

New Covenant Priesthood (Part 9)

God Resists the Proud

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We learned in the two previous sermons that pride is an invisible spiritual influence generated and communicated by Satan and his demons. It takes root in us and then flourishes in a sense of wealth, or strength, or accomplishments, and then manifests itself in a wide variety of relationship-destroying acts.

The sense of wealth, or strength, can be in virtually anything that we assign it to. It doesn't even have to be real. We just have to think it's real in order for pride to take root there. It can be in the way that we saw some event, as opposed to the way another saw the same event. It can be in the way that we said something, as opposed to the way somebody else said that we said something. Whatever it is, it will make us militantly confident in ourselves, and create division.

Pride leads us to make perverted judgments. I would even say here *prejudicial* judgment of others and circumstances that elevate us, or our opinion, as being better or more deserving than others. It will produce feelings that we are being mistreated and taken advantage of. Unless pride is recognized and controlled, we will act to support our feelings, and those actions almost invariably will produce some degree of division and warfare.

We also saw that pride carries with it another false assumption, i.e., that one is what he is on his own. This leads one to think that one is intrinsically better than others. However, the reality, according to the Bible, is that everybody is indebted to others for what they are. I'm going to read I Corinthians 4:6 just to remind us of it.

I Corinthians 4:6-7 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that you might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?

Paul is strongly inferring about God in this context, but it is not restricted to God, because *others* have had an influence in making us what we are. Parents, teachers, employers, employees and neighbors have all contributed to make it possible for us to have feelings of strength. Though we undoubtedly have contributed to what we are, nobody is entirely self-made. That is something we cannot take credit for, because we are indebted to others.

Who gave Satan his intelligence, position, authority, and beauty? He most certainly didn't create himself. But Satan allowed pride to pervert his thinking, and he elevated himself. He rejected his dependence, and rebelled against God.

Did we create ourselves? Did we reveal God to ourselves? Did we create the forgiveness of sin? Did we lead ourselves to repentance? Did we give ourselves the power to believe? Did we create the goal of eternal life in the Kingdom of God? These are just a few things that have been given to us in just one area of life. Nobody is entirely self-made in *any* aspect of life.

Pride arrogates to itself full credit for the sense of wealth or strength in which we put confidence. This led David (in Psalm 10) to show that pride subtly elevates one as being above God, and results in a rejection of one's dependence upon and submission to God. This is not something that the person loudly proclaims, but rather something his actions show. This leads him to hypocritically claim that he knows God, loves God, and has a relationship with God, while in actual fact he ignores, neglects, and rebels against God in some area of life important to him. This produces *the worst* sin of all—idolatry.

Now why is pride so bad? Turn to Isaiah 66: 1-2 and we'll read what is said here.

Isaiah 66: 1-2 Thus says the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things has *my* hand made, and all those things have been, says the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

Taking the sense of what He is saying there, pride is so bad because it cuts us off from a good relationship with God, and then also with fellowman. I'm going to refer to another scripture in I John 4: 20-21. Listen to what John says here in relation to pride, even though pride is not mentioned. We're talking about relationships, because pride destroys relationships.

I John 4: 20-21 If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loves God love his brother also.

There is one word there that is kind of interesting in regard to this. If you will recall, we began the previous sermon with Proverbs 6: 16, where the word *hate* was used. "These seven things does My soul hate," God says. I mentioned to you there that we should not pay too much attention to *hate* in an absolute sense. That is, "My will is entirely set against it." But rather I showed you the word "hate" means, "*reject from fellowship*." These seven things cause God to reject the person who is reflecting these things from fellowship with Him.

We're still on this question, "*Why is pride so bad?*" It's because it destroys relationships, whether with God, or with man. The very first thing that God mentioned was a form of pride—"a haughty look." Three times the Bible says (once in Proverbs, once in James, and once in I Peter) "God resists the proud, (He rejects the proud from fellowship) but gives grace to the humble." God opens the way to Him to those who are humble and of a contrite spirit.

We're going to refine this destruction of fellowship a little bit further, because there is a very good reason why pride produces such horrible fruit. Recall that Satan said to Adam and Eve, "*You shall be as gods!*" It was immediately after he said this that the sin occurred. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. What an elevation for a mere human to be god, to be in control, to have the authority and the power to do, as it were, anything you wanted to do. The pride of life filled their thinking. They disrespected the revelation of God, and sin immediately occurred.

Brethren, pride is so bad because it is all about disrespect. We'll put this into a context that anybody ought to be able to understand. The fear of God—the respect *for* God—evaporates before pride in order to get something for itself. Pride produces the disrespect for law (whether it's God's or man's), because the fear of law dissolves in order for the proud one to feel free to do what he has to do in order to get what one wants.

When Evelyn and I were going or coming from Tampa just within the past month or so, we heard a man say on the radio that speed laws meant nothing to him, that he was going to go as fast as he wanted to go. Do you see how pride elevated him above the law? He had no respect for the law. He had no respect for the people he might kill by going too fast. That attitude is a reflection of pride working. That person is declaring that he is above the law that ordinary people must obey.

In addition to disrespect to laws, pride also disrespects policies, traditions, and dignity. It's interesting what Paul in II Thessalonians 2:15 said directly to those people there.

II Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Today it's very common—at least out in the world—for many people to want to be casual; as casual as they possibly can in the worship of God. We hear the churches around Charlotte advertising that they have a "*Come as you are*" service. They're talking about coming in whatever in the way of clothing. I heard one man being interviewed, and he liked this because he could show up before God in jeans. Instead of these people showing respect for God's holiness, for His position as the Sovereign Ruler of *everything that is*, they are elevating themselves and saying to God, "*You're just going to have to accept me the way I am.*"

The doing of disrespect begins to extend out to things like lying, stealing, and even murder, besides the aforementioned idolatry. Pride will neglect respect for a spouse, children, parents, brethren, police, employees, employers, neighbors, and run roughshod over them in its drive to get what it wants. If you think I'm kidding, all we have to do is look at the *prime* example—Satan. Pride *drove* him to think and to be convinced that the God who created him (and whom he could see with his own eyes) could be defeated in a war. It so twisted his judgment.

When I say that pride will disrespect anything that gets in its way in order to accomplish the satisfaction of the self, I *mean* it. Before pride, the obligation to obey Jesus' command to "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" or to Paul's "Esteem others better than

themselves," or Peter's "Submit to every ordinance of man,"—are forgotten or thrust aside so that pride can fulfill its need. Pride says, "*I did it myself, and I deserve to be served rather than to serve.*" It is interesting what is said in Ephesians 5: 21.

Ephesians 5:20-21 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Submitting yourselves one to another *in the fear of God*.

Notice here *the fear of God*. What does pride do in regard to the *fear of God*? It dissolves it in order to get what it wants. If fear of God dissolves before pride, do you think that there is going to be any respect for this command? And if there isn't, how are we going to submit to one another? I'll tell you it's going to be very difficult because, as the cliché goes, we will throw our weight around to get our way.

In marriage (which this verse is directly connected to) a husband will be very reluctant on occasions (or maybe most of the time, and perhaps even adamantly so) to listen to the counsel of his wife. He will say, "*I know what she's going to say anyway.*" But the truth is he doesn't want his opinion and his gender authority to be challenged. This sets up an interesting, if cynical, observation. Consider this: This guy is so smart that he married this stupid woman whose opinion he now doesn't want to hear.

Men, do you understand what you are telling God by this sort of conduct? It is telling Him that you are unfit to rule in the Kingdom of God. It is telling God you are not going to listen to the counsel, to the appeals, or hear the needs of the *weak* or the *poor* (as the Bible names them), because you say you'll know what they're going to say anyway, and you will prejudge them.

What about a woman who refuses to submit? Well, she's going to do it her way regardless, because she too is telling God that she's going to do the same thing in the Kingdom of God. She will constantly be questioning directives in the wrong self-centered manner. Please understand ladies that it is not wrong to question. It is not wrong to have strong feelings about something, but please be sure that as you are questioning, you are also checking your attitude, and *why* you are questioning. It might reveal some pride.

The marriage of couples with these attitudes will be dominated by self-serving, and based upon competition. Each will be seeking to control situations to one's personal advantage, and the cooperation, sacrifice, and submission necessary for any successful marriage will be replaced by warfare. Pride turns a person in on himself so that he is blind to its dependence on others. His obligation to others, and the needs of others, and the cooperation and sacrifice it takes to make an endeavor peaceful, profitable and secure for all, will be turned aside. You see, pride produces an abundance of self-centered disrespect.

Pride puffs up as being the guide plowing the way for sin in places that are maybe not often thought of. Here is an example for you. There are people who can't seem to stop talking. They have a great proclivity for wearing people out. I wonder if you are aware that the Bible labels that as not only foolish, but also evil. Let's look at it. Let's go to Proverbs 14: 10.

Proverbs 10:14 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the

foolish is near destruction.

Notice that warning.

Proverbs 10:19 In the multitude of words there wants not sin: . . .

I'm going to change one word there because of what it means today. "In the multitude of words there is *no lack of sin*." There is no lack. Sin is not lacking.

Proverbs 10:19 . . . But he that refrains his lips is wise.

He's already telling you the person who doesn't restrain his lips is foolish.

Proverbs 10:20-21 The tongue of the just is as choice silver [and that's pretty good]: the heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want [or lack] of wisdom.

I want you to go back and look at verse 14, which says, "Wise men lay up knowledge." It's better translated this way: "*Wise men conceal knowledge*." Do you know what that means? It doesn't mean that they really hide it, and keep it from others. It's just simply a way of saying, in the context, that they're not talkative. That's all. They make no show of what they have learned. When they speak it is with due consideration.

But the contrast shown is that the foolish are careless, blurting out words and creating considerable harm for themselves and others. That's why it says, "*is near destruction*." Verses 19 through 21 intensify the thought by stating that sin is not lacking, and providing more contrast, showing the value of being "slow to speak." In much talking there is a lot of sin, and sin is evil, and there is no lack of it in virtually non-stop talking.

One of the disheartening things about the non-stop talkers is that they seem to be blind to what they are doing. They're just gibbering away it seems all the time. It's like they can't help themselves, like the tongue has control of the mind, and is just going off. Let's look at Proverbs 14: 3.

Proverbs 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride:

There is a direct connection between the foolish and pride. We already saw that people who talk a lot are foolish. Now the direct connection is made as to what is *driving* them. It is pride. Pride is driving them.

Proverbs 14:3 But the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

Look at the contrast there. He is saying that the foolish, who talk a lot, who are near

destruction, are going to die because of their foolish talking; but the lips of the wise are going to live. We have a direct connection now between *the pride* and *the foolish*, and therefore sin, and they are bringing a great deal of punishment upon themselves. I want us to look now at Proverbs 13:24.

Proverbs 13:24 He that spares his rod hates his son.

Now connect the word *rod* in Proverbs 13:24 with the word *rod* in Proverbs 14:3. *Rod* is used in the Bible as an instrument of punishment. With that thought transferred into Proverbs 14:3, it shows that the foolish talker's own mouth is the instrument that brings punishment upon him. But you see, pride is lying in the background, generating it.

Let's go now to Ecclesiastes 10:12. Again notice the contrast.

Ecclesiastes 10:12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious;
but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

There's the destruction. The instrument of the destruction is his constant talking. Verse 13 continues the thought.

Ecclesiastes 10:13-14 The beginning of the words of his mouth is
foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also
is full of words.

This is pretty damning. Let's go now to Ecclesiastes 5, and we'll put a cap on this part of the sermon. As I begin this, I want you to reflect on one of the themes of Psalm 139, which David shows that regardless of where we are, God is *with* us. We are *never* out of His presence in regard to these things.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 Keep your foot when you go to the house of God, and
be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they
consider not that they do evil.

What is the sacrifice of fools? "*Yakkity, yakkity, yakkity, yak!*"

Ecclesiastes 5:2-3 Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your
heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and
you upon earth [showing a difference in power]: therefore let your
words be few. For a dream comes through the multitude of business;
and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

I hope I'm convincing you, brethren.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: pay that which you have vowed. Better is it that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Allow not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin; neither say you before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also different vanities: but *fear you God.*

There is powerful warning there about being careful in our speech. It's interesting in verse 7 He says there are different vanities. In a multitude of words there is futility, vanity, and sin abounds. That vanity is pride, and the sin that plows the way for all of its expression.

We're going to go back to Deuteronomy 8. I was thinking this morning, as I was going through this, that in the last five or six sermons we had sometimes come back to Deuteronomy 8. I'm developing a habit like Herbert Armstrong did, only it's not Genesis 1, 2 and 3. It's Deuteronomy 8: 2-3.

Deuteronomy 8:2 And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, . . .

Notice there is a comma after the word "wilderness," indicating a little break in the thought, as though he's going to explain something.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 . . . to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not; [They had no prior knowledge of it nor experience with it] neither did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.

I'm going to go all the way back into the New Testament now to II Corinthians 12. We're going to look first at verse 7, then verse 10. Here with have an experience of Paul.

II Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

II Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

In Deuteronomy 8:2-3 the emphasis was on what God did in order to produce humility. In II Corinthians 12 the emphasis there is on what God did to humble the Apostle Paul. Israel's trek through the wilderness was a very difficult experience for them, and I think that you will all agree that so was Paul's life. God led Paul in somewhat the same manner as He led the Israelites.

When God is going to be leading somebody, we should begin at least to understand that not everything is going to be roses, ice cream, happiness, joy, and peace, that there is going to be a great deal of trouble. There are going to be times of hunger and thirst situations in which we feel that we are absolutely helpless before the onslaught of what is going on. There was apparently one time when God had to resurrect Paul when he was stoned to death. I am sure that stoning hurt, and it was done to humble him. It was done to create in the Israelites, and in the Apostle Paul, and in us—a sense and an awareness of *oudependence* on God.

The tests that He gives to prove us (as He says) are tests of our faith, to see whether or not our confidence is in Him. These tests are to see whether or not we are going to depend upon *Him* to divide the Red Sea (as it were), or to supply us with the strength of food, or the refreshment of water, the encouragement, the hope, or whatever it is that we need. This is so that always there is attention between dependence, humility, and the fear of God so that we might be able to resist the urges of our nature to pull us into pride where we begin to act on our own to satisfy the desires of our heart.

He directly says in Deuteronomy 8:3 that He did this in order that they would be moved to recognize their need to conduct their lives according to God's word, and therefore God's will. Even though God's will is not mentioned there, it is implied in the use of the word *word*." It was done for them to live their lives in *the fear of God*.

Pride is the producer of the worst forms of self-love. I said earlier it makes us focus on ourselves. We'll show more of this as we go along. God mercifully gave Paul a problem to keep him ever mindful of his dependence. The truly humble are knowledgeable of their dependence, and they cry out to God continually for help.

The following quotation appeared on the Church of the Great God web site the day following my last sermon on pride. The author of this quotation is Rebecca Manley Pippert. I have no idea who she is, but she understands a vital aspect of this very serious subject.

Quote by Rebecca Manley Pippert:

"God is making us holy. But there is a requirement for learning how to submit to God's authority: humility. We won't get very far in the development of holiness if we are defensive about our flaws. That is why truly holy people are so easy to be with. They have been around God too long to try to pretend they are perfect. They are the first to acknowledge their pride and their faults."

The feelings of "*the holy*" are not merely feelings of weakness, because everybody experiences that; but rather it is a true recognition of their dependence upon what God only can supply. In John 15, Jesus said, "Without Me, you can do nothing." He meant spiritually. He meant for the

purposes of salvation. We can build mighty towers. We can build automobiles, airplanes, and rocket ships, but none of that is going to get us into the Kingdom of God. He is *absolutely* necessary. He is the key to salvation. Without Him we can do nothing.

Do we recognize that dependence? If we recognize that dependence—"What do you have that you have not received?"—where is there room for boasting? Where is there room for pride? There is *NONE*! There is no room at all! That is why the humble will acknowledge that they do have pride in them, and they will acknowledge to flaws they have in them as well. This leads the children of God to diligently search for His will in every circumstance of life. They seek counsel to find it. He is in their every-thought process.

His way is never ignored, neglected, nor rejected. Their mind is ever open to the acceptance of His will regardless of the sacrifice that might be imposed upon them in submitting to it. It matters not whether it is in marriage, church, on the job, or in the neighborhood. As long as man continues to have confidence in and dependence upon himself, and neglect or reject God, this world is going to continue as it is.

We're going to look a remarkable verse in regard to pride in Habakkuk 2: 4-5. This verse says something that is very important to our understanding.

Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him:
but the just shall live by his faith.

Notice this is a verse with a contrast in it. It is contrasting that man in the first phrase with those in the second. They are obviously different. That is why the contrast is there.

Habakkuk 2:5 Yes also, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man; neither keeps at home, who enlarges his desire as hell [or the grave], and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathers unto him all nations, and heaps unto him all people.

He is talking here about a specific person (probably the Beast), but it is what is said in verse 4. The way this is written indicates that the proud cannot—it is impossible—for them to live by faith. Salvation is by grace, through faith. Along with destroying "fear of God," pride also erodes faith. I'm going to read this to you as the *New International Version* translates it.

Habakkuk 2:4 (NIV) "See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright
? but the righteous will live by his faith."

This verse is saying that pride—"being puffed up"—twists a person's desires into a perversion, and those desires become lust, envy. Division and war quickly follow. A proud person will instead live by his own resources and desires rather than in faith, humbly submitting to God. If one cannot, or will not live by faith, salvation then becomes impossible. That's how important humility is. Where will the proud's confidence be? Where will the proud's faith be? It will be in themselves. It will be in what men can do. It will be in their nation. It will be in their wealth. It

will be anything else other than God. Their faith will be in anything in which they put their confidence, their dependence and security, other than in God.

Let's go back to Proverbs again, this time to Proverbs 3:5-8.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding.

That's what the proud will do. They will lean to their own understanding.

Proverbs 3:6-8 In all your ways acknowledge him [God], and he shall direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones.

We won't read any more of the verses here. Actually the thought just continues on for about another ten verses. What I wanted to get out of that was primarily "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding." That's what pride does. It perverts our judgment to depending upon ourselves and other men. It twists our desires into lust.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 said that God did all this in the wilderness to get people to think about His word, but the proud will not do that. This is why Habakkuk 2:4 says that those who are driven by pride will not be in the Kingdom of God, because they cannot live by faith.

Satan wouldn't follow what it says in Proverbs 3. Adam and Eve didn't either, and neither has the rest of mankind. However, God's begotten children *will*—by faith. It is this that separates them from the rest of mankind, and works to prepare them for everlasting life in the Kingdom of God.

Let's go now to Matthew 5:3. This is right at the beginning of the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Poor in spirit" has very much to do with humility. I give this, because when you connect this scripture with Isaiah 66:1-2, you begin to understand this characteristic not only opens the way into God's presence, but sustains it all the way through the relationship. It is interesting that the word "poor" appears here to point out to us that those who have access to God—that theirs is not a sense of wealth, of strength and accomplishment, but *dependent* weakness and need. They are *poor*! What a difference!

I'm going to give you a definition of "*poor in spirit*" which I gleaned from a commentary by Emmet Fox in his book *The Sermon On The Mount*. The whole book was on the sermon on the mount.

"To be poor in spirit means to have emptied yourself of all desire to

exercise personal self-will. And what is just as important, to have renounced all pre-conceived opinions in the wholehearted search for God. It means to be willing to set aside your present habits of thought, your present views and prejudices, your present way of life if necessary, to jettison in fact anything and everything that stands in the way of your finding God."

Emmet Fox gave either 4 or 7 (depending upon how you group them) related choices that one has to make in order to live up to his definition of "poor in spirit." The important fact for us is that these "poor in spirit" honestly see themselves as they are, as measured against the only standard that matters in terms of eternal life and pleasing God. That standard is God. We measure ourselves against *His* standard. And none of us is rich the way God is.

As we saw in another sermon, in the book of James and in I Peter, humbling ourselves is a choice. It is a choice that needs to be made many times, and it is one that is greatly needed.

We're going to go now to Matthew 19, because this chapter presents us with perhaps one of the more tragic figures in all of the Bible, and that is the rich young ruler who came to Christ, asking Him what he would have to do to have eternal life. Of course Jesus told him.

Matthew 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

His choice was to turn aside because of his love of his possessions—his sense of security, his confidence. His dependence was in his wealth, and he could not choose to humble himself. He could not choose to jettison his wealth, to go the way that Jesus pointed.

The Scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not receive Christ's message for basically the same reason. They had *great* possessions of rabbinical training, public honor and offices. They would have had to sacrifice in order to accept Jesus' teaching. Perhaps we too have great possessions that need to be brought into scrutiny, such as things like confidence in our own judgment, ideas with which we are familiar, material attachment to institutions or organizations, pride born of skill or academic achievement, or perhaps fear of public ridicule, or the distinction of having been born into a certain family, race, or going to a certain school, or serving in a branch of the military. As I send earlier, the list is potentially endless. Paul addressed this in Philippians 3: 3-8, and verses 13 and 14.

Philippians 3:3-8 For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee: Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those

I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

This section puts the right spin on all kinds of things of this nature that we might humanly, carnally, take confidence in. I want you to notice the comparison Paul makes in verses 3 and 4 that distinguishes a true Christian from those who might be religious, and even be claiming that they are Christian. But true Christians worship God in, or by means of, the spirit. That's one characteristic, but it's the second characteristic that I am most interested in for this sermon. It says that they *rejoice* in Christ Jesus.

That word "rejoice" is quite interesting because it is translated in other places "boast." In other places it is translated "glory" in the New Testament. It means exactly the same thing as our English words "boast" and "glory" mean. That word "rejoice" means " *to brag, to honor, to proclaim the achievements of,*" whether of another or of the self. It just depends on the context.

Notice in verse 4 that Paul gives a contrast to make sure that we understand what he is writing on, because he says: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh " He's talking about things we might *boast* in that are of the flesh. True Christians do not exalt in, or glory in, or put any of their confidence in their own achievements in terms of their relationship with and standing before God.

In I Corinthians 1:31 exactly the same word is used. Verse 27 says, "And God has chosen the foolish things of the world," and the paragraph ends by saying in verse 31, "That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord."

The only truly, eternally, worthwhile things in which one can put one's confidence and security, are the values and qualities received as gifts from God. Because they are gifts, none of these allow us room to be proud because they are things given, not inherent. What we need to do is to choose to turn our attention to recognizing this, and then using those gifts in His service.

Turn to Philippians 3:13. Paul is still on the same subject. This is what he says he is going to do.

Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: ["I haven't made it yet," He says.] but this one thing I do, forgetting those things [all those human things and pedigree he had] which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark [which is the Kingdom of God] of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Brethren, Habakkuk proved to us that we cannot allow pride to be a dominant force in our lives. Pride will reveal itself in the elevation of the self above others, and it *will* affect relationships. There is no way to stop it. The most serious relationship it affects is the one with God, because "He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble." Isn't that what we want? We want *grace* in *ALL* that it means. I'm thinking of giving a sermon on that, because my mind is expanding on

what *grace* means. It means a lot to us. It /S salvation in many, many, many ways. "God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble."

It is pride that destroys human relationships. It destroys the relationship with God and men because it produces disrespect for God, for law, for others, for policies, for traditions, and on and on it goes, creating destruction as it goes along on it's not-so-merry way.

I am right at a point where if I start something it will take me longer to finish the thought than in the time that we have left, so we will just stop here. The subject of the next section here I feel fits right into the Days of Unleavened Bread. According to the schedule it will be given on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, March 28, 2002. The subject is "forgiveness." There is a direct connection between pride and forgiveness. Or I should say, "pride and the *unwillingness* to forgive."