

Spiritual Poisons, part 3, PRIDE
November 13, 2016



The story is told of two ducks and a frog who lived happily together in a farm pond. The best of friends, the three would amuse themselves and play together in their waterhole. When the hot summer days came, however, the pond began to dry up, and soon it was evident they would have to move. This was no problem for the ducks, who could easily fly to another pond. But the frog was stuck. So it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck that the frog could hang onto with his mouth as they flew to another pond. The plan worked well--so well, in fact, that as they were flying along a farmer looked up in admiration and mused, "Well, isn't that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it?" The frog yelled down, "I did!" His pride did him in.

Everyone deals with the sin of pride. Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, wrote: ***"There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify (kill) it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."***

We are in a series of sermons on spiritual poisons. These are not physical things that you might touch or swallow and which could harm your body. Instead, we are dealing with things that can harm your spirit.

These spiritual poisons will hinder the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in you.

The Holy Spirit is working to transform your character into the character of Jesus. This occurs over a long period of time, in fact the rest of your life. But if you allow these poisons into your spirit they will hinder what the Holy Spirit is working to accomplish in you. All of these spiritual poisons concern sins in us.

Jesus taught that our outward sins, the sins visible to others, all start with secret sins in the heart. So early on in Christian history, pastors determined to identify these sins of the heart. Their goal was to make help people deal with these sins and thus prevent sinful actions against each other.

This is my goal too. I want to help you recognize these most dangerous spiritual poisons and begin working to flush them out of you.

We began by looking at apathy. This was apathy towards our blessings in Christ. Then we looked at anger. While anger is a natural emotion, it can lead us to sin if we do not respond to it correctly. This morning we will tackle the spiritual poison of pride.

To begin, I want you to think a few minutes about how to answer the question at the head of your outline. **"I am most proud of my _____."**

I would guess that we are all proud of something. Pride is a common human failing. Let me suggest some categories to think about.

To fill in that blank, **You might think of an ability or talent you have.** Maybe you are good at math, or science, or writing, or sewing, or music, or a sport. Maybe you are mechanically inclined or excel at computers. Maybe cooking or baking is the thing you take pride in.

To fill in that blank, **You might think of the lifestyle you have chosen.** One woman is proud in her makeup and another is proud that she doesn't bother with makeup. One man is proud of purchasing a new car while another is proud of choosing to keep driving an older car. One parent is proud of being a strict disciplinarian while another is proud of being lenient. One person is proud of going to a large church with lots of people and activities. Another is proud of going to a small church where everyone knows everyone's name. Some people choose to be proud of their good behavior while others choose to be proud of their bad behavior. Some people are proud of living high on the hog while others are proud of choosing a simple lifestyle.

To fill in that blank, **You might be thinking of a possession, something unique or special that you own.** Maybe you are proud of your big TV, big house, big vehicle, or big bank account. Maybe you have a special piece of art or an antique that you are proud of. Maybe you are proud of your phone, your computer purchase. Maybe you are proud of some item that has been handed down in your family from one generation to the next. There are any number of things we might choose to be proud of owning.

Christians are extra susceptible to pride. Since we have the true knowledge of salvation and are striving to be good people, we are most in danger of being proud of these things. Maybe you are proud of being a Christian, proud of your prayers, proud of your Bible knowledge, or proud that you go to church on Sundays while others sleep in. Yes, Christians, too, are tempted by pride. And this is a great danger to us.

Let me point out some of the dangers of pride. **Some dangers of pride:**

> **Pride can make us un-teachable.** In our pride we may have such thoughts as these:

- "I know enough to get by."
- "I know all I need to know."
- "I am smarter than the average person."
- "I don't need anyone's advice."
- "I don't need anyone's help."
- "I am self-sufficient."

We might even resist what God wants to teach us. Solomon, the wisest man of the ancient world, observed this of the foolish person.

Proverbs 12:15 (NIV) The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

> **Pride in us can prevent compassion for others.** People who are full of themselves tend to look down on others as less capable, less smart, less talented, less informed, less discerning, less thrifty, less spiritual, less generous, less faithful, or less something else. Pride puffs us up above others - at least in our eyes. Such attitudes do not foster compassion for others.

> **Pride has a hardening effect on the heart.** Pride makes us less sensitive to our own sin. Pride makes us less sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. When we read or hear the Bible and the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, pride pushes back and we fail to repent.

> **Pride can damage relationships and prevent reconciliation.** Have you ever lost a friend because neither of you would apologize? Pride says, "I'm not going to make the first move towards reconciling." And so there is a relationship that never gets healed. This, in a Christian, is an insult to God's grace.

And here is one more danger. This last one is the most serious, the most dangerous problem that pride causes us.

> **Pride puts us at odds with God.** This is the lesson we need to see this morning. Look at what God says to us through the book of James in the Bible.

James 4:6 (NIV) "God opposes the proud..."

(Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34; Matthew 23:12; 1 Peter 5:5;)

There are no qualifications here. There is no hint that some pride is okay and other pride is sinful. It is stated as a simple fact that God opposes the proud person, all proud people.

The word "opposes," or you translation may say "resists," is a military term meaning "to battle against." This is ACTIVE opposition. God does not say, "Okay, proud person, you go your way and I'll go mine." No, your pride is an act against God and so He actively resists you. He actively opposes you. He works against you.

I sure don't want God working against me. I want to be on His side. If you do too, then we best be able to recognize pride in us. And it IS in us. We all battle pride in some form, though we do not often recognize it in ourselves. Pride is one of the sneakiest of sins. Sure, we can see it in the person who brags on himself or boasts in her possessions. But most pride is hidden inside. You may never brag or boast and yet be full of pride. We better learn about pride because God opposes the proud.

But why? Why does God oppose the proud? God opposes pride because of what pride is. **Pride is stealing God's glory for ourselves.**

Pride is giving self more credit than self deserves. Pride gives me all the credit for what I did, can do, or own, as if God had no hand in it. Pride leaves God out of the picture.

It is God who has given us the background, talents, abilities, skills, health, opportunities, and other resources that we use to do or get what we are proud of. The poison of pride is failing to acknowledge what God has done for us and in us.

Paul, the missionary, had a tough time dealing with a prideful church. This church was in the city of Corinth. They had divided themselves into groups, each boasting about what teacher they followed. They were all supposed to be following Jesus. But some had chosen to follow one of the missionaries instead. And they were dividing the church, and proud of it.

So Paul is writing to correct their sinful thinking and boasting. He points out that he and the other missionaries are not special people. They are simply servants of God. He commands them to stop boasting, to humble themselves towards each other, and reconcile the church. Then he makes the point that they have no reason for their pride.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (NIV) "... who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

God makes us different from each other. God gives each of us different skills, talents, and abilities. So why do we take pride in such things instead of giving glory to God?

What have you done, or can you do, that God has not made possible? God gave you your hands and feet, your mouth, your ears, your brain. God gave you the ability to learn. God gave you the health to function. God gives you the strength to accomplish anything.

God has had a part in your every accomplishment. There is nothing you accomplish without provisions from God. God has made possible everything you own. Anything you might take pride in, God had a bigger part in it than you did.

Do not steal His glory. Do not act as if you did it all yourself. Give God the glory He deserves.

Pride steals God's glory. And God won't stand for it. Final judgment is coming to the earth, in part, because of all the pride of mankind.

Isaiah 2:2, 11-18 (NIV) In the last days...

The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted and they will be humbled,... for every lofty tower and every fortified wall, for every trading ship and every stately vessel. The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols (what man has made or done) will totally disappear.

What is bringing this dire action from God? Pride. Our pride steals God's glory. If you are proud of you for any reason, then your thinking is not right in relation to God. You are not giving Him the glory He is due from you.

But there is an antidote to this spiritual poison. **The antidote for the poison of pride involves seven actions:**

James 4:7-9 (NIV) Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

1. Submit yourself to God, James 4.7a.

2. **Resist the devil, James 4.7b** Pride is of the devil.
3. **Come near to God, James 4.8.** This is not the same as submitting to God. You can submit to God in obedience while keeping your distance from Him with your heart.
4. **Repent of sin, James 4.8.** This is the "washing of hands and purifying hearts".
5. **Grieve your sins, James 4:9.** Grieve that you stole glory from God.
6. **Humble yourself before God, James 4:10.** I am nothing. I am no one special. I am Your servant, God.

This last is not written as a command, but as a promise. As with all of God's promises, we are to believe them and act upon them.

7. Expect the promise of verses 6 and 10 to be fulfilled.

James 4:6 (NIV) God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

James 4:10 (NIV) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.

God opposes the proud, because the proud fail to give God the glory He is due for who He is and all He does. God opposes the proud, resists the proud, ignores the prayers of the proud. But God will lift up the humble. He will support you, give you strength, meet your need.

Lately in your life, has He been opposing you or lifting you up?

Is pride the reason why you are not getting what you need?

Where is the poison of pride living in your spirit, your heart, your mind? It is time to flush it out.

Invitation

Pride is the biggest obstacle to becoming a follower of Jesus. To become a follower of Jesus, you have to admit you are a sinner in need of a savior. Pride keeps many people from acknowledging that truth. And so they push Jesus away.

Instead, push your pride away today. Admit to God you are a sinner in need of Jesus.

Receive Him as your savior and turn your life over to him as your Lord. Give up your pride for Him, that He might save you from the penalty of your sins.

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Terms related to pride:

Conceit - Romans 12:16

Haughtiness - 2 Samuel 22:28; Isaiah 3:16; Zephaniah 3:11

Boasting - Proverbs 27:1; James 4:16