

BEWARE OF PRIDE IN THE HEART

"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord."

– Prov. 16:5.

PRIDE IS VERY DECEITFUL and frequently cloaks or covers itself with humility. Because of our own imperfections it is well for us not to become judges of others, but merely limit our judgment to the outward manifestations. The Lord says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:20.) We are to judge the outward conduct, but we cannot go beyond and say what is of the heart. Errors of judgment are not an abomination to the Lord. He may look upon mistakes with sympathetic eyes. People are not responsible for those qualities which have come down to them by inheritance. Without judging individuals we may see certain conduct sometimes which may seem to be pride, yet is not pride.

We have seen people who have a great lack of self-esteem, a great lack of vanity, but who may have large approbateness. They do not think so much of themselves as they wish others to think of them. They say, "If people knew me as I know myself, I would simply be a cypher in the world." There is a certain amount of truth in this. People with small self-esteem are often taken to be proud, when it is really not the case. In trying to look as though they were somebody they will carry themselves as though they thought they were everybody. Such persons are simply laboring in an unfavorable condition in which they were born. We cannot think that the Lord would abominate them. They are very often little to themselves and very humble with the Lord. Yet they try to make themselves appear in as favorable a manner as possible. We must admit that there is a propriety in this to a certain extent. It is wise for them to try to overcome their weaknesses of nature. They should try to think soberly of themselves (that is, to be of sound mind), and they should try not to overdo matters. They must act with meekness, as well as feel and think meekly.

There is another class who have a large amount of self-esteem, yet who think, "I do not wish others to know that I have this high opinion of myself, therefore I will cloak it. I will endeavor to speak very humbly. The Scriptures say that we should be humble, therefore when I speak of anything I will try to speak from this standpoint." Such people very frequently get a gloss of humility of an *outward kind*. Some people really think that this course is right. If they are sincere in their conduct, we cannot suppose that the Lord would abhor them.

Our thought, then, is that in this text "The proud in heart" are the haughty-minded – those who feel haughty toward others and are not sympathetic, who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, who despise others. The heart of such a one is not that which God could love or that anyone could love; *it is an abomination in the Lord's sight*.

WHY PRIDE IS AN ABOMINABLE TRAIT

An abomination is that which is extremely displeasing – that which is repulsive – that which a person should not wish to entertain – should not harbor – must reprove. There *must be some reason* why God declares Himself thus in opposition to pride. We perceive that no one really has anything whereof to be proud. As the Apostle suggests in one place (I Cor. 4:7), "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?" What have we that we have not received of the Lord? If whatever we have received is a gift, where is our right to be proud of it? Evidently, such would be a very wrong condition of mind to be in – to be proud of things not our own, not of ourselves, but a gift.

There is, therefore, no reason for any to be proud; but there is every reason to be thankful to the Great Giver of all good. And that which is true of us is true also of the angels. Hence, there is nothing in all the Universe for any of God's creatures to be proud of. **[R5001 : page 110]** Whatever conditions they are in are not of themselves. God

seems to have arranged the conditions for humility, so that there could be *no ground* for pride.

Pride is merely selfishness, self-laudation; and selfishness is another name for sin. Sin and selfishness, therefore, are in opposition to the Divine Character and the Divine Plan – totally in opposition to it. It is, therefore, the right and proper thing that God should have the proud in detestation. Not having used His blessings aright, they could not have His favor. Whether they be proud of mental attainments, proud of physical strength, proud of wealth or ancestry, or proud that their "ancestors were monkeys," matters not. It is all pride, and an abomination to the Lord.

THE MOST DETESTABLE FORM OF PRIDE

But evidently the most detestable form of pride is *pride in the Church* – as though we had made the Plan and could boast in it! We do, indeed, see that anyone making the Plan might justly feel proud of it. But when we remember that none of us made the Plan, but that we are privileged to see it, we should be filled the more with humility, and should try day by day to better glorify His Name for the blessings which He has provided for the whole world.

We cannot suppose that any kind of pride would be more detestable in God's sight than pride of the Truth. If anyone should continue in such a course, manifestly it would lead him out of the light. We see this principle illustrated well in the case of Satan. Noble, grand, he allowed pride to enter his heart and said, "I will ascend above the others; I will have *an empire of my own.*" And this pride made him the opponent of God. (Isa. 14:12-17.) He is known in the Scriptures as the Adversary, Satan, the Devil.

All those who have the spirit of pride fail to recognize that "every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights." (Jas. 1:17.) Every such one, therefore, has the spirit of the Adversary instead of the Spirit of God. If it be allowed to grow and bring forth

fruit, it will lead eventually to the Second Death. It is appalling to see the nature of the temptations that come to God's people! But we are not to judge their hearts, to determine whether it is a pride of heart or not; for it may be merely a deception for a time. And even though they may miss the "high calling," they may get a place in the "great company." And when we see that the conduct is not at all in accord with what we should expect in those blessed with the Truth, it should make us all search our own hearts to see to what extent *we* have the *same traits of pride*.

Perhaps this quality of pride is nowhere more manifested than in some of those who have been in the Truth for quite a while. Sometimes it is on the part of the sisters. Sometimes they are very proud of what they know and very domineering in their manner, seeming to think that they know it all. Sometimes it is on the part of the brethren, in whom a spirit of pride appears. They have been placed as Elders. They see that they themselves are right and others are wrong. Sometimes this leads to an attempt to override the liberties of the congregation and to hold power in their own hands. **[R5001 : page 111]**

"BE NOT MANY TEACHERS"

It may not always be our privilege to mention such a matter. Such things may be matters that belong to a class. But, as one Pilgrim brother remarked some time ago, "Brother Russell, I sometimes think that, when we get beyond the veil, we shall be astonished to find how few of those who have exercised positions of prominence in the Church will be amongst the elect." It behooves us all who are associated in the Lord's work to watch ourselves closely, that if we find the slightest tendency in this direction of pride we may stamp it out as we would some contagious disease, knowing what the effects are upon others. We should be sympathetic with those who are beset, but not with the difficulty. We are reminded of the Apostle's words, "Be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater

condemnation." Those who have seen the Truth clearly and have some talents and opportunities will have the severer trial on that account.

Recently we have heard of some trials in the Class Extension work. The opportunities of Class Extension have resulted, in some cases, not advantageously. Some of great self-esteem have felt that they should be in the work, determining that they would tell the Class what to do. Some good brethren may have done this; some noble men may have done it. But in doing it, they were not acting wisely, we believe.

As we said at first, it is not well for us to judge the heart. Everyone is privileged to preach as he may have opportunity. He may go forth entirely at his own expense and opportunity. He may preach all that he can. Good men have done so. There is nothing in the Scriptures to prohibit it. But to try to coerce a Class – trying to recognize the Class in some sense and to ignore that Class in another sense – is not the right thing. If the Class is supposed to express the Divine will, the individuals should acquiesce in what the Class decides.

