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PRIDE AND HUMILITY

#168

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THOUGHTS ON PRIDE FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, PART 1

Charles Bridges

“Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom”
—Proverbs 13:10.

MOST accurately is *contention* here traced to its proper source. “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife” (Pro 28:25). All the crudeness of the day, all the novelties of doctrine producing *contention* (1Ti 1:4; 2Ti 2:23), originate in the proud swelling of “the fleshly mind” (Col 2:18; 1Ti 6:3, 4). Men scorn the beaten track. They must strike out a new path. Singularity and extravagance are primary charms. They are ready to quarrel with every one, who does not value their notions as highly as they do. The desire of pre-eminence, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (3Jo :9); revolt from authority (Num 12:2) or sound doctrine (2Ti 4:3, 4); party spirit, with the *pride* of knowledge and gifts (1Co 3:3, 4 with 4:8)—all produce the same results. Is it too much to say, that vain-glory hath lighted up all the sinful *contentions*, that have ever kindled in the Church? We must indeed “contend for the faith” (Gal 2:5; 1Th 2:2; Jude :3), though it be with our own compromising brethren (Gal 2:11). But even here how yet imperceptibly may *pride* insinuate itself under the cover of glorifying God! Truly “is it the inmost

coat, which we put on first and put off last.”¹

This mischievous principle spreads in families, or among friends. “Some point of honour must be maintained; some affront must be resented; some rival must be crushed or eclipsed; some renowned character emulated; or some superior equalled and surpassed.”² Even in trifling disputes between relatives or neighbours—perhaps between Christians—each party contends vehemently for his rights, instead of satisfying himself with the testimony of his conscience, and submitting rather to be misunderstood and misjudged, than to break the bond of the Divine brotherhood (1Co 6:7). In the wide field of the world we may well ask, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from this lust” (Jam 4:1)? Often has wounded *pride* (Jud 12:1), even without any proved injury (2Ki 14:10), brought destructive *contention* upon a land.

The proud man conceives himself wise enough. He asks no counsel, and thus proves his want of *wisdom*. But with the modest, *well-advised*, there is the *wisdom* that is from above, “which is first pure, then peaceable” (Jam 3:17, with 3:14-16). Many a rising *contention* has it quelled (Gen 13:8; Jud 8:1-3; Act 6:1-6). “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phi 2:3). Christian *wisdom* will keep us within our own line; knowing our own measure and bounds (2Co 10:13-16); and-whatever be our place, parts, or gifts—humble, active, loving, constant, thankful, in the improvement of them.

“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,
and before honour is humility”—Proverbs 18:12

Surely this repetition, like our Lord’s often-repeated parallel, was intended to deepen our sense of their importance. It is hard to persuade a man that he is proud. Every one protests against this sin. Yet who does not cherish the viper in his own bosom? Man so little understands, that dependence upon his God constitutes the creature’s happiness, and that the principle of independence is madness, and its end is destruction (Gen 3:5,6). The *haughty* walk on the brink of a fearful precipice; only a miracle preserves them from instant ruin. The security of the child of God is, when he lies prostrate in the dust. If he soar high, the danger is imminent, though he be on the verge of heaven (2Co 12:1-7).

The danger to a young Christian lies in an over-forward profession. The glow of the first love, the awakened sensibility to the condition of his perishing fellow-sinners; ignorance of the subtle working of inbred vanity, the mistaken zeal of injudicious friends—all tends to foster self-pleasing. Oh! let him know, that *before honour is humility*. In the low Valley of Humiliation special manifestations are realized. Enlarged gifts, and apparently extending usefulness, without growing more deeply into the *humility* of Christ, will be the decline, not the advancing of grace. That undoubtedly is the most humbled spirit, that has most of the spirit of Christ. The rule of entry into his school, the first step of admission to his kingdom, is “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29).

The spring of this *humility* is true self-knowledge. Whatever may be seen of a man externally to his advantage, let him keep his eye looking within; and the real sight of himself must lay him low. When he compares his secret follies with his external decency (what appears to his fellow-creatures with what he knows of himself), he can but cry out—“Behold I am vile! I abhor myself!” (Job 40:4). The seat of this precious grace is not in words, meltings, or tears, but in the *heart*. No longer will he delude himself with a false conceit of what he has not, or with a vain conceit of what he has. The recollection “Who maketh thee to differ?” (1Co 4:7) is ever present, to press him down under the weight of infinite obligations. Its fruit is lowliness of mind, meekness of temper, thankfulness in receiving reproof, forgetfulness of injury, readiness to be lightly regarded. No true greatness can there be without this deep-toned *humility*. This is he “whom the King delighteth to *honour*.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people” (Mat 5:3; Psa 113:7, 8).

“An high look, and a proud heart,
and the plowing of the wicked is sin”—Proverbs 21:4.

Another stamp of abomination upon pride! We cannot mistake the mind of God so continually declared. Yet so many shapes does this sin assume, that, until the Spirit of God shews a man to himself, he rejects the idea of any concern in it.

¹ Bishop Hall’s *Devotional Works*, vol. viii.

² Scott *in loco*.

Nay, he will be *proud* of his very pride, *proud* of a *high* spirit; counting a Christian mean and cowardly, who in the true spirit of the Gospel, yields up his right to a stronger hand.

But not only the haughtiness, but even the natural actions—the *plowing of the wicked is sin*. “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (Joh 6:60). How can the *plowing* of the soil, in itself a duty (Gen 3:19), become a sin? The motive determines the act. The most natural actions are inculcated for Christian ends. They become therefore moral actions, good or bad according to their own motives. The man, who plows the soil, acknowledging God in his work, and seeking his strength and blessing, “does it acceptably to the glory of God.” It is essentially a religious action.

But *the wicked*, who does the same work without any regard to God, for want of a godly end, his *plowing is sin*. His idleness is *sin* against a plain command (2Th 3:10). His industry is the *sin* of ungodliness, putting God out of His own world. The substance of his act is good. But the corrupt principle defiles the very best actions (Tit 1:15). “Every thought, every imagination,” of the natural “heart,” is unmixed “evil” (Gen 6:5). If the fountain-head be bitter, how can the waters be pure? *Sin* indeed defiles every motive in the Christian’s *heart*.

But here it is the substance of *sin*. In the one case it is infirmity of walk in the straight path. In the other, it is an habitual walk in a crooked path. With the wicked, “his eating as well as his gluttony; his drinking as well as his drunkenness; his commerce, negotiation, and trafficking, as well as his covetousness, and inordinate love of the world, are all set down and reckoned by God for sins, and such sins as he must reckon for with God.” Fearful indeed is his condition. Would that he could see it! Whether he prays, or neglects to pray, it is abomination. He cannot but *sin*; and yet he is fully accountable for his *sin*. To die, is to plunge into ruin. To live in unregeneracy is even worse; it is daily “heaping up wrath against the day of wrath” (Rom 2:5).

Ought he then to leave his duties undone? “The impotency of man must not prejudice God’s authority, nor diminish his duty.” What then ought he to do? Let him learn the absolute necessity of the vital change, “Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:7). The leper taints everything that he touches. But let him seek to the Great Physician, whose word is sovereign healing (Mat 8:3), whose Divine blood cleanses from every spot (1Jo 1:7). His nature once cleansed, his works will be clean. His thoughts and principles, all will be for the glory of God; all acceptable to God.

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Charles Bridges (1794-1869) was one of the leaders of the Evangelical party in the Church of England in the mid-1800s. He was vicar of Old Newton, Suffolk, from 1823 to 1849, and later of Weymouth and Hinton Martell in Dorset. Bridges is known for both literary work such as *The Christian Ministry* and his expositions, which include *Ecclesiastes* and *Psalms 119* as well as *Proverbs*.

PRIDE THE DESTROYER

C.H. Spurgeon

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

HABAKKUK had to prophesy to the people that God would eventually deliver them out of the hand of the Chaldeans, and send them better times; but he warned them that, although the vision would come, and, as far as God was concerned, it would not really tarry, yet they would grow impatient under their suffering, and they would say that the vision did tarry. And so, indeed, it would seem to do while they were suffering; and the prophet here hints at the reason why God’s merciful deliverances may sometimes be delayed. The Lord is willing to give mercy directly, for he delights not in judgment. If it were according to wisdom, we should have nothing from God’s hand but that which is pleasant and sweet, for he would not cause any one of his creatures a needless pang, and he is full of gentleness and tenderness and mercy.

The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk's day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away, and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot, and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast, in order that the gold may be divided from the dross. It is ever God's purpose to put a division between Israel and Egypt, between him that feareth the Lord and him that feareth him not. You and I cannot make that division. In this world, it is very dangerous work to try to pull up the tares, for we are very apt to pull up the wheat also. When, at last, we shall haul our big net to shore, then may we begin to separate the contents, and put the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. But now, if we were to try to sort the contents of the drag-net, we should probably throw away as many of the good as of the bad, and save as many of the bad as of the good. We cannot do the separating work, but God is constantly doing it; and often, in times of trouble, trial becomes a very searching test of men. Those who looked like true believers while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the saints; but, alas! this is often the impatience of mere professors, and God thus makes men see what they really are. They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked, that men's true character may be discovered, and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierceness of the furnace-heat of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." Then there is another class, namely, the just; and of these the text says, "The just shall live by his faith." My dear friends, when trial comes on us, as it surely will, may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men who can endure it; and if it be so, we shall live by faith; that will be our distinguishing mark. But if any of us are proud, and have lofty ideas concerning ourselves, "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts." Let us bear this great truth in mind as we come to the direct consideration of our text.

I. I shall speak first upon these words of the Lord to Habakkuk as revealing a great sin.

"His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." The great sin is the sin of pride, the lifting up of the soul in rebellion against the Lord.

This sin of pride is often forgotten; and many persons do not even think it is a sin at all. Here is a man who says that he is absolutely perfect. Does he know what the sin of pride really is? What prouder being can there be than one who talks like that? "Oh, but!" he says, "I am humble." Is there any soul living that is so proud as he is who says he is humble? Is not that the acme and climax of pride? Another says, "I hate flattery." Did not one say to Julius Caesar that he hated flatterers, "being then," as the world's poet says, "most flattered"? Ay, assuredly, that soft silken voice that says, "You never give way to pride, you are of a lowly spirit, you are never lifted up; in fact, you hardly appreciate yourself highly enough, and nobody else does so, you are so humble," why, that is the worst kind of pride, only it has put on the sheepskin instead of coming out in its true wolfish garb.

Pride, to begin with, I am afraid, may be set down as the sin of human nature. If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and then go and search amongst the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in a prince's robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk? If anyone held up his hand, and said, "I am one," I would answer, "That is Number One in the widest street of the whole city of Self-conceit;" for, when we fancy that we have clean escaped from pride, it is only because we have lost the sense of its weight through being surrounded with it. A man who bears a bowl of water feels its weight, but if he goes right into the water, it will be all over him, and yet he will not notice the burden of it. He who lives in pride up to the neck, nay, he who is over head and heels in pride, is the most likely to imagine that he is not proud at all.

Pride takes all manner of shapes. You and I, I daresay, have very different forms of pride. Perhaps my pride does not hold any relationship to your pride; and your pride—of course, it is a very right sort of pride. "It is what I call a proper pride," says one. Yes, that is your sort of pride. Mine, I own, is a very improper one; I frankly make that confession, I cannot and dare not think that it has any propriety about it at all, it is a miserable, wretched affair. So is yours, I think; and you would agree with me if you could but see it as it really is.

But pride takes all manner of shapes. Have you never seen it in the man of property? He is a very important individual. It may be that his property is not very large; but, still, considering the village in which he lives, he is quite a

big man. And on the vestry, why, he is as big as an emperor! You and I do not, perhaps, think much of him; but that does not matter to him, for in his own estimation he is a very great man. Then there is a London merchant; if he has succeeded in life, what a great man he is, how proud, how exclusive! How he looks down upon his fellowmen! How could you, being of an inferior grade, venture into his pew, and sit side by side with him? He carries his pride even into the house of God; we have seen it there, and mourned over it; but it is easy enough for a man to become proud of his possessions. Another man, with no possessions, is proud of his bodily strength; he is very strong, let anybody wrestle with him, and he shall see what a Samson he is. And, oh! how vain-glorious he grows, and how proud—proud of his strength of muscle and sinew and bone!

Another man is proud of his talent. If he has not acquired any wealth by it, yet still he ought to have done so. If the world has not recognized him yet as a genius, he has recognized himself most distinctly. He is a very first-class man in his own line of things; hear how he boasts of what he has learned! We have known others boast of their character. When we have explained what “a sinner” means, they have been kind enough to say, in a complimentary sort of way, “Yes, we are all sinners;” but they did not mean that they really had sinned at all. No, not they; they had a fine, splendid, unworn righteousness that was “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” You know the good people I mean, always able to glory that they have kept the law from their youth up, and have done what they ought to have done; that is a form that pride takes very frequently.

Even in people who do know the Lord, see what relics of pride there will often be. Remember what Mr. Bunyan said on one occasion. After he had done preaching, a brother came to him, and said, “You have preached an admirable sermon.” “Ah!” said Bunyan, “you are too late; the devil told me that before I got down the pulpit stairs.” A good brother prayed at the prayer-meeting very sweetly, very devoutly; and when he had finished, there came a soft whisper in his ear, “You have quite recovered that prayer-meeting from its dulness; what a wonderful man you are!” And when we have not ventured to do anything of the sort in public, if we get five minutes’ communion with God in secret prayer, then up comes Satan again, and says, “Oh, you are growing in grace! You are a wonderful Christian.” If you cannot realize your Lord’s presence, and you are humbled and bowed to the dust because you have not that enjoyment of God which you used to have, then Satan comes, and says, “How tender of conscience you are! How jealous of yourself! How watchful you have been!” and up go your top-gallants, and all your flags of pride are flying in the breeze as you think what a fine saint you are. So, you see, it is as I said, pride takes many shapes.

Now, in all cases, pride is most unreasonable. There is never in a poor sinner any reason why he should be proud. Suppose a man is wealthy; well, who gave that wealth to him? And having it now, how much of it can he carry away with him? And is wealth always a testimonial to the character of its possessor? Is it not sometimes given to the very basest of mankind? And though it is, in some cases, the reward of probity, and of industry, and of perseverance and self-denial, yet even then it does not always bring comfort to a man’s heart, and we can ask him, “What hast thou that thou hast not received?” Of all forms of pride, this pride of wealth is one of the meanest. Suppose a man boasts of his talent, for what has he to pride himself in that? Did he make his own talent? Suppose that his skull happens to be a little bigger than his neighbour’s, and that there are certain organs there more fully developed than in others; did he create his own brain? Did he give himself his own capacities? There is a great deal in our descent and in our birth-gifts; but, being gifts, these are not things for us to pride ourselves upon, for them we must give all the glory to God, for certainly they come from him. And what if a man has a spotless character? Yet he who is most honest to himself knows that there are even within him secret things opposed to his God, and things to be repented of. And what if we have grace? O my brothers, the worst thing in the world would be to be proud of our grace, or of our graces, because these come to us as a bare act of charity. Shall the beggar be proud because he is a bigger beggar than others? Will a man who is very deeply in debt say, “I have reason to be proud over you because I owe ten times as much as you do”? Yet that is just the condition of every man who has any grace; he owes it all to God, and he who has the most grace is the most in debt to his Lord. I think that, the more God’s glories strike our eyes, the humbler we shall lie; and the more grace we receive, the more we shall be like Peter when his boat was full of fish, and it began to sink, and he cried, under a sense of his own unworthiness, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Yes, as we get weighed down with mercy, we shall begin to sink in our own esteem; but there can never be any reasonableness in our dreaming that there is in us any cause for pride.

And to close this part of my discourse, let me remind you that, wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God. Why! pride is even hateful to men. Men cannot bear a proud man; and hence it is that a proud man, who has any sense left, often sees that it is so, and he therefore tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble, when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot bear pride; it is a part of his daily business to put down the proud. When he lifts up his hands, it is either to bless the humble or else to abase the proud. “He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he

hath sent empty away.” He intends that the pride of all human glory shall be stayed, so he lifts his great battle-axe, and crashes through the shield of the mighty. He fits his arrow to the bow, and finds out the joints of the harness of the proud, and they fall before him. God cannot endure them, for pride is a stab at Deity; it is an attack upon the undivided glory of God. “My glory will I not give to another.” He would as soon give it to graven images as to men, and he will not let either false gods or proud men have it. It is to himself, and to himself alone, that all praise and honour and glory must come.

Thus much, then, about the great sin revealed in our text. Let us pause a moment or two for silent prayer before we pass on to the next part of our subject.

II. Now let us think how this great sin betrays a sad evil.

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” If he is a proud man, he is not an upright man. If he thinks highly of himself, there is something out of the perpendicular. If a man says, “I do not need to make confession of sin, I do not need to come to Christ as a guilty sinner.” then, friend, I must tell you that you do not know the truth. If you knew certain things truly, you would change your tune. For instance, a man who says, “I have kept the law,” does not know what the law means. Perhaps he supposes that those ten great commandments only refuse him certain outward things; but he does not know that they are all spiritual—that, for instance, if the commandment says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” it is not merely the act of adultery that is forbidden, but every sin of the kind: every tendency to lewdness, every unchaste word or thought, for so Christ explains it, “I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This makes the law look very different from the mere casual reading of it that many give. If it says, “Thou shalt not covet,” any thought of a desire to gain that which is my neighbour’s, by unlawful means, in discontent with God’s providence, comes under that law. So is it with all the commands; they are spiritual, they are far-reaching, and when a man understands their true character, he cries, “O my God, I have indeed broken thy holy law; how could I have kept it? From the first moment when I sinned, my fallen nature has incapacitated me from ever keeping this thrice-holy law of thine.”

If a man really knows the true character of the law, it may be that he does not know the truth about himself, does not know that he is foolish, does not know that the very springs of his nature are corrupt, does not know that out of the polluted fountain of his unregenerate heart there can only come corrupt streams. When he begins really to know himself as he is in the sight of God, then he cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner;” but not till then. Hence, our text says, “His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;” that is, it is not according to the truth, he does not know the truth, he does not judge according to the truth, but he judges according to a false standard.

This expression may also mean that he does not seek the light. You can often notice that, if a man has a high conceit of himself that he is extremely good and excellent, and does not need to be saved by grace, he does not want to be told too much about himself. He likes to go to a place of worship where they prophesy very smooth things; and if he ever strays in where there is very plain talk, he says that the preacher is too personal. The Hindu thinks it is wicked to kill an insect, or to take life of any kind, and that he will surely not enter into his happy paradise if he does that. When the missionary showed a Hindu, by means of a microscope, how many living creatures there were in a single drop of the water which was in a glass on the table, in order to convince him of the impossibility of avoiding the destruction of life if he drank the water, what did the Hindu do? Why, he smashed up the microscope! That was his way of answering it; and so, sometimes, if the truth be put very plainly so that men cannot escape from the force of it, they do not wish to know the uncomfortable truth; so they turn upon their heel, and find fault with the preacher, and refuse to hear any more from him. Now, he that does not want to know all the truth is not upright, for, as our Lord said to Nicodemus, “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” But he that is upright in heart courts the light; he invites the inspection even of God himself, for he dreads above all things the possibility of being self-deceived. O dear friends, this pride, if we have it, betrays its dire evil by a want of uprightness in not desiring the light!

And, yet further, there is another form of this want of uprightness. A man whose soul is lifted up with pride has his whole religion warped so that there is nothing upright about him. Have you never heard him pray? “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.” This is the sum and substance of his prayer, for pride has warped it. If he praises God it is not as a sinner saved by grace; he sings something about what he has done, and what he has become; and always the first point in his conversation is, “See what I am! See what I am!” Pride warps him everywhere, so that he cannot do a single action that is not affected by it. If he gives alms to the poor, he has his penny in one hand, but his other hand is holding to his mouth a trumpet, so that he may blow it at the corner of the street that everybody may know how generous he is. He spoils all that he does because his soul is lifted up with pride, which warps his whole life.

I believe, dear friends, that a heart of this kind will never stand the test of the coming days. Have you ever noticed that, when Paul quotes this verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he makes a very significant addition to it? He says, "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." That is a kind of hint to us that, when the heart of a man is lifted up with pride, in due time he will draw back. I will tell you, dear friends, what I have seen many times. I have seen men, members of Christian churches, undoubtedly very earnest, very generous, indeed, all that you could wish them to be; they have prospered in worldly affairs, but where are they now? One of the severest tests that can be applied to any man is to let him be made wealthy; well might our Saviour say, as the rich young man turned away from him, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The true children of God can bear even this test, but there are many professors who cannot; wealth is a fining-pot that tests the sincerity of their profession. This is how it acts. The man has grown too respectable to worship where he used to meet with a few poor godly people; he must go to some place where there is a higher class of society. It is true that there is no gospel preaching where he goes, and that there is all the mummery of semi-Romanism; but the elite of the neighbourhood go there, and so must he. If he happens to meet any of his old friends with whom he seemed to be so glad to have communion in years past, he scarcely recognizes them, he does not know them in the Lord, he has gone clean away from them. Is not that often the case? And why is it so? Because the gentleman always was a person of importance; and now, having grown wealthy, he is still more important; so he goes away from those who would be his best friends. That is because his soul is not upright in him.

I have also seen just the opposite of this man. I have seen persons grow very poor after being in circumstances of comparative comfort. Before they were poor, they seemed to be very earnest Christians; but, after a while, when poverty had overtaken them, they did not like to come among their old friends because their clothes were not quite new, and their house was not in quite so good a street, and they were going down in the world. Instead of clinging to Christ all the more, instead of following after the Lord, and making sure of a heavenly inheritance when the world was slipping away from them, they have turned back, and have renounced whatever semblance of faith they ever possessed; and the reason is, because their soul was lifted up with pride, and was not upright. They never were truly brought low and humbled before God; and so, when the testing time came, away they went. Now, dear friends, such a test as this will be applied to all of you. You will either go up or go down; or else, if you remain in the same station of life, the test in your case will be time. You will grow weary in the ways of God, you will want some fresh thing unless the Lord has truly humbled you, and brought you to live by faith in him. But if the Lord has wrought in you effectually by his grace, then he may make you as rich as he likes, or as poor as he likes, or let you live as long as Methuselah if he likes, but you will stand fast to your profession because the root of the matter is in you. God grant that it may be so!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, pride of heart discovers in men a serious opposition.

Let me read the whole of our text: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." And the but here seems to imply that, as long as a man's soul is lifted up with pride, he will never truly know anything about faith, and never come to live by faith.

For first, the gentleman is too great to live by faith. He will not even give himself time to consider what faith means. He is so busy in the City; he has to look after such a number of things; he is so important a person, that he cannot trouble his head about faith. Teach a Sunday-school child, teach a servant girl, teach an old woman, teach a working-man, if you please; but as for himself—well, to tell the whole truth, he does not care about religion. He says that he cannot bring his mind down to such a thing as that; his notion is that he is altogether too great a man to give himself to the consideration of this matter. Now, these are the people that destroy their own souls because they will not be candid enough to enquire and learn what the way of salvation is.

"Were I so tall to reach the pole, And grasp the ocean with a span."

I would wish to know what God has to say to me; and if I could grow as holy as the archangel, I would still delight to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear what he has to reveal to me. But there are some who are too big for that kind of thing; they will never believe in Christ, for they are too great even to consider what faith is.

And, next, there are some who are too wise ever to believe. They read certain "high-class modern literature," and their minds have grown very expansive, and they know how to sort out that which is philosophical and that which is not. They can judge their Creator, they are more infallible than the Holy Ghost, they sit in trial upon prophets and apostles, and upon the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and they pick and choose what they will believe, and what they will reject. Such people do not believe to the saving of the soul; of course, they do not, for it is essential to faith that you become as a little child; and until you do so, you cannot have true faith in Christ.

There are some who are not so much burdened with worldly wisdom, but they fancy that they are too good to be saved. I know that the notion with some people is that salvation is only for very wicked people—for those who have been

to prison, those who have flagrantly sinned against the rules of society. Do you not know, my dear hearer, that there is the same way of salvation for you who have been amiable and excellent and moral, as there is for the drunkard and the thief? Do you not know that there is only one gate to heaven for the murderer, if he be saved, and for yourself who have kept the commandments from your youth up? “Ye must be born again,” is a necessity for the children of saints as well as for the children of sinners. “Ye must be washed in the precious blood,” is as true for the very best of fallen humanity as for the very worst. By these stern truths, the axe is laid to the very root of the tree of self-righteousness. Oh, that men did but think of this! But they are so good, so very good, that they cannot imagine that they are to be saved like the very chief of sinners, and so they reject the only way of salvation.

And I have known some, too, who are too “advanced” now to continue to live by faith. They do not want to come to Christ just as they did at first; they are so “advanced” now that they stand on a different footing from what they did. Well, I can only say to such that I believe that this is nothing but pride of heart; as for myself, I will, by God’s grace, never go one inch beyond the position of Jack the Huckster:

“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is my All-in-all.”

This is the only ground upon which I dare set my foot; it always begins to slip and slide beneath me when I get beyond that. Christ for me, first and last, Alpha and Omega, the Beginner and Finisher of faith. I believe that every other ground of standing is a quicksand that will swallow a man up. “The just shall live by his faith;” and if any are getting so proud that they are living by their feelings, or living on their old experience, I think that we may stand in doubt of them, and they have reason to stand in doubt of themselves. There was one who used to say that he was not half so much afraid of his sins as he was of what he conceived to be his good works, for his sins had humbled him full often, but what he thought were his good works had puffed him up, and done him much more mischief. I am more afraid of a lofty pride of self than of anything else under heaven. He that is down need fear no fall, but he that rises very high in his own esteem is not far from destruction. “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

IV. I close my discourse with this last point. Our text, after having spoken against pride, directs us to a very pleasing contrast.

“The just shall live by his faith.” There is a man with an upright heart, an honest tongue, a careful hand, an obedient walk. He is a really just man. Are there such? There are none that are perfectly just, but there are many who may be called just in the Scriptural sense of the term. They walk before God, and are perfect, even as was said of Job, “That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” Blessed be God, there are tens of thousands of his people that are just men whom he has taught to serve him, to do as they would be done by, seeking to do to others as they would have others do to them; there are plenty of such. It is a beautiful sight to see a really just man. May we live in such company! May we die in such company!

Now, whenever you come to talk with these just men, you will find that they are truly humble. They do not live upon their works. The more holy a man is, generally the more he depreciates himself. You do not hear a just man saying, “I am living before God, by my alms, by my prayers, by my repentance, by my fasting, by my churchgoing, by my chapelgoing.” You never hear anything of the sort; a just man disclaims his own righteousness, thinks nothing of it, and wraps himself up in the righteousness of Christ, and says that he is “accepted in the Beloved.”

Our text says that this man “shall live by his faith.” That is to say, when trial comes, and the proud man dies, the just man lives on. Where is the man who had such a lofty idea of himself? Ah, where is he? He is gone. but this man of faith lives on. You know the story of the two martyrs; they had both witnessed a good confession, and at last they were laid by the heels in prison to wait for a few days, and then to be burnt. One of them said to his fellow, “I am so afraid lest, when I come to the stake, the sharp pain should make a coward of me, and I should turn away, and deny my Saviour.” “Oh!” replied the other, “I have no fears about that; my faith in God is so firm that I am sure he will help me through. I am confident in what I have believed. I shall die like a man; I am not at all afraid of the fire.” “Ah!” said the first, “I lie awake at night, for fire is a dreadful thing, and I wonder how I shall act when I begin to burn. I do love the Lord, I know; and I do trust him; and if I turn aside, it will be an awful thing; but I am so afraid, for my flesh is very weak.” The other answered, “I cannot bear to hear you talk like that; here am I, full of confidence, and full of faith; I never have any such feelings as you have. You are very imperfect; I have gone far beyond you.” When they came to the stake, our poor tempted friend burned splendidly, blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord; and the great, self-confident boaster recanted, and saved his wretched life. His soul, which was lifted up, was not upright in him; but the just man lived, in the very best sense, by his faith, and triumphed even amidst the flames. I shall not wonder if many who have their top-sails up are blown out of the water, and into the water, and wrecked, when the great winds of temptation are out; while many who are creeping along, afraid of the tempest, with nothing but bare poles, will outlive the storm.

It is not the man who is so great in his own sight that is great in the sight of God; but it is he that is broken and contrite, little and weak and trembling, and yet who believes in Jesus, and casts himself upon the great love of God in Christ, who shall live; ay, and he shall so live that, when he comes to die, he shall die full of life, and he shall enter into life eternal. I know that I am addressing some who say that they are afraid to die, and they think that they cannot be God's people because of that fear. Do not distress yourself in that way, my dear friend; perhaps you are not called to die just yet, and you have therefore not yet had dying grace given to you; but you will have it when the time comes. A dear friend of mine had been for many years in great bondage because he thought that he was afraid to die, and God brought him out of that bondage in rather a singular manner. He happened to be in a London printing office, one day, and, next door, a wholesale chemist's took fire. There were a great many explosions, and the place was burning furiously. He was upstairs, and others began running down to make their escape. My old friend was as cool as possible; he walked downstairs, he was in no hurry; and, though there was great danger, and everybody thought that the whole place and all that were in it would be burnt, he was quite calm. He said that, when he reached the street, he stood and looked at the fire, and said to himself, "Now, when I seem to be in danger of death, I am perfectly calm and happy; so, when I come really to die, that is how I shall be; I am sure that I shall, for I have tested and proved it." And you timid, nervous people, have you not found out for yourselves that, if ever you get into an accident, you are often the bravest people there? You feeble trembling ones seem strengthened up at the moment, and so shall it be when you come to die, if you are believers in Jesus Christ. He that loved you will not leave you in your last minutes. Would you leave your wife, would you leave your child, would you leave your husband, if you saw any of these dear ones in the agonies of death? No, if you were a thousand miles away, you would come home to them to wipe the death-sweat from their brows, and moisten their parched lips, and do you think that our blessed God will be out of the way when we come to die? No. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He will be there; and Jesus will be there; and the Holy Spirit will be there; and so we who believe in Jesus shall die in peace.

Remember how rapidly our lives are passing away. One after another, from this congregation, goes into eternity every week. Do not go into eternity without Christ, I beseech you. "When shall I go?" say you. Ah! that I cannot tell. You know how, all through the year, our friends keep on going. There is not a week passes without it being said to me, "So-and-so is gone." I ask, "Did I know him? Whereabouts did he sit?" I look at the spot, and I remember, "Yes, it was that gray-headed old man in that seat over yonder" or, "that young man with a wife and three or four children." Yes, they are gone; and if they were not saved, they are gone where hope can never reach them, where they are past all invitation, where they must for ever wring their hands in anguish because they would not have heaven and Christ on free-grace terms.

"Well, dear sir, we are going to think about these things." Are you? Will you tell me when you are going to think about them? I would rather that you stated a time, even if it were a year to come. It would be a dangerous thing to put it off so long, would it not? But, oh! if you keep your promise, I would rather that you said "a year to come" than that you should keep on, year after year, postponing your decision. Recollect that you who are unsaved need three things. First, you need the pardon of sin; and it is scarcely necessary for me to repeat in your ears that you can only get it by coming to Christ. You desire also to be heard in prayer, your very heart sighs after that favour; and you know there is but one throne of grace, and only one Being who can present your petitions so that they shall be granted. And you also long to have a sight of God, a comforting sight of him as your reconciled Father; and that you can never have except through Jesus Christ. These three things are to be found in Christ, and they are not to be found anywhere else. If there be anyone here who wants Christ, I am so glad if he knows who Christ is, and what are the treasures that are stored up in him. It is a great thing to have this knowledge; but, oh! it will be a terrible thing, bringing far greater responsibilities, and involving seven-fold guilt, if you know where these things are, and what they are, and yet do not seek to possess them yourselves. I leave with you the last words of my text, praying that they may describe you: "The just shall live by his faith."

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. History's most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.

THOUGHTS ON PRIDE

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, PART 2

Charles Bridges

“As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise”
—Proverbs 27:21.

THE [re-]fining pot and furnace have been before mentioned, as the Lord’s “trial of the heart.” The most searching furnace is here shown. He that is praised is not only much approved, but much proved. The courting of the *praise* of our fellow-creatures is the world within. *Praise* is a sharper trial of the strength of principle than reproach. “If a man be vain and light, he will be puffed up with it. If he be wise and solid, he will be no whit moved therewith.”³ A haughty and supercilious deportment; “loving to have the pre-eminence” (3Jo 9); forwardness to give our opinion, and offense, if it be not taken—this is the dross brought out of the furnace. Count the discovery a special mercy. Know thy need of purifying, and let the great Refiner do his perfect work (Mal 3:2, 3.)

But see a man humbled by *praise*, in the consciousness how little he deserves it, and “who maketh him to differ” (1Co 4:7). See him made more careful and diligent, bearing his honour meekly, and the same man as before; here *the furnace* proves the real metal, and brings out “a vessel of honour, meet for the Master’s use” (2Ti 2:21).

Absalom was tried in this *fining-pot*, and found “reprobate silver.”⁴ Herod, under the shouting praise of his flatterers, “gave not God the glory,” and was blasted in shame (Act 12:21-23). Joseph (Gen 41:41-43) and David (1Sa 18:7, 8, 15-18) maintained their humility; Daniel his consistency (Dan 6:3-5); the apostles their singleness for their Master’s glory. Here was the bright *gold* in the heated furnace.

Fearful often is the trial to a minister of Christ. When he becomes the object of popular applause—his people’s idol (Act 3:11-16); when men of strong impulse and weak judgment put the servant in the Master’s place⁵—then he is in *the fining-pot*. He that is but dross consumes. Even if there be true metal, the man of God “is saved, yet so as by fire” (1Co 3:15). Without painful discipline his usefulness would be withered, his spirituality deadened, his soul lost (2Co 12:7).

Two rules strongly present themselves—Be careful in giving *praise*. Even the children of the world can discover the deadly tenacity of pride in our nature. “Do you know,” remarked M. de Stael on her death-bed, “what is the last thing to die in man? It is self-love.” We cannot therefore do our brother a greater injury, than by supplying fuel for pride by unregulated *praise*. Even if he be a public man, he is not always before God as in the eyes of the Church. It may be that the most eminent servant of God is one of whom the Church has taken little cognizance. And at best we are far too short-sighted to take the accurate measure of our brother’s piety. We cannot weigh it aright without the balances of the sanctuary, which are fully in his hands alone, who searcheth the heart. Therefore till the day appointed for manifestation, it is well to judge each other, whether for good or evil, with becoming moderation. And to which: is it merciful to expose a weak fellow-sinner to the frown of a jealous God, by stirring up the innate corruption of his heart? For put even the finest *gold* into the furnace, how humbling is the spectacle of the dross that yet cleaves to it (Isa 39:2, 2Ch 32:31)! Be not less careful in receiving *praise*. While our taste revolts from extravagant flattery, yet we are apt to think it kindly meant, and it is very rare not to take unconsciously a drop of the poison.

But the praise of the church is by far the most insidious poison—so refined, so luscious! Specially when we feel it to be lawfully obtained, how hard to receive it with self-renouncing consecration to God! “Christian! thou knowest thou carriest gunpowder about thee. Desire those that carry fire to keep at a distance. It is a dangerous crisis, when a proud heart meets with flattering lips.”⁶ May not even the habit of speaking humbly of ourselves be a snare of the devil? Would it not be safer not to speak of ourselves at all? At least, to confine our conversation in strict sincerity to what we are, not what we appear to be, would be a “wise refraining of our lips” (Pro 10:19). Guard against dwelling even in thought upon anything, that brings man’s approving eye upon us. Delight mainly in those works, that are only under the eye of God. Value alone his approbation. Ever think of the love of human praise as the most deadly bane of a Christian profession, to be resisted with intense energy and perseverance (Joh 5:44; 12:42, 43).

³ Bishop Hall.

⁴ 2Sa 14:25, 15:6; with Jer. 6:30, Eze 22:18.

⁵ “We should feel,” said the venerable Mr. Simeon in his own way, “as if our ears were stung with blasphemy, when we discover any attempt to transfer the crown of glory from the head of the Redeemer to that of any of his servants.”

⁶ Flavel.

*“A man’s pride shall bring him low:
but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit”*—Proverbs 29:23.

This Proverb, Bishop Hall remarks in his own style, “is like unto Shushan: in the streets whereof *honour* is proclaimed to the *humble* Mordecai; in the palace whereof is erected an engine of death to a proud Haman.”⁷ It exhibits the *spirit* of our Lord’s oft-repeated declaration expounded by his daily Providences: “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mat 23:12; Luk 14:11, 18:14). The real value of man in himself is so small, that the Psalmist is at a loss where to find it (Psa 8:3, 4; 144:3; 39:5). His undue value of himself is utter delusion; having lost all; stripped of all; yet proud, as if he were the possessor of all. He raises himself to heaven in his airy visions; but soon does he meet with his own punishment: *A man’s pride shall bring him low.*⁸ We see this in the world. The proud conceit of rank, talent, or any superiority, subjects to continual mortification (1Ki 21:1-4, Est 5:13); while on the other hand, humility, at first considered a mean and servile spirit, ultimately comes to its just estimation.

The world counts nothing great without display. But mark the substantial “honour that cometh from God only.” “Heaven is my throne; and earth is my footstool; yet to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit” (Isa 66:1, 2). Yea, “I dwell,” saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, “with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa 57:15). Humility is indeed true greatness, “the crown,” as Mr. Howels finely remarks, “of finite beings, made and jewelled by the hand of God himself. Supremacy is the glory of God; humility is the ornament of his child.” “I am but dust and ashes;” “I am less than the least of all thy mercies;” “I abhor myself;” “Sinners, of whom I am chief” (Gen. 18:27, 32:10; Job 42:6; 1Ti 1:15)—such are the self-abasing confessions of men great in Jehovah’s eyes. They shine with the reflection of his glory; but they turn away with genuine humility from their own shining.

Men of this stamp “the king delighteth to honour” (Est 6:11). Their dignity begins on earth, and is crowned in heaven. “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:3; 18:4). Poor they may be in station. But they shine forth as mightier conquerors than Alexander. Their real glory eclipses the glare of the pomp and “pride of life” (1Jo 2:16).

The elevation of the *proud* is often the step to their downfall. But God’s *honour*, put upon his own people, *upholds* them, as Joseph and Daniel, in their high eminence, as witnesses for his name. Meetness for heaven is that adorning clothing of humility, which leads us to ascribe all our grace to God, and all our sin to ourselves. This is the prostrate adoration of heaven (Rev 5:9-12). The Lord imbue us richly with this spirit.

Indeed all chastening discipline is for the great purpose, to “hide pride from man” (Job 33:17), and to bring us low in our own eyes, that his *honour* may “lift us in due time” (1Pe 5:6; Job 22:29)! It is with us as with our Lord—*honour* comes out of humiliation (Pro 15:33, 18:12). “Thou meanest to be not our Saviour only, but our pattern too. If we can go down the steps of thine humiliation, we shall rise up the stairs of thy glory.”⁹

From *A Commentary on Proverbs*, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.

*When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*
— Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

⁷ Bishop Hall, *Sermon on Text*, Works, v.270.

⁸ Job 40:12; Psa 18:27; comp. Zep 2:15, Rev. 18:7, 8.

⁹ Bishop Hall *ut supra*.

AN ADMONITION TO HUMILITY

Charles Simeon

“Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”—1 Peter 5:5.

AS words are nothing more than sounds whereby to convey ideas, it may seem of little importance what words are used, provided that the ideas annexed to them are sufficiently distinct. But I conceive, that the adopting of a word which was in use among the unenlightened heathen, and continuing to use it as they did, when from the superior light of Christianity, we know that all the sentiments and feelings originally annexed to it were bad, has a direct tendency to counteract the Gospel, and to perpetuate the darkness of heathenism in the land. I refer here to the word pride; which is frequently used in common conversation, and at the bar, and in the senate, yea and even in the pulpit too, in a good sense; as “a just pride,” and “an honest pride.” But I know no passage of Scripture that sanctions the feelings which are associated with that term: or, if the term be so explained as to convey nothing but what is consistent with Christianity, still I conceive that such an use of it is highly inexpedient, because it tends to foster in the mind an approbation of sentiments which are in direct opposition to the morality of the Gospel. Humility is the grace which alone becomes the Christian moralist; and the cherishing of any feeling contrary to humility, will, as the Apostle informs us in my text, expose us to God’s heaviest displeasure.

In confirmation of this, I will endeavour to unfold,

I. The duty here enjoined

Humility is not a mere insulated grace, if I may so speak, like patience, or meekness, or any other virtue, but a feeling which pervades the whole man, and is called forth into exercise with every grace. Humility is that to the Christian which holiness is to the Deity. HOLINESS is not a distinct attribute of the Deity, like justice, or mercy, or power, but a perfection that is blended with all the other attributes, and is the crown and glory of them all. So humility is the warp in the Christian’s loom: and all other graces, whether of a lively or sombre hue, are the woof, by which the piece is diversified: but from beginning to end, humility pervades it all. On this account, I must speak of humility in a large and extended view, and notice it in all its actings, whether towards God or man.

But there is another reason why this grace must be thus extensively considered; namely, that the Apostle himself here speaks of it in this comprehensive view. If we look at the words which precede my text, we shall find that humility is spoken of as exercised towards men: but in the words immediately following my text, it is connected with our duty to God: “All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

Let us then notice this grace,

1. *As exercised towards God*

Here it must begin. We cannot have one spark of real humility till we are abased before God, as guilty, helpless, and undone creatures, who have no hope but in the tender mercy of God in Christ Jesus. We must, as far as respects all hope in ourselves, feel ourselves in the very condition of the fallen angels, whose sin we have followed, and whose punishment we are doomed to share. Indeed, this is our very state, whether we know it or not: and it becomes us to seek the knowledge of it, and to live under a sense of it every day, and all the day long. We should never appear either before God or man in any other dress than this. It was the clothing of holy Job when in his most perfect state (Job 42:5, 6): and so far ought we to be from putting it off because God is reconciled towards us, that a sense of our acceptance with him through Christ should operate as an additional motive for making it the one continual habit of our minds (Eze 16:63). Incessantly should we lie low before him in dust and ashes, and rely altogether upon “his mercy to pardon us, and his grace to help us in every time of need.”

2. *As exercised towards men*

I forbear to mention any other exercises of this grace towards God, in order that I may keep the subject as simple and intelligible as I can. But in viewing its exercises towards man, I must of necessity diversify it somewhat more. Its chief actings will be found to consist in the following things: we must regard ourselves as the lowest of all; and be willing to be treated by others as the lowest of all; and gladly execute the meanest offices, as the lowest of all.

We must regard ourselves as the lowest of all; “esteeming others better than ourselves” (Phi 2:3) and “preferring them in honour before ourselves” (Rom 12:10), and being ready in all places, and on all occasions, to “take the lowest place” (Luk 14:10). It is not indeed necessary that we should accuse ourselves of sins which we have not committed, or deny the superiority of virtue to vice: but we should have such a sense of the peculiar advantages we have enjoyed, and the infinite obligations we lie under, and the consequent aggravations that have attended the many evils which we have committed, that we should account ourselves “less than the least of all saints” (Eph 3:8), yea, the very “chief of sinners” (1Ti 1:15).

Nor must we be offended if we be treated by others as deserving of this character. It is only from pride and a conceit of something good in us, that we are induced to lay to heart the contempt and ignominy that are cast upon us. If we are sincere in abhorring ourselves, it will be a small matter to us that we are abhorred by others. David deserved not the reproaches of his wife Michal: but, when he heard them, instead of being moved with indignation against her, he meekly replied, “I will be yet more vile than thus, and will be base in my own sight” (2Sa 6:22). It was but a small matter to the holy Apostles, that they were considered “as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things” (1Co 4:13): they knew that they deserved nothing but wrath and indignation at the hands of God; and, having obtained mercy of the Lord, they cared not what treatment they met with at the hands of men. To be rendered conformable to our Divine Master in the bitterest reproaches, or the most ignominious death, will, if we be truly humble, be a matter rather of joy and gratitude than of mourning and complaint.

At the same time we must be willing to take on ourselves the lowest offices. To become “the servant of all” (Mar 10:44) must be our highest ambition. Even the Lord of Glory himself, in the days of his flesh, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: and this he did, even to the “washing of his disciples’ feet” (Joh 13:13, 14): yea, though he was in the form of God, “and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet he “took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” “This is the mind that should be in us” (Phi 2:5-8); and this is the example which, as far as circumstances will admit of it, we should follow.

Here is the perfection of humility: and this is the grace which every one of us should be putting on from day to day.

Nothing can more strongly mark the importance of this duty, than,

II. The considerations with which it is enforced

The declaration, that “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,” is cited from the book of Proverbs: and, that it deserves especial attention, is evident from this; that St. James, as well as St. Peter, adduces it for the warning and instruction of the Church (See James 4:6).

1. “God resisteth the proud”

He does so: he abhors the very persons of the proud: “they are an abomination to him” (Pro 6:16,17). He perfectly scorns them (see Proverbs 3:34; this is the passage that is cited both by St. Peter and St. John), and “knows them afar off,” objects whom he disdains to look upon (Psa 138:6).

He will not hear any prayer that they may offer up. See the Pharisee and the Publican. You would imagine that a man who could make such appeals to God, respecting his manifold and self-denying services, should surely find acceptance at the throne of grace; whilst a man so conscious of his vileness as the Publican was, and with so little to say in his own behalf, should, comparatively at least, be disregarded. But the very reverse was the case; for “the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other,” and this is declared to be the universal rule of God’s procedure; for that “every one who exalteth himself shall be abased; but he, and he only, that humbleth himself, shall be exalted” (Luk 18:14).

Nor will God communicate to such persons any spiritual blessing. Instead of drawing them to himself, “he will scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He will fill the hungry with good things, but the rich he will send empty away” (Luk 1:51, 58). Their “esteeming themselves to be rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, when they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,” renders them perfectly disgusting in his sight: and the higher they are in their own estimation, the more he nauseates and abhors them (Rev 3:16, 17).

But this is not all; for he will surely fight against them, to bring them down. Nebuchadnezzar from his own experience attested, that “those who walk in pride, God is able to abase;” and he might with truth have added also, is determined to abase. For the Prophet Isaiah has plainly warned us, that “the lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted: for the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low” (Isa 2:11, 12).

Now, I pray you, let this consideration be duly weighed, in order that you may with zeal and earnestness address yourselves to the duty that is here inculcated. If you bring not a broken and contrite spirit before God, and if you exercise not a spirit of meekness and lowliness before men, think not that God will ever look with complacency upon you, or acknowledge himself as your friend: for assuredly he is, and will be, your enemy, and will sooner or later resent the dishonour which you do unto him. He may not inflict on you such judgments as he did on Nebuchadnezzar or on Herod: if he only leave you to yourselves, you will soon find what an evil and bitter thing it is to cherish such a disposition in your hearts: for, as “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18), you may expect the effects of a spiritual dereliction; you may expect, that, “being lifted up with pride, you will fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1Ti 3:6).

2. *He “giveth grace unto the humble”*

What will he not do for those who are of an humble and contrite spirit? If there were but one such object in the whole universe, God would look through all the shining ranks of angels that surround his throne, and fix his eyes on him (Isa 66:23), he would even come down to him, and dwell with him; yea, and dwell with him for the express purpose of comforting and reviving his drooping soul (Isa 57:15). If he offered up a prayer, God would hear and answer it (Job 33:27, 28) if, on any sudden emergency, he only poured forth a cry, God would attend to it, and not forget it (Psa 9:12); and if there were only a desire in his heart, even that should be noted, in order to satisfy and fulfil it (Psa 10:17). See this exemplified in King Josiah. God had determined to destroy Jerusalem: but because Josiah was of an humble spirit, he would first take him to himself, and not suffer him to witness the calamities which were coming upon his nation: “Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord” (2Ch 34:27). See it yet more strongly illustrated in the case of the most wicked man that perhaps ever existed upon the face of the earth, the man that made the very streets of Jerusalem to run down with the blood of innocents, and set up his idols in the very House of God: see it, I say, in the case of King Manasseh; of whom it is said, “When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him” behold! of this man it is said, “God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication” (2Ch 33:12, 13).

Say now, whether here be not encouragement enough to seek humility? Find an humble person to whom God ever refused any thing. You cannot. A humble person may be “cast down for a time; but he shall soon be lifted up: for God will save the humble person” (Job 22:29).

What shall I then add to these considerations?

You need no other inducement to work either upon your hopes or fears. To have God your enemy, determined to “resist you,” would be the greatest evil that could befall you: but to have him your friend, pledged to supply you with all the blessings of grace and glory, would be the summit of human bliss. Commending then this alternative to your devoutest meditations, I would say to all of you, in the animated language of the prophet, “Awake, awake, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city” (Isa 52:1). There is nothing so “becoming to one of God’s elect, as humbleness of mind,” (Col 3:12) nor any ornament he can wear so pleasing to his God (1 Peter 3:4). Come then, beloved, and clothe yourselves with humility; and wear it so at all times, that you may be known by it, as a man is by his accustomed dress: so shall “God be glorified in you,” and all who behold you be compelled to “acknowledge, that God is with you of a truth.”

Charles Simeon (1759-1836): evangelical Anglican preacher and writer who had a lasting influence on English evangelical thought; born in Reading, England. The agonizing experience of his conversion impressed him forever with the power of the Cross. He preached for three purposes: “to humble the sinner, to exalt the Savior, to promote holiness.”

HUMBLE FAITH

Edward Fisher

ACCORDING to the measure of any man's faith, is his true peace of conscience; for, says the apostle, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom 5:1). Yea, says the prophet Isaiah, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isa 26:3). Here there is a sure and true grounded peace: "Therefore it is of faith," says the apostle, "that it might be by grace, and that the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16). And answerable to a man's believing that he is "justified freely by God's grace, through that redemption that is in Jesus Christ" (Rom 4:3, 24), is his true humility of spirit. So that, although he be endowed with excellent gifts and graces, and though he perform never so many duties, he denies himself in all; he does not make them as ladders for him to ascend up into heaven by, but he desires to "be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ," (Phi 3:9). He does not think himself to be one step nearer to heaven, for all his works and performances. And if he hear any man praise him for his gifts and graces, he will not conceive that he has obtained the same by his own industry and pains-taking, as some men have proudly thought; neither will he speak it out, as some have done, saying; These gifts and graces have cost me something-I have taken much pains to obtain them; but he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am; and not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1Co 15:10). And if he behold an ignorant man, or a wicked liver, he will not call him "Carnal wretch!" or, "Profane fellow!" nor say, "Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou" (Isa 65:5), as some have said; but he pities such a man, and prays for him; and in his heart he says concerning himself, "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1Co 4:7).

And thus I might go on, and show you how, according to any man's faith, is his true joy in God, and his true thankfulness to God, and his patience in all troubles and afflictions, and his contentedness in any condition, and his willingness to suffer, and his cheerfulness in suffering, and his contentedness to part with any earthly thing. Yea, according to any man's faith, is his ability to pray aright (Rom 10:14), to receive the sacrament with profit and comfort: and to do any duty either to God or man after a right manner, and to a right end (Heb 4:2). Yea, according to the measure of any man's faith, in his love to Christ, and so to man for Christ's sake; and so, consequently, his readiness and willingness to forgive an injury; yea, to forgive an enemy, and to do good to them that hate him; and the more faith any man has, the less love he has to the world or the things that are in the world. To conclude, the greater any man's faith is, the more fit he is to die, and the more willing he is to die.

Faith is the chief grace that Christians are to be exhorted to get and exercise; and therefore, when the people asked our Lord Christ, "What they should do to work the works of God," he answered and said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (Joh 6:29); speaking as if there were no other duty at all required, but only believing; for, indeed, to say as the thing is, believing includes all other duties in it, and they spring all from it; and therefore says one, "Preach faith, and preach all." "Whilst I bid man believe," says learned Rollock, "I bid him do all good things"; for, says Dr. Preston, "Truth of belief will bring forth truth of holiness; if a man believe, works of sanctification will follow; for faith draws after it inherent righteousness and sanctification. "Wherefore" says he, "if a man will go about this great work, to change his life, to get victory over any sin, that it may not have dominion over him, to have his conscience purged from dead works and to be made partaker of the divine nature, let him not go about it as a moral man"; that is, let him not consider what commandments there are, what the rectitude is which the law requires, and how to bring his heart to it; but "let him go about it as a Christian, that is, let him believe the promise of pardon, in the blood of Christ; and the very believing the promise will be able to cleanse his heart from dead works."

Whence has faith its power and virtue to do all this?" Even from our Lord Jesus Christ; for faith doth ingraft a man, who is by nature a wild olive branch, into Christ as into the natural olive; and fetches sap from the root, Christ, and thereby makes the tree bring forth fruit in its kind; yea, faith fetcheth a supernatural efficacy from the death and life of Christ; by virtue whereof it metamorphoses the heart of a believer, and creates and infuses into him new principles of action. So that, what a treasure of all graces Christ hath stored up in him, faith draineth, and draweth them out to the use of a believer; being as a conduit, that watereth all the herbs of the garden. Yea, faith does apply the blood of Christ to a believer's heart; and the blood of Christ has in it, not only a power to wash from the guilt of sin, but to cleanse and purge likewise from the power and stain of sin, and therefore, says godly Hooker, "If you would have grace, you must first of all get faith, and that will bring all the rest, let faith go to Christ, and there is meekness, patience, humility, and wisdom, and faith will fetch all them to the soul; therefore, [says he,] you must not look for sanctification till you come to Christ in faith."

Edward Fisher (*fl.* 1640s-50s): author of the well-known *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, who preferred to remain anonymous, simply signing himself as E.F.; apparently a member of both the Guild of Barber-Surgeons and a Presbyterian Church in London, who, without a formal education, was apparently well-versed in the theological disputes of his day. [Abstracted from David Lachman's *The Marrow Controversy*.]

When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures to touch so much as a grain of praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of all grace, and fits us to deal efficiently with our fellow-men. – *C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)*

A WORD ABOUT PRIDE TO ALL BUT ESPECIALLY TO MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

Richard Baxter

ONE of our most heinous and palpable sins is PRIDE. This is a sin that hath too much interest in the best of us, but which is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men. Yet is it so prevalent in some of us, that it indicteth our discourses, it chooseth our company, it formeth our countenances, it putteth the accent and emphasis upon our words. It fills some men's minds with aspiring desires, and designs. It possesseth them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light, or who by any means eclipse their glory, or hinder the progress of their reputation. Oh what a constant companion! what a tyrannical commander, what a sly and subtle insinuating enemy, is this sin of pride! It goes with men to the draper, the mercer, the tailor: it chooseth them their cloth, their trimming and their fashion. Fewer ministers would ruffle it out in the fashion in hair and habit, if it were not for the command of this tyrannous vice. And I would that this were all, or the worst. But, alas, how frequently doth PRIDE go with us to our study, and there sit with us and do our work! How oft doth it choose our subject, and, more frequently still, our words and ornaments! God commandeth us to be as plain as we can, that we may inform the ignorant; and as convincing and serious as we are able, that we may melt and change their hardened hearts. But pride stands by and contradicteth all, and produceth its toys and trifles. It polluteth rather than polisheth. And, under presence of laudable ornaments, dishonoreth our sermons with childish things, as if a prince were to be decked in the habit of a stage-player, or a painted fool. Pride persuadeth us to paint the window, that it may dim the light, and to speak to our people that which they cannot understand, to let them know that we are able to speak unprofitably. If we have a plain and cutting passage, it taketh off the edge, and dulls the life of our preaching, under presence of filing off the roughness, unevenness, and superfluity. When God chargeth us to deal with men as for their lives, and to beseech them with all the earnestness that we are able; this cursed sin controlleth all, and condemneth the most holy commands of God, and saith to us, 'What! Will you make people think you are mad? Will you make them say you rage or rave? Cannot you speak soberly and moderately?' And thus doth pride make many a man's sermons; and what pride makes the devil makes, and what sermons the devil will make and to what end, we may easily conjecture. Though the matter be of God, yet if the dress, and manner, and end be from Satan, we have no great reason to expect success.

And when pride hath made the sermon, it goes with us into the pulpit, formeth our tone, animateth us in the delivery, takes us off from that which may be displeasing, how necessary soever, and setteth us in pursuit of vain applause. In short, the sum of all is this; it maketh men, both in studying and preaching, to seek themselves, and deny God, when they should seek God's glory, and deny themselves. When they should inquire, What shall I say, and how shall I say it, to please God best, and do most good? it makes them ask, What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, to be thought a learned able preacher, and to be applauded by all that hear me? When the sermon is done, pride goeth home with them, and maketh them more eager to know whether they were applauded, than whether they did prevail for the saving of

souls. Were it not for shame, they could find in their hearts to ask people how they liked them and to draw out their commendations. If they perceive that they are highly thought of, they rejoice, as having attained their end; but if they see that they are considered but weak or common men, they are displeased, as having missed the prize they had in view.

But even this is not all, nor the worst, if worse may be. Oh, that ever it should be said of godly ministers, that they are so set upon popular air, and on sitting highest in men's estimation; that they envy the talents and names of their brethren who are preferred before them. As if all were taken from their praise that is given to another; and as if God had given them his gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their persons, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world, and as if all his gifts to others were to be trodden down and vilified, if they seem to stand in the way of their honor, What? A saint, a preacher of Christ, and yet envy that which hath the image of Christ, and malign his gifts for which he should have the glory, and all because they seem to hinder our glory? Is not every true Christian a member of the body of Christ, and, therefore, partaketh of the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And doth not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts, not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot hath the benefit of the guidance of the eye, but also because his own ends may be attained by his brethren's gifts, as well as by his own? For if the glory of God, and the Church's felicity, be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another, because he helpeth him to do his master's work? Yet, alas, how common is this heinous crime among the ministers of Christ! They can secretly blot the reputation of those that stand in the way of their own; and what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they be proved liars and slanderers, they will do in generals, and by malicious intimations, raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And some go so far, that they are unwilling that any one who is abler than themselves should come into their pulpits, lest they should be more applauded than themselves. A fearful thing it is, that any man, who hath the least of the fear of God, should so envy God's gifts, and had rather that his carnal hearers should remain unconverted, and the drowsy unawakened, than that it should be done by another who may be preferred before him. Yea, so far doth this cursed vice prevail, that in great congregations, which have need of the help of many preachers, we can scarcely, in many places, get two of equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God. But unless one of them be quite below the other in parts, and content to be so esteemed, or unless he be a curate to the other, and ruled by him, they are contending for precedency, and envying each other's interest, and walking with strangeness and jealousy towards one another, to the shame of their profession, and the great wrong of their people. I am ashamed to think of it, that when I have been laboring to convince persons of public interest and capacity, of the great necessity of more ministers than one in large congregations, they tell me, they will never agree together. I hope the objection is unfounded as to the most, but it is a sad case that it should be true of any. Nay, some men are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an equal assistant to further the work of God, they had rather take all the burden upon themselves, though more than they can bear, than that any one should share with them in the honor, or that their interest in the esteem of the people should be diminished.

Hence also it is that men do so magnify their own opinions, and are as censorious of any that differ from them in lesser things, as if it were all one to differ from them and from God. They expect that all should conform to their judgment, as if they were the rulers of the Church's faith; and while we cry down papal infallibility, too many of us would be popes ourselves, and have all stand to our determination, as if we were infallible. It is true, we have more modesty than expressly to say so. We pretend that it is only the evidence of truth in our reasons, that we expect men should yield to, and our zeal is the truth and not for ourselves. But as that must needs be taken for truth which is ours, so our reasons must needs be taken for valid. And if they be but freely examined and be found fallacious, as we are exceedingly backward to see it ourselves because they are ours, so we are angry that it should be disclosed to others. We so espouse the cause of our errors, as if all that were spoken against them were spoken against our persons, and we were heinously injured to have our arguments thoroughly confuted, by which we injured the truth and the souls of men. The matter is come to this pass through our pride, that if an error or fallacious argument do fall under the patronage of a reverend name (which is nothing rare), we must either allow it the victory and give away the truth, or else become injurious to that name that doth patronize it. For though you meddle not with their persons, yet do they put themselves under all the strokes which you give their arguments; and feel them as sensibly as if you had spoken of themselves, because they think it will follow in the eyes of others, that weak arguing is a sign of a weak man. If, therefore, you consider it your duty to shame their errors and false reasonings by discovering their nakedness, they take it as if you shamed their persons. And so their names must be a garrison or fortress to their mistakes, and their reverence must defend all their sayings from attack.

So high indeed are our spirits, that when it becomes the duty of any one to reprove or contradict us, we are commonly impatient both of the matter and the manner. We love the man who will say as we say, and be of our opinion, and promote our reputation, though in other respects, he be less worthy of our esteem. But he is ungrateful to us who contradicteth us and differeth from us, and dealeth plainly with us as to our miscarriages and telleth us of our faults.

Especially in the management of our public arguings, where the eye of the world is upon us, we can scarcely endure any contradiction or plain dealing. I know that railing language is to be abhorred, and that we should be as tender of each other's reputation, as our fidelity to the truth will permit. But our pride makes too many of us think all men condemn us, that do not admire us, yea, and admire all we say, and submit their judgments to our most palpable mistakes. We are so tender that a man can scarcely touch us but we are hurt. We are so high-minded that a man who is not versed in complimenting and skilled in flattery above the vulgar rate can scarcely tell how to handle us so observantly—and fit our expectations at every turn without there being some word or some neglect which our high spirits will fasten on and take as injurious to our honor.

I confess I have often wondered that this most heinous sin should be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when far less sins are by ourselves, proclaimed to be so damnable in our people. And I have wondered more, to see the difference between godly preachers and ungodly sinners, in this respect. When we speak to drunkards, worldlings, or ignorant unconverted persons, we disgrace them to the utmost, and lay it on as plainly as we can speak, and tell them of their sin, and shame, and misery; and we expect that they should not only bear all patiently, but take all thankfully. And most that I deal with do take it patiently; and many gross sinners will commend the closest preachers most, and will say that they care not for hearing a man that will not tell them, plainly of their sins. But if we speak to godly ministers against their errors or their sins, if we do not honor them and reverence them, and speak as smoothly as we are able to speak, yea, if we mix not commendations with our reproofs, and if the applause be not predominant, so as to drown all the force of the reproof or confutation, they take it as almost an insufferable injury.

Brethren, I know this is a sad confession, but that all this should exist among us, should be more grievous to us than to be told of it. Could the evil be hid, I should not have disclosed it, at least so openly in the view of all. But, alas, it is long ago open to the eyes of the world. We have dishonored ourselves by idolizing our honor; we print our shame, and preach our shame, thus proclaiming it to the whole world. Some will think that I speak overcharitably when I call such persons godly men, in whom so great a sin doth so much prevail. I know, indeed, that where it is predominant, not hated, and bewailed, and mortified in the main, there can be no true godliness; and I beseech every man to exercise a strict jealousy and search of his own heart. But if all be graceless that are guilty of any, or of most of the fore-mentioned discoveries of pride, the Lord be merciful to the ministers of this land, and give us quickly another spirit, for grace is then a rarer thing than most of us have supposed it to be.

Yet I must needs say, that I do not mean to involve all the ministers of Christ in this charge. To the praise of Divine grace be it spoken, we have some among us who are eminent for humility and meekness, and who, in these respects, are exemplary to their flocks and to their brethren. It is their glory, and shall be their glory; and maketh them truly honorable and lovely in the eyes of God and of all good men, and even in the eyes of the ungodly themselves. O that the rest of us were but such! But, alas, this is not the case with all of us.

O that the Lord would lay us at his feet in the tears of unfeigned sorrow for this sin! Brethren, may I expostulate this case a little with my own heart and yours, that we may see the evil of our sin, and be reformed! Is not pride the sin of devils, the first-born of hell? Is it not that wherein Satan's image doth much consist? And is it to be tolerated in men who are so engaged against him and his kingdom as we are? The very design of the gospel is to abase us, and the work of grace is begun and carried on in humiliation. Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction in terms, to be a Christian, and not humble. All who will be Christians must be Christ's disciples, and 'come to him to learn'; and the lesson which he teacheth them, is, to "be meek and lowly."

Oh, how many precepts and admirable examples hath our Lord and Master given us to this end. Can we behold him washing and wiping His servants' feet, and yet be proud and lordly still? Shall he converse with the meanest of the people, and shall we avoid them as below our notice, and think none but persons of wealth and honor fit for our society? How many of us are oftener found in the houses of gentlemen than in the cottages of the poor, who most need our help? There are many of us who would think it below us, to be daily with the most needy and beggarly people, instructing them in the way of life and salvation, as if we had taken charge of the souls of the rich only!

Alas, what is it that we have to be proud of? Is it of our body? Why, is it not made of the like materials as the brutes, and must it not shortly be as loathsome and abominable as a carcass? Is it of our graces? Why, the more we are proud of them the less we have to be proud of. When so much of the nature of grace consists in humility, it is a great absurdity to be proud of it. Is it of our knowledge and learning? Why, if we have any knowledge at all, we must needs know how much reason we have to be humble; and if we know more than others, how much must more reason than others to be humble. How little is it that the most learned know, in comparison of that of which they are ignorant! To know that things are past your reach, and to know how ignorant you are, one would think should be no great cause of pride. However, do not the devils know more than you? And will you be proud of that in which the devils excel you? Our very

business is to teach the great lesson of humility to our people; and how unfit, then, is it that we should be proud ourselves? We must study humility, and preach humility; and must we not possess and practice humility? A proud preacher of humility is at least a self-condemning man.

What a sad case is it, that so vile a sin is not more easily discerned by us, but many who are most proud can blame it in others, and yet take no notice of it in themselves! The world takes notice of some among us, that they have aspiring minds, and seek for the highest room, and must be the rulers, and bear the sway wherever they come, or else there is no living or acting with them. In any consultations, they come not to search after truth, but to dictate to others? who, perhaps, are fit to teach them. In a word, they have such arrogant domineering spirits, that the world rings of it, and yet they will not see it in themselves!

Brethren, I desire to deal closely with my own heart and yours. I beseech you consider whether it will save us to speak well of the grace of humility while we possess it not, or to speak against the sin of pride while we indulge in it? Have not many of us cause to inquire diligently, whether sincerity will consist with such a measure of pride as we feel? When we are telling the drunkard that he cannot be saved unless he become temperate, and the fornicator that he cannot be saved unless he become chaste, have we not as great reason if we are proud, to say to ourselves, that we cannot be saved unless we become humble? Pride, in fact, is a greater sin than drunkenness or whoredom; and humility is as necessary as sobriety and chastity. Truly, brethren, a man may as certainly, and more slyly, make haste to hell, in the way of earnest preaching of the gospel, and seeming zeal for a holy life, as in a way of drunkenness and filthiness. For what is holiness, but a devotedness to God and a living to him? And what is a damnable state, but a devotedness to carnal self and a living to ourselves? And doth any one live more to himself, or less to God, than the proud man? And may not pride make a preacher study for himself and pray and preach, and live to himself, even when he seemeth to surpass others in the work? It is not the work without the right principle and end that will prove us upright. The work may be God's, and yet we may do it, not for God, but for ourselves. I confess I feel such continual danger on this point, that if I do not watch, lest I should study for myself, and preach for myself, and write for myself, rather than for Christ, I should soon miscarry; and after all, I justify not myself, when I must condemn the sin.

Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what baits there are in the work of the ministry to entice a man to selfishness, even in the highest works of piety. The fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man. But woe to him that takes up the fame of godliness instead of godliness! "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." When the times were all for learning and empty formalities, the temptation of the proud did lie that way. But now, when, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively practical preaching is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit, the temptation of the proud is to pretend to be zealous preachers and godly men. Oh, what a fine thing is it to have the people crowding to hear us, and affected with what we say, and yielding up to us their judgments and affections! What a taking thing is it to be cried up as the ablest and godliest man in the country, to be famed through the land for the highest spiritual excellencies! Alas, brethren, a little grace combined with such inducements will serve to make you join yourselves with the forwardest in promoting the cause of Christ in the world. Nay, pride may do it without special grace.

Oh, therefore, be jealous of yourselves, and, amidst all your studies, be sure to study humility. 'He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' I commonly observe that almost all men, whether good or bad, do loathe the proud, and love the humble. So far indeed doth pride contradict itself, that, conscious of its own deformity, it often borrows the homely dress of humility. We have the more cause to be jealous of it, because it is a sin most deeply rooted in our nature, and as hardly as any extirpated from the soul.

Taken from the book "The Reformed Pastor."

Richard Baxter (1615-1691): Puritan preacher and theologian in the Church of England; his ministry at Kidderminster was marked by a dramatic transformation of the whole community. Well-known author of *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, *The Reformed Pastor*, *A Christian Directory*, *A Call to the Unconverted*, and others. Born in Rowton, Shropshire, England.

THOUGHTS ON PRIDE

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, PART 3

Charles Bridges

“When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom”—Proverbs 11:2.

PRIDE was the principle of the fall (Gen 3:5), and therefore the native principle of fallen man (Mar 7:22). When *pride* had stripped us of our honour, then, not till then, cometh *shame* (Gen 3:7, with 2:25). This is the wise discipline of our God to scourge the one by the other. The Babel-builders (Gen 11:4); Miriam (Num 12:2, 10); Uzziah (2Ch 26:16-21); Haman (Est 5:1, 7:10); Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:29-32); Herod (Acts 12:22, 23); all are instances of *shame*, treading upon the heels of *pride*. Even in common life, a man will never attempt to raise himself above his own level—but then cometh *shame* (Luk 14:11), the most revolting recompense. And thus our God puts to *shame* the man, who knows not his bounds, and who refuses to stand on the *low* ground, on which he has placed him. “Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luk 18:14; Isa 2:17).

Such is the folly of *pride*. *With the lowly is wisdom*. What a splendour of *wisdom* shone in the *lowly* Child, “sitting at the doctors’ feet, astonishing them at his understanding and his answers!” (Luk 2:47). And will not this spirit be to us the path of *wisdom*? For the Divine Teacher “reveals to the babes, what he hides from the wise and prudent” (Luk 10:21). There is no greater proof of proud folly, than believing only what we understand. Faith is thus grounded on knowledge, not on testimony: as if the word of God could not be implicitly received, except as corroborated by other witnesses. Happy is that lowliness of spirit, that comes to God’s revelation, as it were without any will or mind of our own; humbly receiving what He is pleased to give; but willing, yea, thankful, to be ignorant when He forbids us to intrude! (Col 2:18).

“...and before honour is humility”—Proverbs 15:33b.

Most wise therefore is our Father’s discipline—*Humility before honour*. Indeed, without *humility*, *honour* would be our temptation, rather than our glory. Had not the Apostle been kept down by a most humbling trial, his *honour* would have been his ruin (2Co 12:7-9). The exaltation of the Lord’s people in Providence, is therefore often conducted through the Valley of Humiliation. Joseph was raised from the prison to the throne (Gen 41:14-44). Moses and David were taken from the Shepherd’s fold to feed the Lord’s inheritance (Exo 3:1-12; Psa 78:70-72). Gideon acknowledged himself to be of “the least of the families of Israel” (Judg 6:15, 16). Ruth was humbled by adversity, ere she was raised to the high *honour* of a Mother in Israel, and progenitor of the Saviour (Rut 2, 4:13-22; Mat1:5). Abigail confessed herself unworthy to wash the feet of her lord’s servants, before she was *honoured* to be his wife (1Sa 25:41, 42). And in the daily walk of life, the lowest place is the path-way to *honour* (Luk 14:7-11).

The same principle obtains in the dispensations of grace. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted in due time” (Luk 18:14; 1Pe 5:6). Not that in the forgetfulness of our high privileges and confidence, we are to be weighed down in a sense of degradation. The true *humility*, which realizes our vileness, casts us most simply upon the full resources of the gospel, so that the most humble is the most triumphant believer. “The lower then any descend in humiliation, the higher they shall ascend in exaltation. The lower this foundation of *humility* is laid, the higher shall the roof of *honour* be over-laid.”¹⁰

And was not this the track of our beloved Lord: *Before honour, humility*; the cross before the crown? How deep was that descent, by which He, who was infinitely more than man, became “a worm and no man” (Psa 22:6)! And yet the *honour*, which rewarded this *humility*, what tongue can tell (Phi 2:9)! “We must not disdain to follow Jesus Christ.”¹¹ Is it a light privilege to follow in the pathway consecrated by His steps, irradiated by His smile (Mat 11:29; 20:28; Joh 13:14)?

¹⁰ Trapp *in loco*.

¹¹ Cope *in loco*.

*“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly,
than to divide the spoil with the proud”*—Proverbs 16:18, 19

What more vivid exposition of these Proverbs is needed, than our own ruined condition? Our father’s *pride*, desiring to “be as God,” hurried his whole race to *destruction*. “O Adam” was the exclamation of a man of God, “what hast thou done!”¹² “I think,” said another holy man, “so far as any man is *proud*, he is kin to the devil, and a stranger to God and to himself.”¹³ The most awful strength of Divine eloquence seems to be concentrated to delineate the character and ruin of *pride*.¹⁴ Example abounds throughout the Scripture;¹⁵ each sounding this solemn admonition—“Be not high-minded, but fear” (Rom 11:20; also 1Co 10:12, 1Ti 3:6). Fearful indeed is our danger, if the caution be not welcomed; if the need for it be not deeply felt!

The *haughty spirit* carries the head high. The man looks upward, instead of to his steps. What wonder therefore, if, not seeing what is before him, he *falls*? He loves to climb. The enemy is always at hand to assist him (Mat 4:5, 6); and the greater the height, the more dreadful the *fall*. There is often something in the *fall*, that marks the Lord’s special judgment. God smites the object, of which the man is *proud*. David gloried in the number of his people, and the Lord diminished them by pestilence. Hezekiah boasted of his treasure, and the Lord marked it to be taken away. At the moment that Nebuchadnezzar was proud of his Babel, he was banished from the enjoyment of it. “The vain daughters of Zion,” *priding* themselves on their ornaments, were covered with disgrace (Isa 3:24). Yet after all, the state of heart that prepares man for the *fall* is the worst part of his condition. For what is our *pride* is our danger. “Why,” a wise man asks, “is earth and ashes proud? Pride was not made for man.”

But have we been preserved from open disgrace? Examine secret faults. Trace them to their source—a subtle confidence in gifts, attainments, and privileges. And then praise thy God for his painful discipline—the preserving mercy from ruinous self-exaltation. Truly the way down to the Valley of Humiliation is deep and rugged. Humility, therefore, is the grand preserving grace. The contrite publican was safe, when the boasting Pharisee was confounded (Luk 18:14). Better then—more happy, more honourable, more acceptable to God and man—is a *humble spirit*, companying *with the lowly*, than the *spoil* of the *haughty* conqueror, ministering only to his destruction (Jam 1:9). Better is an humble spirit, than a high condition; to have our temper brought down, than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? Most men strive to rise; few desire to lie low! May thy example, blessed Saviour, keep me low! “When Majesty,” said pious Bernard, “humbled Himself, shall the worm swell with pride?”

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For who maketh thee to differ
from another? and what hast thou
that thou didst not receive?
now if thou didst receive it,
why dost thou glory,
as if thou hadst not received it?
— 1 Corinthians 4:7

Nothing sets a man so much out
of the devil’s reach as humility.
— Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

¹² Adam’s *Private Thoughts*.

¹³ Baxter’s *Narrative*.

¹⁴ Isa 14:4-19; Eze 28, 29; Job 40:11-12.

¹⁵ Pharaoh, Exo 9:16, 17; Amaziah, 2Ch 25:15-20; Haman, Est 5:11, 7:10; Pharaoh, Eze 29:3-5; Nebuchadnezzar, Dan 4:29-33; Herod, Act 12:21-23. *In the church*: David, 2Sa 24:1; Uzziah, 2Ch 26:4-16; Hezekiah, 2Ch 32:25; Peter, Mat:26:33, 26:69-74.

PRIDE AND ITS CURE

L. R. Shelton, Jr.

GOD'S eternal Word is forever settled in heaven, because it was written in heaven "and is given unto us by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:16, 17). The Word of God is a sword to cut and to heal us; it is bread to feed us; it is water to quench our thirst; it is a fire to burn its way into the deepest recesses of our hearts; it is a lamp to lighten our pathways; it is a rod to chasten us; it is a staff to lead us; it is life to quicken us and make us alive; it is the power of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit to save us, cleanse us, deliver us, and make us suitable for the inheritance of the saints, and all of this by the saving faith in Christ that is worked in us by hearing the Word of God. For we are told: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom 10:17).

Yes, the Word of God warns us, counsels us, guides us, leads us, and points us to the Lamb of God, Who takes away our sins by the shedding of His own precious blood. The Word of God also reveals unto us the gracious invitation of our Saviour God to come to Him and find rest, peace, forgiveness and deliverance from sin, especially this sin of pride.

We have shown you from the Word of God that the God of the Bible hates sin, especially this sin of pride, because it robs Him of His glory. But, if we are willing to confess the sin of pride and forsake it, He will have mercy upon us: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Pro 28:13). Alright, there it is! To the Law and to the Testimony we must go, paying special attention now to the many gracious invitations that God gives to poor, needy sinners. It is written, as it were, in bold letters on the pages of Holy Writ: **COME, AND WELCOME TO JESUS CHRIST.**

Oh, how my poor soul rejoices in such an invitation: **COME AND WELCOME TO JESUS CHRIST.** Come and welcome to the only One who can deliver us from sin, this sin of pride and its deserved damnation; come and welcome to the only One who can save us from the wrath of God; come and welcome to the only One who was lifted up for our transgressions and raised for our justification; come and welcome to the only One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; come and welcome to the only One who can bring us back to God; come and welcome to the only One who can bring us to heaven; come and welcome to the only One who is rich in mercy, grace and love; come and welcome to the only One who has gone to prepare a place of rest and peace for us in His Father's home; come and welcome, I say, to the One who opened the fountain of cleansing by the shedding of His precious blood for sin and for uncleanness. I say again: Come and welcome to Jesus Christ.

What a mercy is this then, that is bestowed upon poor sinners: to be invited to come to the feast made ready by the Master Himself. You might ask the question: To whom then is this invitation of mercy given? Matthew 11:28 has our Lord saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, it is given to those who have laboured long and hard to save themselves by the works of their own hands, and are no closer to God than when they started, but are in fact laden down with a heavy burden of sin. Our Lord says: Come and welcome to Me, come lay down your burden of sin upon Me, and I will give you rest.

I tell you from a heart of personal experience today that there is no rest like the rest of the sin-weary soul upon the bosom of Christ by faith. I don't know of another soul living that tried to work his way into the good graces of God as I did. But to quit my work and rest in Christ as my All-in-all was indeed a great mercy. How can anyone possibly live in confusion and strife, in the arguing of their heart and in the awful accusing conscience without Christ to bear their sin-burden. I can't live without Him.

Again, Luke 14:17 has our Lord saying: "Come; for all things are now ready." What is ready for those who are invited to come?

(1) Salvation from sin is ready; for Christ Himself finished the work of redemption on the cross and proved its accomplishment by rising from the dead and leaving our sins in the grave.

(2) The Father who planned our salvation is ready to receive us in Christ, because He has let the Lord Jesus back into His presence as our Representative. No sin was upon Him when He returned to glory as our High Priest; all our sins had been left in the tomb, therefore the Father received Him and set Him above all principalities and powers.

(3) The riches of His grace and mercy are ready; His white robe of righteousness is ready; His eyesalve to put upon our blinded eyes is ready: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev 3:18).

(4) All power is ready to save, deliver and keep each poor soul that comes to Christ, for our Lord tells us in Matthew 28:18: “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” Also in John 17:2 He says He has power over all flesh. Therefore, John 6:37: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Yes, He has power to save and to keep, and will not cast us out, for He Himself said in John 10:27-28: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Yes, all things are ready; so come and welcome to Jesus Christ.

Again, Isaiah 55:1: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” What a gracious invitation is this! We are welcome to Jesus Christ as poor bankrupt paupers. Oh praise the Lord, that fits my case, for that is all that I am: a poor, worthless, penniless pauper. But did you know, my friend, that this is the one to whom the invitation is given? No money—yet come and buy, for God freely gives us all things in Christ. The question is asked: What are all these things? I will answer, He freely pardons us for Christ’s sake. He freely forgives us of all our sins for Christ’s sake; He blots them out as a thick cloud never to be remembered against us anymore.

This then is a most blessed invitation, for it invites both the thirsty and the hungry, both the cursed of God and the devil’s castaways to come and welcome to Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners.

Again, Isaiah 1:18 has our blessed Savior God saying: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Think of this! Ponder this! Meditate on this! The Lord of glory inviting poor sinners to come and reason with Him about their eternal soul. He invites you who are sin-sick, sin-laden, sin-convicted and convinced, to come and reason with Him and to know that every sin you confess to be scarlet, every sin you confess to be red like crimson, He will forgive and cleanse by His own precious blood as you look to Him by faith. What a word! What an invitation! What a blessing! What a salvation! What a Saviour is given to us in the Gospel!

You might say: But I am a great sinner. But Jesus Christ says: Come and welcome, I died for great sinners. You might say: But I am an old sinner having lived all my life in sin. But Jesus Christ says: Come and welcome, I died for old sinners, black and dirty as they are. You might say: But I am a hard-hearted sinner, I have a heart of stone on which nothing makes an impression. But Jesus Christ says: Come and welcome, I died for hard-hearted sinners, I give them new hearts. You might say: But I have served sin and Satan all my days. But Jesus Christ says: Come and welcome, for I died to deliver you from the clutches of sin and Satan. Yes, our Lord said it is written of Him: “Thou shalt call his name JESUS for he shall save [or deliver] his people from their sins.”

You might say: But I have sinned against light and knowledge. But Jesus Christ says: Come and welcome, I died for sinners like you. You might say: But I have sinned against mercy and the prayers of father, mother, brothers, sisters and wife; and even the prayers of all of God’s people. But Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God says: Come and welcome, for I died for the ungodly sinner like you. You might say: But I have no good thing to bring with me, I have nothing but sin, a wasted life, a proud and rebellious heart. But, dear friend, our Lord says: Come and welcome to Jesus Christ, for He alone can put away your sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

If you indeed hate sin, mourn over sin—for it has been against God. If you are willing to confess your sins and forsake them, then indeed God says He will put them out of His sight. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ, for in Him alone is found deliverance from the power, penalty and presence of sin.

At times my soul seems not to be able to contain itself as I understand that my Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ still invites me to come to Him. As 1 Peter 2:4 puts it: “To whom coming”—always coming—for He is still my Lord and Saviour. He is still my Refuge from each storm, my Hiding Place in every fear and in every battle. He allows me, by His grace, to keep coming to Him day by day and hour by hour to find in Him my all in all. I need a Saviour just as much today as I did the day I first came to Him as a poor, hell-deserving sinner.

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:8-13).

This article was taken from chapter four of the booklet “The Sin of Pride” by L.R. Shelton, Jr. to point unto the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood as our only ground of cleansing from the sin of Pride or any other sin.

L. R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003) was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he later became associate pastor in his father's Baptist church. While he did not have the opportunity to attend college or seminary, as a young man he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, the Puritans, and Lloyd-Jones. In 1970 he established a gospel outreach in Litchfield, Minnesota. There he developed a God-given burden to share classic Christian literature from prior centuries freely worldwide. In 1978 the small ministry moved to Pensacola, Florida, where he founded Mount Zion Bible Church and served as its pastor until his death.

Beware of too sublime a sense
of your own worth and consequence.

The man who dreams himself so great
and his importance of such weight

That all around in all that's done
Must move and act for him alone,

Will learn in school of tribulation
The folly of his expectation.

– *William Cowper (1731-1768)*

