

# Life's Swagger

1 John 2:16

because all that is in the world--  
the •desire of the flesh,  
and the •desire of the eyes,  
and •the ostentation of the life--  
is not of the Father, but of the world,

orldliness is divided into three categories by John. The third category, the "ostentation of life," (translated "the pride of life" in most Bibles) is the one least understood by most of us.

"Life" is from the Greek 'bios', having to do with the external aspect of our lives.

"Ostentation/pride" could also be translated "swagger," "boastfulness," or "presumptuous confidence".

When we put the two terms together, we are talking about an *attitude* that we manifest as creatures whose lives are suited to the *earth*. The idea is **how naturally we carry assumptions about our earthly existence**. Also implicit in the phrase is how our earthly experience naturally CARRIES ALONG those assumptions, as if on the crest of an undying wave. Of course, our earthly existence itself is not to blame for this, being impersonal.\*

The “Swagger of Life,” as we might call it, takes God's amazing *correspondence* between earth and its dominant creature, man, and *separates* it from God. Even when a man's thoughts temporarily turn towards God, he does not make a complete connection between his own existence and God's design. His own existence organically blocks the connection out. It says, “**I** am alive,” with an emphasis on the “I.” It says “I am alive today as I was alive yesterday. I didn't need an explanation for my life yesterday; that's proof enough that my life was sufficient unto itself. My life remains **self**-sufficient today.” We don't ask for any proof; our life seems to simply tell us that we're on our own, moving along on our own power.

*Therefore, every aspect of life becomes merely a reinforcement in our minds of our self-sufficiency.* It is not something we reason out; it is an **ASSUMPTION**. Furthermore, it is an assumption we can barely escape. We **operate by** the Pride of Life.

A Christian, then, has not experienced much of a deliverance if he still operates by this “Bravado of Existence.” Hopefully, his conversion-understanding of man's total obligation to his Creator has done much to break the dominion of his Bravado. But the assumption remains implicit in our earthly souls. It is in our bones. “I exist because I exist,” my soul chants through my ongoing heartbeats and breaths. “My life moves along on its own,” is the credo I

don't have to *say* but simply *live*. "Plus, I'm obviously holding the rudder that directs me!" The crazy thing is that, in a certain sense, this is perfectly correct. God created us to function on our own (as much as any part of the Universe does). Unfortunately, with the sin in our members, our 'automotive' motif becomes an 'independent-of-God' mentality.

THEREFORE (and here's the big point of this meditation), it is much for our good when our **earthly confidences** are shaken. Flattering assumptions we make about ourselves, the way others regard us, our relative good health, our ability to fashion solutions to life's difficulties: one or more of these are dealt a painful blow, perhaps a mortal one. We are rocked to our foundations. We are angry more than helpless-feeling; irritated more than humbled. This anger shows us how much the Pride of Life was in charge.

But if we will be thoughtful, we can gain wisdom. Why was I counting on *that*? There may have been an injustice involved in the removal of that earthly confidence. Another person may have unjustly dealt me the blow. But being reduced to Self *without* Bravado is only a good thing. It feels horrible, and it's embarrassing; but it is challenging a natural, sinful assumption of ours in a way that that assumption wills *not* to be challenged otherwise: "I am the author of my earthly existence." The sickness/loss/disappointment answers, "No you're not."

So how will you respond to irritations today? - even the most 'inconsequential' ones? Their cumulative affect can go a long way in breaking our “Corporal (bodily) Conceit” (so let us rename it this one last time for our learning) if we are receptive.

\* Through it, we can even admire God's original wisdom in adapting man's soul to his surroundings.