

The Wickedness of Pride

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“The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil: Pride and arrogancy...do I hate” (Pro. 8:13). The Bible deals with few sins more explicitly than with pride. Scripture is piled upon Scripture to show God’s abhorrence of it. Likewise, Scripture steadily urges upon us the lovely offsetting virtues of meekness, lowliness, and humility. Pride, like its evil cousins of envy and hatred, is detestable when observed in others, but sometimes hard even to detect in oneself. It is born of naked selfishness and ever lurks just beneath the surface in every heart, ready to burst forth unless kept under the tightest security of Truth and righteousness.

Pride was the basis of the problems concerning the use of spiritual gifts in Corinth. Some brethren there thought they were “Super Christians” because they could speak in tongues and others could “only” prophesy. The great love chapter fully exposed the evil of such arrogance. Genuine love does not allow one to “vaunt” himself and be “puffed up” (1 Cor. 13:4). To “vaunt” oneself means to brag or boast. To be “puffed up” literally means be inflated with pride and self-praise.

A person who constantly “blows his own horn” by talking about his accomplishments has a serious pride problem. He is either an unmitigated egotist or he has such a low view of himself that he must always be convincing himself of his own worth. We all need to learn: “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Pro. 27:2).

Those who are humble do not advertise their own abilities or accomplishments, though they be great. In my thirty-five years of working in various congregations as a Gospel preacher I learned the “hard way” to be wary of a newcomer who begins almost immediately to beg for a class to teach and to boast of his or her abilities. Only an exceptional level of pride will cause a person to insist upon a teaching/leadership role when one has not been asked or permitted to fill such by the elders. The same is true of those who “campaign” and “politick” among the membership in their ambition to be an elder or deacon. Pride is bad enough in any Christian, but when an elder or preacher succumbs to it, tragic consequences will almost certainly come upon the congregation. Pride is doubtless at the root of the doctrinal defections of many of the notorious change agents in the church over the past few decades.

These words are not intended to discourage a humble desire and willingness to serve when called upon. They are intended as an exposure of the vainglory that seeks to force itself where it is neither qualified nor welcomed. Paul well described such pride: “Desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm” (1 Tim. 1:7).

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