member of the human race differently. One who found himself less fallen than another, would surely have no reason to boast. Let us suppose a bus loaded with passengers, rounds a corner too fast and tips over. Some of the passengers are shaken up badly, some sustain minor injuries, others are not hurt at all. The ones who were hurt the least would have no reason to boast. We think the same is true regarding the fall of the human race through Adam.

No man has any reason to be proud of his knowledge, or his attainments through knowledge—we all realize that the limitations of man, far exceed his abilities. There are many questions that man cannot answer—seemingly simple questions. What man can fully understand the life principle?—no one fully understands it, for as the Psalmist says, “WE ARE FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE.” Psa. 139:14 From ALL standpoints then, pride as we see it in the world is quite unreasonable, even more than this—it is foolishness. And as we think of pride in the world, we will say it is 50% bad for the sake of illustration. If a child comes into the world having proud parents, those who would teach him to be proud and boastful, surely he would not be entirely responsible for this condition. Thus we class pride in the world as 50% bad.

There is another word that we can add to this one word “pride” that will increase its deplorableness, as well as bring us to the title of our subject—SPIRITUAL PRIDE. We would class this as being 100% bad. Should someone ask why we so classify it? We answer, because such a term applies only to the Lord’s people during this Gospel Age—not everyone is spirit begotten, therefore not everyone could have Spiritual pride. The Apostle’s reasoning in 1 Cor. 2 shows this—verses 9 to 12, “AS IT IS WRITTEN, EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NEITHER HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN, THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED FOR THEM THAT LOVE HIM. BUT GOD HATH REVEALED THEM UNTO US BY HIS SPIRIT: FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHETH ALL THINGS, YEA THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD. FOR WHAT MAN KNOWETH THE THINGS OF A MAN, SAVE THE SPIRIT OF MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THINGS OF GOD KNOWETH NO MAN, BUT THE SPIRIT OF GOD. NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD: THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD.”

Verse 11 tells us that no man knows another man's mind except it be revealed to him. So it is by the Holy Spirit or mind of God that we understand Spiritual things. Those having received this Holy Spirit referred to by the Apostle in the foregoing texts are those who are liable to this disease—Spiritual Pride! It is not for us to say who has or who has not this disease. The reason for the thoughts given along this line, is that we may guard against getting it.

Peter tells us in his first letter (4:17) “JUDGEMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.” We have seen then, that pride in the world is merely foolishness, and that they are only partially to blame in this; but it becomes a much more serious thing when applied to the Lord's own people—Spiritual Pride! To begin with, the Christian has nothing to be proud of, since all we have, or hope to be is of the Lord. The Apostle asks the question: 1 Cor. 4:7, “WHAT HAST THOU, THAT THOU DIDST NOT RECEIVE?” Evidently flattery was being used in the Corinthian Church—not only used but encouraged by those who received it. Thus the Apostle's question. No doubt this condition caused the Apostle to say in his second letter to the Thessalonians that the “MYSTERY OF INIQUITY DOTH ALREADY WORK.”

Some of the things which the Lord has done for us are stated in the 40th Psalm—“I WAITED PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD; AND HE INCLINED UNTO ME, AND HEARD MY CRY. HE BROUGHT ME UP ALSO OUT OF AN HORRIBLE PIT, OUT OF THE MIRY CLAY, AND SET MY FEET UPON A ROCK, AND ESTABLISHED MY GOINGS. AND HE HATH PUT A NEW SONG IN MY MOUTH, EVEN PRAISE UNTO OUR GOD.” The 2nd verse indicates that we were brought out of the “horrible pit” of sin and death. The “miry clay” would seem to suggest our own personal part in sin, and of course the “rock” would be a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. Since being established “in Him” our direction has certainly been established in a right way. What a testimony to our Heavenly Father!

Even more than this is shown by the prophet Isaiah (61:10), “FOR HE HATH CLOTHED ME WITH THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION, HE HATH COVERED ME WITH THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Then the Apostle Paul in Eph. 1:3 says, “HE HATH BLESSED US WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST.” As we analyze just these few texts of Scripture, we come to realize fully, that we have no reason to be proud. Obviously all the glory belongs to the Lord.

We note the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter 9, verses 23 and 24, “THUS SAITH THE LORD, LET NOT THE WISE GLORY IN HIS WISDOM, NEITHER LET THE MIGHTY GLORY IN HIS MIGHT, LET NOT THE RICH. GLORY IN HIS RICHES.” Certainly the Lord has given us “wisdom,” the “Spirit of a sound mind.” He has also given us strength, the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the

flesh.” And then we are rich in the knowledge of God’s plans and purposes, as well as “rich in faith.” We might say the prophet goes on with the real lesson in V. 24, “LET HIM THAT GLORIETH GLORY IN THIS, THAT HE UNDERSTANDETH AND KNOWETH ME, THAT I AM THE LORD, WHICH EXERCISE LOVINGKINDNESS, JUDGMENT, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE EARTH: FOR IN THESE THINGS I DELIGHT SAITH THE LORD.” The Lord delights in our glorying in Him that we have a knowledge of Him, His plans, His purposes and His character.

In the early days of the church (the preparation for it) our Lord Jesus noted perhaps a touch of pride in the 70 who had gone out preaching in his name—Luke 10:17, “AND THE SEVENTY RETURNED AGAIN WITH JOY, SAYING, LORD, EVEN THE DEVILS ARE SUBJECT UNTO US THROUGH THY NAME.” In verse 20 the Lord states, “NOTWITHSTANDING IN THIS REJOICE NOT, THAT THE SPIRITS ARE SUBJECT UNTO YOU; BUT RATHER REJOICE BECAUSE YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.”

If we glory in those things which the Lord has done for us, then we are in the proper attitude of heart. The greatness of God and all that he has done for us should cause us to be humble—this is good. In 1 Peter 5:5 we read, “GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, AND GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” None of us would desire that God should resist us, and for this reason we search our hearts for any measure of such a characteristic as pride. To any degree that we have pride, to that degree God is resisting us. Likewise we are without God’s grace that we would have by possessing the proper humility. “God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.” We remember that in John 15 our Lord stated, “WITHOUT ME, YE CAN DO NOTHING.” So what real progress could we make, if God resisted us?

The development of love is the most important grace, according to 1 Cor. 13. If this fruit be properly developed, the Apostle says (V. 4) “IT VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP.” A sententious statement on a calendar reminded of that verse in 1 Cor. 13, which said, “Some men grow, others swell...” When one sees normal physical growth in their children, he is happy for this. If one would find a finger or an arm, or any part of the body swelling up, he would become concerned and rightly so. An undue swelling in our physical bodies often means danger—it means the same in mental swelling. The sad part is, that while usually something can be done about a physical swelling, but not in the case of mental swelling, since few who have mental swelling are aware of it. An important reason for guarding well against the slightest beginning of this spiritual disease is that, like cancer, it must be caught in its early stages in order for a cure to be effective.

We do certain things to guard against other physical sickness. For instance to guard against a cold, we know that proper clothing is important—proper Spiritual clothing is important to the Christian. “BE YE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY” the Apostle Peter

tells us in 1 Pet. 5:5. Such clothing not only prevents Spiritual Pride, but it is also a very beautiful adornment. Contrary to this, we see that pride, as a cloak, is very poor apparel. Pride is so ugly that it hates to be known for what it really is. Humility, on the other hand, helps to cover the imperfections that each of us has.

As we think of pride, especially on the part of those whom God has dealt with in a special manner, we think of the various areas in the Scriptures concerning this. No doubt we would be safe in saying that the first character we think of, when we think of pride, is Lucifer. From what we gain in the Scriptures concerning him, we believe that he must have been an outstandingly beautiful specimen of God's creation. And even though he could take no credit to himself for this, yet he became proud, and this beauty became a snare to him. A reference to this is found in Ezek. 28:17, "THINE HEART WAS LIFTED UP BECAUSE OF THY BEAUTY, THOU HAST CORRUPTED THY WISDOM BY REASON OF THY BRIGHTNESS." We know of the adverse effect upon the heart of Lucifer through his pride and ambition—it led to his thinking along the lines recorded in Isa. 14. "I WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN, I WILL EXALT MY THRONE ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD, I WILL ASCEND ABOVE THE CONGREGATION IN THE SIDES OF THE NORTH: I WILL ASCEND ABOVE THE HEIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS: I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH." We notice the many "I's" in these verses, and we see that the central letter in the word pride is "I." Here is an example of what pride has done for this individual. Pride of heart opened the way for a complete corruption of his heart. We see how well the Prophet stated it—"THOU HAST CORRUPTED THY WISDOM BY REASON OF THY BRIGHTNESS." Pride is a sin—it led, in this case, to other sins, to the point where Lucifer now opposes God to the utmost of his ability. His present name Satan, meaning adversary, is indeed a contrast to that of Lucifer or "morning star." This example should warn us to loathe even the slightest appearance of pride in anyone, especially ourselves. It will not do to say we would never become proud, because the Prophet speaking of the fallen human heart, says, "THAT IT IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED: WHO CAN KNOW IT?"

We have another reference in Scripture concerning pride. The characteristics of the individual involved are referred to in Num. 12:3, "NOW THE MAN MOSES WAS VERY MEEK, ABOVE ALL THE MEN WHICH WERE UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH." Moses recognized his inability to serve God—we note his words in Exod. 4:10, "AND MOSES SAID UNTO THE LORD, O MY LORD, I AM NOT ELOQUENT, NEITHER HERETOFORE, NOR SINCE THOU HAST SPOKEN UNTO THY SERVANT: BUT I AM SLOW OF SPEECH AND OF A SLOW TONGUE." After much time in the Lord's service, the picture changed, and no doubt we recall the circumstances. As the Lord's servant, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, across the Red Sea and into the wilderness toward Canaan. It was necessary for Moses to perform some miracles by the power of God on behalf of the people. One of these miracles was the smiting of the

rock when the people thirsted for water. In Exod. 17:1-7 we have the account of the first time this miracle was performed. The second account is recorded in Num. 20:7-11. In V. 8 the words of the Lord to Moses were, “SPEAK YE UNTO THE ROCK BEFORE THEIR EYES: AND IT SHALL GIVE FORTH HIS WATER.” According to the Exodus 17th account (V. 6) Moses had been commanded to smite the rock. Now, in the Numbers 20th account he was to speak to the rock. According to the 10th and 11th verses, we see that Moses did not obey this command; instead, his words were, “HERE NOW, YE REBELS: MUST WE FETCH YOU WATER OUT OF THIS ROCK?” His actions are recorded in V. 11, “AND MOSES LIFTED UP HIS HAND, AND WITH HIS ROD HE SMOTE THE ROCK TWICE.” In 1 Cor. 10:4 the Apostle Paul points out that this rock represented Christ. We understand that the first smiting of the rock represented the crucifixion of our Lord. The second smiting represented the “CRUCIFYING OF CHRIST AFRESH, AND THE PUTTING OF HIM TO AN OPEN SHAME.” (Heb. 6:6) The real point of concern to ourselves, in this subject lesson, is the fact that such a meek and humble character as Moses was, should be lifted up with pride, even for a moment. Again, what a lesson to each of us—to guard well against such an enemy in our flesh.

Another example of a humble minded man being lifted up with pride, is found in Saul, the first king of Israel. When he was told that Israel desired to have him as their king, his reply expressed humility on his part, “AM NOT I A BENJAMITE, OF THE SMALLEST OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL? AND MY FAMILY THE LEAST OF ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN?” As time passed apparently this was forgotten and Saul began to feel that he was important enough to decide what part of God’s commandments he should comply with, and what part should be left out. The special thing forgotten by Saul, was that because God had been working through him, his efforts had been fruitful. Having forgotten this, he was willing that all the credit and glory should be his. It was for this very reason that Samuel was sent to him with the words recorded in 1 Sam. 15:17, “WHEN THOU WAST LITTLE IN THINE OWN SIGHT, WAST THOU NOT MADE THE HEAD OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL AND THE LORD ANOINTED THEE KING OVER ISRAEL?”

As the Lord’s people, we too can easily forget our own unworthiness, and perhaps strain our ears for words of praise from the brethren, or our fellow man. What are some of the things which contribute to head swelling or spiritual pride? If anything along the Truth lines prospers to any extent, we can, in our own minds think of it as our own accomplishment. How much more becoming to realize with the Psalmist (Psa. 118:23), “THIS IS THE LORD’S DOING, IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES.”

The various accounts in Scripture concerning those who have permitted pride to have its effect in their lives, show especially that those who have it, do not realize it. Pride has a destroying effect upon the conscience—it causes a person to have the feeling of self-righteousness. In the condition of self-righteousness, a person usually spurns counsel

from others—perhaps we have noted this in the parable of Luke 18, the parable was spoken to “CERTAIN WHICH TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES THAT THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS.”

Luke 18, verses 10 to 12, “TWO MEN WENT UP INTO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY: THE ONE A PHARISEE, AND THE OTHER A PUBLICAN. THE PHARISEE STOOD AND PRAYED THUS WITH HIMSELF, GOD, I THANK THEE, THAT I AM NOT AS OTHER MEN ARE, EXTORTIONERS, UNJUST, ADULTERERS, OR EVEN AS THIS PUBLICAN. I FAST TWICE IN THE WEEK, I GIVE TITHES OF ALL THAT I POSSESS.” We would ask, could a person in such a condition, receive counsel from anyone? If he had nothing wrong with him, as he quite evidently supposed was the case, who could help him? And so the self-righteous and proud of heart feel quite indignant toward any who might be so bold as to even imply that they are proud.

If we should get into this attitude, the adversary has succeeded in leading us beyond the help that comes from the fellow members of the body of Christ. The apostle declares that “EVERY JOINT SUPPLIETH.” So then, the conscience is the “precision instrument” by which we measure the various matters presented to our judgment. Using tools or gauges to illustrate our conscience, we could have, for a conscience, an ordinary set of calipers, such that are used to measure rough castings. Or we might have for a conscience, a pair of micrometer calipers, used to measure objects within a thousandth of an inch. A scale might also be used to illustrate the conscience. We’re thinking of an instrument used for weighing. We would want the apothecary’s scale to represent our conscience, one that measures in drams. The keener the conscience the more safe we are in resisting Spiritual pride.

It has been well stated that if we swallow our pride, we will not get indigestion.