

1 PETER 5

Acts 13:36 — David, having served the purpose of God, fell asleep.

What do you believe is the greatest danger to your ministry? Perhaps a family problem. Or divisive church member. Or a disgruntled elder or a staff member living in a sinful life of shame. Those are very real dangers.

But the greatest danger to our souls and our ministries is our own pride.

There is a growing obsession with self that is expressed in many different venues, as demonstrated in *The Narcissistic Epidemic*. We are surrounded by phony people and philosophies — even phony friends through social networking.

Pride is epidemic. YouTube — “broadcast yourselves.” The narcissistic epidemic has even influenced and infiltrated the church — e.g., Osteen. Churches adapt to the self-oriented culture. Narcissism is the outworking of pride; it’s hard for us to see and feel it. Now it is said that we need pride for self-fulfillment.

Pride is in fact the soul’s greatest enemy. It isolates us from the grace of God and the God of grace.

The theme of this letter is how to live as Christians in the midst of escalating hostility. In chapter 5, he deals with relationships in the context of the church — vv. 1-4, elders and people, vv. 5-11, the entire church. This message to the church was not only crucial in times of persecution, but also to every church in every time. This passage speaks to us all because it deals with the issue of pride and humility.

Proposition: *GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.*

Three imperatives surround that proposition. Peter connects all three imperatives to the proverb. The proverb serves as a hinge on which the entire passage swings. It is the biblical case for humility and the path to humility.

1. The Case for Humility

This proverb is a timeless, inviolable principle of God. To be proud is to “shine above others.” The primary idea of the word is that we look down on others; we are the standard by which others are measured. It is self-sufficiency and independence (from God). Pride is the first sin that ever existed in the universe, beginning by spontaneous generation in Satan.

Since the fall, it comes naturally to us, and is present in every human heart. Everyone possesses some idea of his own excellence (Calvin). It is terribly dangerous.

It is secret and deceitful. It is ready to mix with everything and contrary to the gospel. There is no one sin that does so much to let the devil into the hearts of saints. (J. Edwards).

It is the dandelion of the soul. The Bible tells us many ways that pride manifests itself — cf. Dan. 4 and Nebuchadnezzar. Pride can be taken in position (Mt. 23 — loving the chief seats...). Pride can be taken in our spiritual activities (Mt. 6 and the giving of alms and prayers; cf. 23:5). We can take pride in spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:23). We can take pride in knowledge (1 Cor. 8:1).

As pastors, we are especially susceptible to pride, because we are often the focus of attention. So how does pride show itself in us as pastors?

- ✓ By excessively talking about ourselves and our ministries.
- ✓ Comparing our ministries with others
- ✓ Expecting others to serve us
- ✓ Crafting our messages to be edgy
- ✓ Building our sermons on what we want to say
- ✓ Exercising heavy-handed authority
- ✓ Trying to be biblically or theologically novel
- ✓ Pursuing advanced degrees for its sake rather than the knowledge
- ✓ Wanting to be recognized by titles
- ✓ Acting like the resident authority on every topic
- ✓ Craving famous pastorates and positions of influence
- ✓ Expecting everyone to agree with our positions — even on lesser issues
- ✓ Resisting and refusing all criticism
- ✓ Catering to people of wealth and position
- ✓ Forcing our own agenda
- ✓ Being critical of others sins and excusing our own
- ✓ Envyng the positions of other pastors
- ✓ Seeing ourselves as superior to others — our views are more accurate, our personalities more winsome, our heart more mature...

What do you have that you did not receive? 1 Cor. 4.

How does God react to our pride? God is opposed to our pride, v. 5. God is taking up military arms against and going to battle against the proud. God has taken up His weapons and launching His artillery against the proud in heart. Cf. Is. 2:12.

To humble the proud is part of what it means to be God. The proverb that Peter quotes (3:34) is in the midst of a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. Pride is at its heart antithetical to who we have become in Christ. God opposes pride in His children just as much as He does in unbelievers. Many illustrations exist in the OT. Uzziah was used mightily (2 Chron. 26:4ff) until he became strong and his heart became proud (v. 15ff). His pride kept him excluded from the house of the Lord. He could no longer come near. Cf. also Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:24ff). His heart was proud (v. 25), therefore wrath came on him... And there are many other examples of how God opposed His own. Miriam and David and the disciples and Peter all are examples.

To keep pride from growing in Paul's heart, God sent a stake through his flesh!

If we defend our pride, we distance ourselves from God's grace.

Grace is the reality in God that causes Him to delight to do good to those who do not deserve it and to those who deserve the exact opposite of goodness. This is what God constantly does and how He acts.

But He only bestows grace where there is true humility.

The OT word group "lowly" informs the NT word "humility." It is a deep sense of one's moral littleness. It is the opposite of self-sufficiency. It always accompanies true saving faith.

Those who realize they have nothing to offer God — all they can do is beg (Mt. 5:3) — are the ones who receive grace from God. It is God's plan to make something out of nothing which is why he cannot do anything with those who believe they are something (Luther).

Grace is absolutely essential to our spiritual survival as well as our spiritual service and ministry. Success in the use of the gifts God gives us is always and only because of grace (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:10). Cf. also 1 Tim. 2 — ***be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*** The only way to carry out your ministry is to be strong in grace. We can do nothing apart from grace. This is one of the inviolable laws of God's moral universe. God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

2. The Path to Humility — God gives grace to the humble.

How does the Spirit begin to move us from pride to humility? The path is identified through the three imperatives —

- Submit to human authority —

Peter is compelling the young men to submit themselves to those who hold the office of elder (not just older men in general). Why does Peter single out one group — younger men? Because young men are often impatient with older leaders.

Be subject to means to place yourself under the authority of another. Peter is telling the younger men under the authority of the elders. If you want to pursue humility in your life? Submit to the authority figures in your life.

This command is not an excuse to exhibit heavy-handed authority over others.

What should this submission look like? Cf. the Westminster Larger Catechism —

- ✓ Show respect in attitude, words, actions
- ✓ Pray for them

- ✓ Thank God for them
- ✓ Imitate them
- ✓ Be loyal to them
- ✓ Have forgiving spirit toward their weaknesses
- Become a slave of everyone

We are, like Christ, to put on the slave's apron of service (Jn. 13). Cf. especially Phil. 2:3ff. We are to carefully examine the evidence and come to the verdict that everyone is deserving of more honor and respect than we are and therefore more important. True humility is always looking for ways to serve others ahead of ourselves.

To clothe yourself with humility is to willingly become the slave of another, as the Lord did.

- ✓ Is that my mindset to my spouse? Am I her slave to care for her?
- ✓ Would my children say that is true?
- ✓ My church?
- ✓ My fellow elders and pastors?

Only one thing will accomplish this in our lives — a contemplation of the cross (Lloyd-Jones).

- Embrace God's providence in our circumstances (v. 6)

To humble yourself means to bow low under another — to bow to the sovereignty of God. We were elected to obey Him (ch. 1). We must accept His providence even when there are fiery trials! If we are reviled, it's ok. Cf. 4:19 — humble yourself under God's divine providence even when it is hard and means persecution.

Embrace God's providence in your life. It's not forever. We humble ourselves by accepting what He does as true. Cf. Js. 4 — ***if the Lord wills*** — every affair of our lives is to be submitted to God as recognition of His providence.

You cannot contemplate God's power without bowing before Him in fear and humility. Cf. Charnock. He can command a crumb to go awry and strangle us...the omnipotence of God is not only the object our the believer's trust, but fear...

Humility begins with seeing the character and purpose of God and thus seeing our own condition (Is. 6; Job 42). When we struggle with pride, we have not come to see God in His glory and majesty.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Why? Because He will then exalt you at the right time. That might happen in this life, but the phrase ***at the right time*** has eschatological overtones — only then we are to keep humbling ourselves, waiting for the ultimate exaltation.

How do we do this? Note v. 7 — casting all our anxiety on Him.

Casting tells us how to humble ourselves. Do we cast (throw on another) our anxieties on God? Peter may be alluding to Ps. 55:2. Through prayer, we are to throw on God anything that makes us anxious — daily affairs of life to persecution.

Note the encouragement to do this — **because He cares for you**. Everything that creates anxiety for us is a concern and care for Him. What do I believe I can handle myself?

Prayerlessness is the believer's declaration of independence. Eph. 6:18. We are supposed to be devoted to the ministry of the Word and the ministry of prayer. There is something desperately wrong when our preaching is longer than our praying.

The calling of this passage is an impossibility, which makes us thankful for our Savior, who is the only one who ever lived out this passage. May this be in our mind which was also in Christ Jesus.

Pride is a danger that puts us on a collision course with God.