

# Pride

## Transforming Truths

### Article - 4



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# PRIDE

## *Pride—Its Manifestations*

PRIDE IS A poisonous manifestation of selfishness. It is, as someone has well said, ‘selfishness gone to seed’. Every Christian should be on the alert to resist the encroachment of pride, because to whatever extent it is permitted to influence our thoughts and actions, it will blight our peace and joy in the LORD, and distort our every outlook in keeping with its own ugly form.

One manifestation of pride is undue regard for self. Paul speaks of it as thinking more highly of one’s self than is warranted—than one ought to think. Self-esteem manifests itself in many and unsuspecting ways. It may prevent one from accepting the truth from a humble source; and by the truth we mean not only the doctrines relating to the divine plan, but details of truth on any and all subjects. It is so easy for any of us to be wrong, even in the everyday things of life, that we should be willing to be corrected no matter from what origin the correction may come.

If a person hesitates to seek advice for fear that it may reveal his own lack of knowledge, it is a sign of pride. In the world, the men and women who are the most successful are those who seek the advice of others, especially in fields with which they are not too well informed themselves. This is still more applicable to the Christian life. Our understanding of the truth of God’s Word is less likely to be complete if we are unwilling to take into consideration the viewpoints of others of like precious faith. That is the reason it is so essential that we meet together for mutual study and fellowship.

Undue contention in presenting our views may be a manifestation of pride. The truth is such a bulwark of strength against error that we do not need to be contentious in its use. To be overly concerned about a point may indicate that what we are presenting is partly our own view, rather than God’s, and our pride is causing us to be contentious in its presentation. If such is the case, then pride will cause us to be very reluctant to change our opinion; that is, to admit that we are wrong even when the truth is apparent.

This self-esteem manifestation of pride also may cause us to resent reproof, even though the reproof may have been deserved and necessary. On the other hand, a Christian who is properly humble before the LORD, and before his brethren, will not resent reproof, even though it may not be merited. Elders of the church should be specially on guard along this line; for unless they are, pride may ruin their usefulness as servants of the brethren. If an elder resents having his thoughts called into question by even the humblest member of the ecclesia, it is a sign of undue self-esteem, and he should take the matter in hand before he is slain by the monster. This is true, even as the Apostle Paul has said: “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”—Phil. 2:3

Elders are servants of the Heavenly Father’s people, and it is not fitting for servants to resent questioning by those whom they serve. If there is any doubt in the mind of a brother, or sister, as to where one of their servants, or would-be servants, stands, with respect to doctrine and practice, it behooves that servant to display the greatest of patience and painstaking care to make his position clear. A refusal to do this may represent a lack of true humility before the LORD, and before the brethren.

Self-esteem also sometimes manifests itself in the habit of interrupting others when they are talking. This may not always be the cause for such rudeness; sometimes it is just a plain case of nervousness. But if we find ourselves constantly interrupting others in order that we may talk ourselves, it could easily be that inwardly we think that what we have to say is more important than what the other person is saying. Such would represent undue self-esteem.

A willingness to listen to others is one of the evidences of true humility, and is of prime importance to our growth in grace and knowledge. The lowliest saints of God, from the standpoint of education and ability, may often express thoughts which are golden nuggets of truth, more valuable, perhaps, than a whole discourse by one more talented. If we are not listening when these thoughts are expressed, we lose them; hence we lose the blessings that would accrue from them.

If we are not humble enough to listen to our brethren, we could easily become proud enough not to listen to the Almighty One. God speaks to us through his Word. If we go to his Word merely to find that which will bolster up an idea which we have developed in our own minds, it means that we are not truly listening to the Heavenly Father, but misusing his Word to satisfy the desires of our own self-esteem. Let us be on the alert, dear brethren, to note the slightest manifestation of pride along this line, and in prayer before the LORD ask him to help us to be free from it. Or, as Peter has advised, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”—I Pet. 5:6

## **SOCIAL PRIDE**

Social distinctions among the brethren are, thank God, pretty well broken down, but the spirit of pride which was responsible for fastening the ungodlike theory of class distinctions upon the unhappy world is still apt to manifest itself among the brethren. We may, for example, find ourselves seeking the fellowship of only the better educated and talented among the brethren, and ignoring those whom we consider not to be of ‘our kind’. If we find any such tendency to be influencing us, we may be sure that the grace of God has not yet taken as full control of our lives as it should.

There is also danger that we may develop what might be called a ‘spiritual class distinction’ complex. That is, we may wish to fellowship with only those whom we consider to be as ‘well developed’ spiritually as we consider ourselves to be. Sometimes a fear is expressed that newly interested brethren coming into the church may spoil our deep fellowship. This is to our shame, and is unlike the spirit manifested by the Master. If we feel that we are well-developed spiritually, let us rejoice in whatever privileges we may have in helping others to the same condition. If we do not rejoice in helping the weak, it is a very good sign that our own development is not as rounded out as it should be.

While it is true that Jesus seemed to regard some of his apostles more affectionately than others, this does not mean that he did not love them all, and was not glad for every opportunity he had of being with them all, and serving them. In our truth association there will be those to whom we are drawn more than to others, but this does not mean that we should ignore any of the brethren, and not rejoice in every privilege we have of being with them and enjoying their fellowship. There should be no cliques among God’s people—“All ye are brethren.”—Matt. 23:8

## **APPROBATIVENESS**

Too great a desire to be well thought of by the brethren may manifest itself in various ways. One may hesitate to speak, read, or pray in meetings. To onlookers this may seem to be a display of humility, yet, actually, it could be on account of fearing criticism if a mistake is made. We might decide that it is better not to give a testimony at all than to give a poor one which would give the brethren the thought that we are not very good at giving testimonies. Pride, in a very subtle form, could be ruling our hearts.

We may have an ambition to lead. The apostle says that one who desires the office of a bishop, or elder, desires “a good work.” (I Tim. 3:1) To have a desire to bless others through leading meetings, etc., is not, in itself, an evidence of pride, but it does expose those so disposed to the dangers of pride. We can check ourselves in this connection by noting our own attitude when others are speaking or leading meetings. Do we feel like staying away from meetings if we are not leading? Or, if present, are we uneasy and not paying attention to what is being said, all the while thinking to ourselves that we could bring out the thoughts in a much better way than is being done? If we thus muse, let us beware—pride is gaining the ascendancy and, if encouraged, will cause our downfall.

Along this same line, pride will hinder us from rendering faithful service unless we can be foremost in affairs. One who is truly humble will be just as happy to serve as a deacon as he is to serve as elder. Indeed, he will be happy to serve in every way possible even though the ecclesia does not recognize his service, or confer any office upon him. For some reason the idea of preaching has taken on altogether too important an aspect in the minds of many of the LORD’S people, with the result that, at times, brethren may get the idea that if they cannot be foremost in the service along this

line they are being neglected and ostracized. If we find ourselves feeling that way about it, let us beware.

From the LORD'S standpoint, the brother or sister who serves faithfully even in an obscure way, and who does not, therefore, receive the praise of the brethren, is just as honorable as those who are out at the forefront—perhaps even more so. At least, there is less danger that such service is rendered, in part, because of the expressions of appreciation by the fellow-workers. It is most proper that we afford every encouragement to those who serve. But how nice it would be to accord those who serve unheralded and unsung, a little more attention along this line. They deserve it; and if they continue to be faithful in that which is least, surely rich blessings will be theirs in the kingdom, whether or not we recognize and appreciate their service now.

Another possible manifestation of pride is the disposition to talk too much about one's humility, as though our friends would not know we were humble unless we told them! Humility does not need to be advertised. Like the fragrance of a beautiful rose, its presence is manifested without the necessity of special attention being called to it. The rose does not need to say: "How sweet is my perfume!" nor does a truly humble Christian need to call attention to his humility.

If we discover, then, that we are fearful that anyone will not recognize our humility, and feel that we have to call their attention to it, it is a sign that we have more approbateness than we thought. Of course, no one would actually say to others: "See how humble I am?" No, the flesh finds more clever ways of advertising its feigned humility than that. A brother might get up on the platform to speak, and open his discourse by saying that he did not understand why he was there, for there were others who could serve so much better. The chances are, that if the brother really felt that way about it, he would have seen to it that he was not there. This might not necessarily be the case, but it could be, so deceitful is the human heart, and so desperately wicked. True humility will cause one to serve as well as possible in whatever position in the LORD'S providences he may find himself, without making apologies, excuses, and explanations.

Another habit which might represent the spirit of approbateness is that of constantly referring to what "I said," or "I did." "So-and-so asked me such-and-such, and my answer was thus-and-so," is an attitude we will do well to avoid. Deep down in our hearts, referring to matters of this kind may be a desire to let the friends know that we are very brilliant, and in such high standing with God that our advice in spiritual matters is constantly sought. We say it "*might*" display something of this kind. In any case, it is well to be on guard.

Another good test of humility is to note our attitude when others get credit which may properly belong to us. An interesting thought concerning some passage of Scripture may be under discussion. The thought may be based upon a suggestion that came from us. Do we 'itch' to let the brethren know this; or are we happy simply in the knowledge that they are being blessed as a result of our efforts? Right along this line it is well to scrutinize the motives of our every word and deed.

In our association with the brethren, opportunities are constantly arising for rendering a little assistance here and there, by kind words and deeds. If, when we do these things, we look to see whether or not they were noticed, it means that a little bit of pride is still left in our hearts. 'Playing to the gallery', as the thought is expressed in modern language, will never get us into the kingdom.

Along this line of seeking approval from our friends for what we do, is the other test of what our attitude is when someone else is complimented, and we are ignored. Do we resent this, instead of rejoicing in it? This is a heart-searching test, yet by it we are able to measure our growth in humility and to determine whether or not we have reached the point where we are able actually to esteem others as being better than ourselves, and are therefore glad to see them put forward.—Phil. 2:3

### **MORE OBSCURE EVIDENCES OF PRIDE**

Although the habit of "foolish talking, or jesting," as mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:4, is generally looked upon by the brethren as merely a waste of time, yet it could manifest a spirit of approbateness in that one may seek to draw attention to himself and his brilliance through his ability to make the brethren laugh. In such an event, the motive back of the jesting would be a whole lot more detrimental to the brother than the jesting itself. A humorous play on words, if wholesome

and harmless, may help to relieve nervous tension; but, if prompted by approbateness, it will do serious injury to any Christian indulging in it.

Just as one may hold back from giving a testimony for fear of making a mistake and having his pride injured, so a Christian may seek to give a very eloquent testimony in order to display his ability. Here again, approbateness would be displayed. To make sure that love, zeal, thankfulness, sincerity, etc., are the motives that prompt us in speaking, it is well to ask ourselves questions. "Is it my desire to speak only to praise the Heavenly Father? Am I truly seeking to be clothed in humility? Am I depending wholly on the LORD'S strength to help me speak? Do I really sense my own weakness?"

Pride may also be manifested in our characters by a reluctance to distribute the message of the kingdom, for fear our friends and neighbors might see us, and on account of it not think so well of us. Then again, does pride in any way hinder us from firmly, freely, and gladly acknowledging our belief in God's plan, no matter who may ask us? Or are we just a little bit ashamed of being a Bible student? Are we reluctant about being seen associating with God's people; or do we rather own them as our friends wherever and whenever we may be seen with them? In these ways, also, we may check to determine the degree to which pride rules our hearts.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Success in life, whether connected directly or indirectly with the LORD'S service, proves a test to our humility. If we have, by God's grace, learned to do something well, how anxious are we to display our ability? Do we become fretful, and assume 'a persecuted attitude, when we imagine someone is holding us back? If so, it is well to realize that it is probably God who is holding us back until we have learned well the lesson of humility. If our ambitions or plans are frustrated, let us not blame this brother or that sister, but realize that all our brethren on earth could not keep from us that which the Heavenly Father wishes us to enjoy.

When we maintain this proper viewpoint of our relationship to God, and of his watchcare over our highest spiritual interest, we will be greatly helped along the road to true humility. If our ambitions are checked we will search our hearts, and inquire of the LORD for the reason why, instead of blaming the brethren and becoming embittered toward them. Perhaps the brethren may be wrong in their dealings with us; if so, that is something with which God must deal. Of this we can be sure, that our own position in the matter could only be possible through the LORD'S permission. And our faith in his watchcare should enable us to believe that he will permit nothing to happen in our lives but what will be for our highest spiritual welfare. In this let us rejoice.

The same viewpoint holds true even though our brethren in Christ may not be involved. In the business world, at our work in the factory, or the office, we may seem to be held back from doing things which we aspire to do, and which we believe we have the ability to do. If this be the case, let us not blame our competitor, our foreman, our office manager, or our fellow worker. Let us, rather, as in our association with our brethren, seek to ascertain what lessons the LORD may have for us in our experiences. If they accomplish nothing more than to keep us humble before God, they are very valuable, indeed. But if we become embittered toward those whom we imagine to be responsible, we have failed in the test.

Some of us may have imaginary accomplishments, and these cause more trouble than real accomplishments. Real accomplishments often represent years of patient toil and trials and tests in the school of Christ, hence the cost of attainment should be a counterbalance to keep the Christian who has attained humble. On the other hand, mushroom-like development of ability, real ability, unaccompanied by development along other lines, requires the possessor to especially guard against a lack of humility. But if one's attainments are only imaginary, then the danger is truly great. Such an one may prove to be a great trial to many of God's people. Seemingly, there is always someone to sponsor the cause of a brother who imagines he is being persecuted by the brethren. Thus his pride is further encouraged, and his overcoming made the harder. Paul said: "Let nothing be done through ... vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man

on his own things [accomplishments], but every man also on the things [accomplishments] of others.”—Phil. 2:3,4

We may have heard the fable of the bird which tried to make an impression by wearing borrowed feathers. We may be tempted to do this along spiritual lines. We may reason that we wish to serve the truth in the best way possible, hence to use the material of others, permitting the brethren to believe that it is our own. The friends may say, as they have said of various ones in the past, “What a talented brother!” The friends no doubt received a blessing, but the brother’s blessing would have been greater had he presented his own, though inferior outline, or else told the brethren the source of the thoughts he was presenting. The point in this is that the desire to get ahead among the brethren, which is a form of pride, may lead also to mild forms of deception.

We can check the attitude of our hearts along this line by carefully scrutinizing the motive of everything we say and do. For example, it is always commendable to quote the Bible in proof of what we believe, whether it be from the platform or in private conversation. But there is a possibility of quoting long passages of Scripture merely for the purpose of parading our knowledge before our friends. Let us watch ourselves along this line, and make sure that all we say and do is with the motive of glorifying the LORD, and not to display self.

### **SPIRITUAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

It is well to examine ourselves to discover what progress we have made in overcoming pride. Along this line, here are a few thoughts for prayerful consideration:

- Are we truly glad to express approval of any grace of the Spirit we see manifested in others, feeling, at the same time, that we have not reached such a high attainment ourselves?
- Are we always looking for superior qualities in others, and happy to acknowledge them when suitable opportunity offers?
- Have we learned to measure ourselves, not by ourselves, but by the perfect standard, Christ Jesus?—II Cor. 10:12
- Are we humble enough not to fear that the brethren will think we are not humble?
- Are we truly glad to take a back seat while others are taking a leading part in the service?
- Are we patient and gentle in defending the truth?
- Do we rejoice when various doctrines of the truth are repeated for the benefit of learners, even though we know them ourselves?
- Are we able to enter wholeheartedly into the comments and prayers of others, even of the least talented, and not permit them to rankle us with the feeling that we could do so much better ourselves?
- Have we developed to the point where we are not resting on the laurels of past service, but instead, are rejoicing in the golden opportunities of the present?

In this whole lesson on pride, Jesus is our pattern. He had all knowledge, all ability—earthly and heavenly—yet he said that his teachings were not his, but his Father’s. He said that he could do nothing of himself, but only as the Father helped him. His words, Jesus claimed, were not his own, but the Father’s. In view of this wonderful example of humility, how should we walk who once were sinners, enemies of God, and without any spiritual knowledge, wisdom, or ability?

May we, indeed, remember that “before honor is humility” (Prov. 15:33; 18:12); “before destruction” is pride (Prov. 16:18,19); and that pride is so displeasing to God that it is classed with murder, bearing false witness, and with lying. (Prov. 6:16,17) Let us, then, endeavor to be clothed with humility and being adorned with this and other graces of the Spirit, be truly “meet for the Master’s use.”—II Tim. 2:21

Amen!!

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## STORIES TWICE TOLD

### **YOU CAN ONLY WEIGH WHAT YOU ARE**

A little boy was on the scales, and being very anxious to outweigh his playmate he puffed out his cheeks and swelled like a frog. But the playmate was wiser. 'Oho!' he cried in scorn, 'that doesn't do any good; you can only weigh what you are!' How true this is of us bigger children who try to impress ourselves --and, yes, sometimes God Almighty -- by the virtues we should like to have! It doesn't do any good. 'You can only weigh what you are.' -- Wellspring.

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## SOMEONE ONCE SAID

### **PRIDE**

Being willing to receive sometimes takes more grace than giving to others -- reluctance to receive exposes our pride.

Of proud men it can be said, that the taller they grow the harder they fall.

Pride is the forerunner of humiliation.

Temper gets us into trouble. Pride keeps us there.

A conceited person is like a rooster that thinks the sun has risen to hear him.

Pride is selfishness gone to seed in the fertile soil of selfcenteredness. One may be humble out of pride.

Anyone who thinks he knows all the answers just isn't up-to-date on the questions.

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# **Transforming Truths**

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