

## New Covenant Priesthood (Part 7)

### Manifestations of Pride

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This sermon is a continuation of the series of sermons on the priesthood, and this particular one is going to be on pride's manifestations. In the last sermon I concluded with Luke's recording of Jesus' message in Luke 17 and Luke 18, showing the very distinct linkage between faith, faithfulness, thanksgiving, prayer, and humility. Together they form a strong foundation for a good relationship with God, making a good witness for Him, and for personal growth as well.

At the end of the sermon I summarized by saying that in an overall sense faith is the most important of that grouping, but it is humility that truly opens the door of acceptance before God, and that love is a product of these elements. Love is the keeping of the commandments, and combined with the giving of the heart, is the evidence that we truly have a relationship with God. Anybody can say that he believes there is a God, and can say he believes that God, but what evidence will he have to prove that statement unless he also has the humility to submit to that God in obedience to what he says he believes?

By way of contrast, it is pride that provides the foundation of our enmity and our resistance against God, but humility is the hallmark of true Christian character. A hallmark is proof of genuineness or excellence. Jesus drew attention to humility's importance by naming it first among the Beatitudes. I emphasized here *true Christian*, because there is a counterfeit human humility that can be quite good, but it is not *godly* humility unless the person truly does have a relationship with God, is comparing himself to God, and is strongly motivated to and is keeping His commandments. It is only when a person sees himself in proper comparison with God that he can then see himself in proper comparison with other men, not allowing pride to elevate itself above and against others in a competitive spirit. Pride is a sin that we are all guilty of, and it will take a lifetime to root it out. Everyone of us loathes it when we recognize it in others, but the sad truth is we will only reluctantly admit it is in us. When we do, we tend to excuse it as minor. The proof of that is we make so little effort to rid ourselves of it.

C. S. Lewis, who is considered by many to be the greatest of this world's Christian's apologists of the Twentieth Century, said this in regard to pride: "*Nothing can be done about overcoming it until first one sees it in himself. If you think that you are not conceited, it means that you are very very conceited.*"

Dante Alighieri, in his work "The Divine Comedy," lists seven deadly sins. He listed pride first, because according to him it is the father of all other sin. There is some biblical evidence that his conclusion is correct. Pride is the father of much stubbornness, vanity, conceit, anger, temper tantrums, self-righteousness, fighting, critical judging, impatience, persecution, self-confidence, competition, lying, presumptuousness, sarcasm, narcissism.

Pride *strongly* promotes an unwillingness to forgive, and it has a rejection of correction right quick at hand. It may make some people easily irritated and subject to being easily offended,

thus allowing one's temper to blow something that could be nothing more than a minor irritation all out of proportion to its real importance. And then we insist upon justice, and very likely a measure of revenge. This usually takes the course of insisting that the other must be the one to apologize and change, while at the same time gratuitously admitting that they are not exactly sinless either. Or one might take the alternative of more or less attempting to correct and change the other. But pride resists our becoming childlike, and is at the foundation of a whole host of relationship-destroying behavior.

What we're going to see in this sermon is biblical evidence of the manifestations of pride. We are going to see that pride subtly, subconsciously, yet powerfully, misdirects a person's thoughts, and therefore conduct away from the truly important areas of life. Unless we are aware of its influences, there is no way to resist it. It will blow our perspective and direct us toward more personal objectives important to us, but not to God, and therefore vanity, futility, uselessness, and very possibly quite destructive of relationships.

Proverbs 21:4 A high look and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

This is a verse commentators say is difficult to translate into English, but the sense appears to give evidence that pride *is* the father of other sins. "The Revised Standard Version" and "The New International Version" both translate the verse as: "*Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin*" That phrase, "*the lamp of the wicked*" defines the author's use of "*proud and haughty*." Thus the verse appears to say, "*As plowing prepares the way for the productions of the earth, so pride prepares the way for the production of sin*." Pride *is* sin manifesting itself in a multitude of more easily seen sin.

As mentioned earlier, in some Bibles the word "plowing" is translated "lamp," indicating *that which reveals, guides, or shows*, because that's what a lamp or light does. It reveals, guides, or shows the way. The words "high look" or "haughty" are indicating that a perverted comparison or judgment is at the heart of leading to the production of more easily recognizable sin.

Unless we are very aware of God, and perceive Him as so high above us that He is beyond comparison, we cannot possibly have a proper perspective of others and ourselves. The result will always be to exalt ourselves against Him in rebellion against His rule of us. We will go through life driven by this invisible spiritual and subconscious influence, and thoughtlessly sinning, not even understanding what is in reality driving and motivating what we do. It's there, and we're not even aware of it in many, many cases.

Pride is an under-sense of one's own superiority, importance, or worth. It is inordinate, undeserved self-esteem. Its synonyms are self-esteem, conceit, vanity, and vain glory. Its antonyms are humility and modesty. Let's listen to these manifestations that are gleaned from this world's dictionaries and thesauruses. What it reveals is what men, apart from the Bible, think of pride. This is what the dictionary says about pride:

*"Pride manifests itself in disdain of others, haughtiness, arrogance, and sarcasm. Self-esteem manifests itself in more deference to one's own opinions than the others would grant. Conceit*

*manifests itself in an exaggerated opinion of one's ability or worth. Vanity is seen as an excessive desire for admiration and praise. Vain glory manifests itself in undue boasting about one's accomplishments"* Those five, in addition to pride itself, are formed of the father—*pride*.

We're going to go to I Timothy 3:6 and read what Paul gives as qualifications [virtues and strengths] for an elder that Timothy should look to in the appointment for the ordaining of an elder.

I Timothy 3:6 [Paul says] Not [to ordain] a novice [someone fairly new to the faith], lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

If you have a more modern translation, they may render "pride" as "conceit," and they will render "condemnation" as "judgment" or "snare." Taken just in that way, forms of pride are shown as a trap, a snare, leading one to death, as indicated by the word "condemnation."

The word that is translated here as "pride," might be translated as "puffed up" or "conceit," but very interestingly the word literally means "*wrapped up in smoke*." That is a vivid description of pride's effect. There are two possibilities that Paul might have been attaining for to illustrate what he was talking about here. The first possibility is this: Smoke is something that can be seen, but it is insubstantial, and thus it is with pride, with conceit. It can be seen, but it's insubstantial. It's as though it is there, it is real, but at the same time there is nothing there. It is a vanity. It's useless. It's futile. This fits almost perfectly with the meaning of the word "vanity," meaning, "*things and/or conduct that is useless, futile, profitless*." The same is like grasping for shadows.

For the second possibility we're going to use a "*house fire*" as an illustration. In a house fire smoke disorients the trapped person. It stings the eyes, making escape more difficult, and eventually chokes the person to death by displacing the good oxygen in his lungs. I think you're aware that more people die in a house fire by smoke inhalation than by being burned. Pride, like smoke, entraps one into death. In a fire, by the time the person is burned, he is already dead from a painful and frightening suffocation. We can see here in this sequence that pride creates pain. It disorients a person, and it suffocates life. That's quite a warning.

Ezekiel 28 reveals pride as the cause of Satan's fall, and that he was created far different from the Adversary he became. Pride led to Satan's downfall by providing motivation. It plowed and guided the way for his rebellion by obliterating his respect for God's holiness and power, and the fact that he owed his very existence to God, His Creator. Pride disoriented Satan's thinking away from his Creator's will and toward his own. Satan's self-esteem, conceit and vain glory gave birth to the vanity of enmity and warfare against His Creator. It's influence continues unabated to this day. Paul's warning is that a concerted person can also fall into this snare if he is not aware and mature enough to fight and overcome its subtle persuasive power.

Ezekiel 28:14-17 You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect

in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness: I will cast you to the ground. I will lay you before kings that they may behold you.

Satan was not created as an animal, but as a powerful, supremely intelligent and beautiful free moral agent. But he couldn't control his thoughts when making comparisons. How do I know this? Because the Bible reveals that pride collects its strength in a perverted comparison. It is almost as if one becomes intoxicated with admiration for something that he deems as worthy in himself. Satan's love affair with his wealth of intellect, his authority, and his beauty influenced him to feel superior to others, and then he misled and misused *them* and circumstances for his own personal benefit. It became, through pride — "*his will be done*" — not God's.

Perhaps even the knowledge of God's plan affected him. After all, he could easily reason that he already had so much more on the ball than those physical creatures God was going to eventually put over him, and his pride wrapped him in smoke and motivated him to act to stop that plan because he knew a better way, and God's way had to be trashed. We see the following in Isaiah 14:12-14:

Isaiah 14:12-14 How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in *your* heart, *I* will ascend into heaven, *I* will exalt my throne above the stars of God: *I* will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the side of the north: *I* will ascend above the heights of the clouds; *I* will *be* like the most High.

Some commentators say that last phrase should read: "I will *be* the most High."

Have you ever felt that you knew better than those in charge? "*I will exalt myself*," he said. "*I will be in charge*." Have you ever felt that you were being overlooked, that your abilities were being neglected or abused, that you were being rejected, or that you were being taken advantage of? Did it motivate you to do something? Brethren, all of us do, and sometimes our thoughts are even true. *We are* being taken advantage of. But this fed his feelings about himself to one of a simmering resentment. A sarcastic bitterness arose, and with it a desire to assert his will and *control* the management of what was going on. He wanted [to be] divorced from the way he was being used to such an extent that he went to war against his Creator.

Brethren, there is an element here essential to understanding what is driving relationships. Both Satan and man [represented by Adam and Eve] were created. They were placed where they were to live and to serve, fulfilling a role that God assigned to them, but *all* of them decided not merely to live and to serve, but to take sovereignty over the position or place to themselves.

One major issue dominates every issue in the Bible: government and sovereignty. Among men this issue will either be driven by Satan and self-generated pride, or by faith in God, the fear of God, and humility before God.

Life (and all of its major issues) is going to be driven by one or the other. This is where our choices lie. This is the battleground where the choices lie, and it is here where the issue will be decided. Right from the beginning Satan played his trump card — enticing Adam and Eve through the desire to become complete masters of their destiny. "*You shall be gods!*" And faith in God, and the word of God were shoved aside in favor of self-sovereignty, and so this world has come to this now. Everybody has followed the same course of action, except for Jesus Christ. "Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done," He said to God. Even under the most extreme pressure, Satan could not get vanity, could not get pride, could not get arrogance, could not get rebellion to rise in Jesus to take control of the situation Himself, so that He didn't have to go through the pain of taking on the sins of others. Brethren, to serve God, to serve others is sometimes very painful.

Ephesians 2:1-5 And you has he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom also *wæll* had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved.)

Brethren, God has revealed to us where the battleground is. It's going to be either Satan operating through our pride, or it's going to be God operating through our faith, through our fear of Him, and our humility before Him. It's going to be one or the other, and we have to watch out, because we are still men and we are still subject to that constant traded communication that Satan can make against every one of us. His spirit of pride is out in that world just waiting for us to pick up on it.

It is interesting that in Job 41: 34, Satan is symbolically referred to as "beholding all high things: he is a king over all of the children of pride." He is the father of pride, and he is the father of the children of pride, and they are his children because they *have* pride, and because they operate according to it. Because of that he is also the father of all the sickness in this world, of all of the mental illnesses, of all of the depression, the frustration, the self-centeredness and the self-pity, and the warfare among us. This is all the result of us operating on pride, and pushing God aside and not submitting to Him in humility.

Satan and his cohorts are so slick, so subtle that they will use pride to help a person overcome simpler vices. Did you ever hear the rebuke, "*Where's your pride?*" The thought behind that is that a person of your station should not be doing such a mean [small, little, unworthy] thing. That is actually a motivation to overcome one evil, by means of a far more subtle difficult sin

that eats away at the character like a spiritual cancer.

As I said, perverted comparison — a judgment twisted by one's belief about one's self — is the heart and core of this sin, and it is not always easily seen. But, its fruits — the effects of perverted comparison — are more easily seen. This is what the Bible concentrates on in its instruction. The Bible shows what it does to one, and in turn what the person who has it does to others because he has it. The pride often remains hidden, but its fruit is not hidden.

Turn to Psalm 10:1-13. We're going to read these verses, and then we're going to go back and go through them more thoroughly.

Psalm 10:1-13 Why stand you afar off, O LORD? Why hide you yourself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride does persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and blesses the covetous, whom the LORD abhors. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; your judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffs at them. He has said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sits in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places does he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lies in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lies in wait to catch the poor: he does catch the poor when he draws him into his net. He crouches, and humbles himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. He has said in his heart, God has forgotten: he hides his face; he will never see it. Arise, LORD; O God, lift up your hand: forget not the humble. Wherefore does the wicked condemn God? He has said in his heart, You will not require it.

The overall theme of this Psalm is the perplexity at the prosperity of the wicked. The author is saying, " *Look at what these people are doing, but God, where are You? Why aren't You coming to the defense of Your people?*"

In doing this, the author gives quite a description of the proud. As we begin, please understand there are two words in these verses translated "poor." These words are somewhat similar in meaning, but neither word specifically means financially or economically poor unless the context demands it. Both words indicate someone *perceived* to be lower: be senseless, weak, unfortunate, or afflicted. In the context, then, it indicates someone taken advantage of by the proud who feel they have every right to do so.

As an example, the word rendered "poor" in verse 2 — "The wicked in his pride does persecute the poor" — is exactly the same word in verse 12 where it says "Arise, O LORD, O God, lift up your hand: forget not the *humble*." The word "humble" is the same word as the word "poor," in verse 2. That gives you some sort of an idea of what we're looking at then. It is somebody who

is not necessarily financially poor, but somebody simply perceived to be weaker or defenseless in the face of the proud.

A second thing I want us to note is another underlying thought to much of the whole Psalm. That is — the proud act as if they are God. "*You shall be as gods!*" Satan wanted to become God. There is a corollary between Satan's sin and man. It does not mean that they actually proclaim themselves that they *are* God, because the Psalm goes on to show that the proud are well aware of God. The focus (of their thinking) is so much on themselves, they simply suppress and disregard their awareness of Him, and in their drive to get what they want, they just ignore Him. The instruction is inescapable. Pride makes a person self-centered and self-willed. Notice in verse 4 it says, "God is not in *all* his thoughts." Doesn't that tell you that God is in some of his thoughts? The proud are aware of God, but they just push Him aside in their thoughts. God is lower in priority to them. Satan was well aware of God. Adam and Eve were well aware of God, but all three of them pushed God and His word aside, and that's what the proud do. Even though they are aware of God, they push God aside in order to exercise their own will.

In verse 2, it says the proud persecute the poor. That word "persecute" literally means, "*hotly pursues after,*" which in turn translates in practical situations as "*take advantage of.*" The proud always have to get the best of business dealings, or in law courts. The proud are indifferent to the needs of others, adept with crafty and malicious plans. The proud manipulate people to their own ends to get their way.

In verses 3 and 4, we now see pride as a form of idolatry. The proud set themselves up above God. They will not seek after God's way of doing things. Even though they do it, they don't seek Him in practical experience, and God is not in all of their thoughts. Now we see pride then as a form of idolatry, and a generator of boasting in their desire to get what they covet after.

"The LORD is abhorred." The proud vaunt themselves, and drive themselves toward what they covet. What they seek is mammon. That is why Jesus said we cannot serve God and mammon.

Mammon is simply a code word for all things material and carnal. God and mammon are opposites. God represents the spiritual. Mammon represents the material and physical. The exaltation of the self is the driving factor in the pursuit for mammon. So the proud is shown either outright forgetting, carelessly overlooking, or defying God while vaunting themselves. They put inordinate confidence in themselves and their abilities. They are not perceived in these two verses as being atheists, as one might think. For example, the Pharisees were not atheists. Were they proud, though? You had better believe that they were proud!

The proud openly express belief in God, but the proud choose to not have Him totally involved in their lives. And so they are selective (especially in application to themselves) of anything that reduces their sovereignty — which they need to control the situation and circumstances. So full well, they reject the commandments of God that they may keep their own tradition, and all the while — hypocritically, publicly worshipping God.

I have observed, in my time in the ministry [dealing with] marital problems, that it is usually the man who has a strong ego problem that is revealed in his unwillingness to seek help. So he frequently takes the, "*Well it's your problem*" attitude toward his wife. Do you know why? He is too ashamed to let others know that he has a weakness. Pride breeds a fear of exposure, and

thus the warfare in the home continues on in an anxiety-ridden and sometimes very turbulent way.

In verses 5 and 6, the psalmist complained because the proud so often appear to be getting their way in the world. It gives the impression that God is giving His approval of their ways by granting them success in what they do. In verse 7, it shows the proud use their tongues as a weapon to sarcastically put others down, even to the extent of blaspheming others in the same manner that God is blasphemed.

A person may not openly blaspheme God, but he will blaspheme those who are made in the *image image* of God, and somehow think that he is not sinning. He does the blaspheming because he thinks he is above and is superior to those poor things. He plays the game of "one-up-man-ship" very well. He uses his tongue to make himself look good, and come out on the top even if he has to lie and/or distort.

In Psalm 119:69, the psalmist says: "The proud have forged a lie against me." That is what the proud will do in order to win. The proud have to *win*, and they *fight* to win. It says here they will use lies, or distort the truth to make another look bad. Why lie? There are two reasons. (1) It makes them think they are better able to attain what they covet. (2) They have to uphold and protect their image, or to build it up to what they imagine it ought to be.

In verses 8 through 10, using metaphors, the proud are compared to gangsters, who beat their prey, and hunters who regard the poor as their victims to be used — and not as fellow-beings intended to share life in God's creation. God shows the hypocrisy that results. They are like the Pharisees who appear one way — humble - while actually competing, looking for an advantage to put themselves ahead.

We have got to understand that the proud are not necessarily shaking their fists at God. The proud are capable of doing these things simply by ignoring Him, because their faith in Him, and their fear of Him, and humility before Him, is of such low degree that God simply fades into the background. "God is not in *all* of his thoughts." The proud are very selective.

Verses 6 and 11 show that the proud are so presumptuous, shallow, and vain in their thinking, that they think God will not punish. The proud are (as we might say today) sick. They are sick in their spirit.

Proverbs 3:33-35 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked:  
but he blesses the habitation of the just. Surely he scorns the scorers:  
but he gives grace unto the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory: but  
shame shall be the promotion of fools.

The concept that the scorner and the proud have that they are not going to be punished is false for sure. "Surely He scorns the scorers." In modern translations, the word "scorners" is rendered "*proud mockers*." "Scorn" is contempt, or disdain for someone deemed to be inferior. It is shown by avoidance of the person deemed unworthy, or immediate rejection or ridicule in the form of sarcasm to the unworthy person's opinion. Scorn indicates resistance to the humble's thoughts or conduct by the proud. Scorn's affect is to divide and to break people into

cliques until such time that God intervenes to punish, and He *will*!

Notice the implication of reciprocity in treatment by God against the scorners. God will scorn the scorners because they scorn the humble. He gives back to them exactly what they are giving to the humble. What the scorners sow, in their relation to the humble, they reap in their relations with God. They sow scorn, and they get it back. That's exactly what comes back to them.

Psalm 138:6 Though the LORD be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knows afar off.

God holds the proud away from Him. It is very interesting that God's reaction is reciprocal to them. He scorns, or resists the proud, and holds them at arm's length, but He unites the humble to Himself through grace.

We're going to look just very briefly at an event that took place during the trip through the wilderness. It appears in Numbers 27: 1-6. We're not going to spend a lot of time on this, but it is interesting to me.

Numbers 27:1-6 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah: but died in his own sin, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he had no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. And the LORD spoke unto Moses.

This is an interesting event from two points of view. The first is that their case was heard. The second is that Moses, despite his apparently exalted position, quickly admitted that he didn't know the answer, and immediately appealed to God for help. It says that Moses was meek above all men. Moses set a wonderful example here. Despite his closeness to God and his exalted position, he apparently *immediately* admitted that he didn't know the answer, and he appealed to God.

The first is actually more important at this point in the sermon. Moses could have scornfully rejected the women on the basis that they were only women appealing, because the law specifically said that the inheritance was to go to the firstborn son. If the firstborn was dead, then it would go to the one under him. Here now were *women* appealing. The lesson here is to quickly admit that you don't know the answer to something, just as Moses did.

The proud have a hard time doing that because in their minds they know the answers! The second one is that no leader, under G