

# Pride Comes Before The Fall

By David Phillips

**W**hen a country is growing, its economy booming, and its wealth abundant there is very little that can bring that country down. When a man has toiled and labored all his life and has become great in strength and might, there is very little that can bring him down. Indeed, strength, power, and stability are desires by most every person on the earth and those who have attained these things often feel as if nothing can bring them down. But there is one thing that can bring the greatest of nations to ruin, that can bring the strongest men to their knees, and lower the most powerful leaders to the seat of beggars – PRIDE.

Pride is one of the greatest enemies of mankind and one of the most effective weapons of Satan. It is near invisible to the one who has it and often presents itself as a mere annoyance to those whom it affects; but in reality it is a deadly poison. For this reason we must look to the counsel of God in order to recognize pride for what it truly is, the affects it has on those who have it, and how we can remove it from our lives.

## What Is Pride?

Vine defines pride as “showing oneself above others, though often denoting pre-eminent, is always used in the N.T. in the evil sense of arrogant, disdainful, haughty; it is rendered ‘haughty’ in Rom. 1:30 and 2 Tim. 3:2. ‘Proud’ is set in opposition to humble, lowly.”

Pride is when we lift ourselves up, thinking that we are better than others. Pride is when we do or say things to lower others making them feel lesser and ourselves greater. Pride is when we brag about our own accomplishments thinking that we have done something great. Pride is when we see rules as something to be broken rather than humbly followed. It is the ladder that upholds the haughty spirit while rotting beneath its feet. It is what makes a ruler feel superior to other men rather than becoming the servant of men and of God. Pride is the fuel which drives all who deviate from God’s law and who do not follow His instructions. It is in the heart of those who claim to be at peace with God but do not walk in His ways. No man having pride can enter into the presence of God nor gain the good pleasure of His Son, for “*Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they join forces, none will go unpunished*” (Proverbs 16:5). For this reason God has shown us the path that the prideful will take so that we may turn from it clothe ourselves with humility (1 Peter 5:5).

## The Path of Pride is Destruction

Mark 7:22: When a man begins to think higher of himself than he ought to he becomes defiled in his mind for his heart is not right with God. With time he gradually sees himself as better than the people around him. He believes that he sees things in a way that other people do not; that he has been able to learn things that others have not. The accomplishments within his life are no longer a regular part of every day life, but have become something great to boast about; a reason to feel superior. For this reason, even from the beginning, pride defiles a man.

Jeremiah 13:9-10: As a man becomes puffed up against his fellow men, so his attitude will be directed toward God if it is not snuffed out. Soon his wisdom, as he sees it, not only goes beyond that of his peers, but also competes with that of God. In his eyes the thought of God creating the entire universe in just six days is utterly ridiculous. To those who teach the Bible as absolute truth he says, “Go to this college and consider their research. They will teach you true wisdom. As for this Bible, it is an illustration for babies.” Thus his pride causes him to blaspheme against God. Even those who have no education mock at the Bible calling it “old” and “out-of-date.” Therefore it is written, “*A proud and haughty man – ‘Scoffer’ is*

*his name; He acts with arrogant pride*" (Proverbs 21:24). Therefore the haughtiness of men drives them to the wisdom of this world causing them to forsake the wisdom of God, just as it did with Israel. "Thus says the LORD: *In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing.*"

Ezekiel 16:49: Refusing to heed to God's word men turn their eyes from that which is good and wholesome. They no longer see their abundance as a gift from God, but as the fruit of their own "mighty works." Therefore they see no need to use their abundance to serve God. They no longer take care of the poor or those who have not the rich blessings that they have. Many men have come to look down upon the poor saying, "If they would just go to school and become wise as I am, then they would become rich." They hoard their wealth saying, "I need it to take care of myself. I do not have enough to share with others."

Proverbs 11:2-3: Therefore the more the man is puffed up in his own eyes the more his neighbors look upon him with shame. Soon the fruit of his lips, which he directs to glorify himself, spew forth as great swelling words of haughtiness rather than wisdom. Though he has become great in his own eyes his pride has brought shame upon him from all who see and hear him. Thus pride leads to shame and destruction is not far away.

Jeremiah 49:16; Obadiah 3-4: Yet it would seem that, though all the world can see the shame of the prideful, he is oblivious. When others strive to offer him advise he balks at the thought saying, "Who are you to advise me" (John 9:34)? When others rebuke him the prideful man believes he has defended himself, but he is deceived. To all others his arguments have become the ranting of a spoiled child; the clanging of a symbol which is an annoyance to their ears. He sees his life as secure, his accomplishments great, is power sure. But he is deceived, for soon all will be destroyed. "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the LORD.

Proverbs 13:10: With such pride comes nothing but strife, for such men seek their own desires and to do only their own will. They fight with other prideful men in a desperate struggle to have their own way; they fight against God! No longer do they have love for others, but only for themselves. They believe themselves right in all things; they abhor instruction and balk at the thought of gaining wisdom. They bicker with their peers, consumed with their own self righteousness, reason has left them.

Hosea 5:5: In their desperate attempts to retain their own preeminence they scheme and plot, they fight and bicker. But before long they stumble. Like a sudden drop in the dark they realize that their very world, their self image, and their self-proclaimed greatness have gone from beneath them. What they thought had become their own ladder of success has in reality become the snare which will bring them down.

Proverbs 16:18: For this reason Solomon proclaim, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Isaiah 13:11: Thus, the haughtiness of men will be their downfall. "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." What awaits the prideful man? What can those who see themselves as better than their neighbors look forward to? Only death and destruction. As much as the world cannot see it, the Lord will bring down the proud with a mighty blow and those who are meek and humble on the earth will be exalted in their place, upheld by the strength of the Lord God (Zephaniah 3:11-12). In this manner the pride of men has caused the downfall of the greatest nations ever established on the earth.

### **Pride Is the Downfall of the Nations**

The Chaldeans - Isaiah 13:19-20: The great country which many know as Babylon was rich in resources, wealth, and power. They were even used by God to punish His people for their rebellion. Yet this great empire followed the pattern just describe so that their pride and haughtiness became known throughout the world. This was more than national pride, for it became their destruction. *“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there.”*

Moab - Isaiah 16:6, 10, 13-14: From the time Israel conquered the Promised Land Moab was a thorn in their side. From time to time Moab would defeat Israelite armies. Their pride was known and their arrogance great. But as with Babylon, their pride was their downfall.

Egypt - Ezekiel 30:6: Today all that remains of Egypt is a few cities and the ruins of what was once a great country. We hear tails of the grandeur of Egypt; the abundance of its gold, the power of its pharaohs, and the ingenuity with which they build the great pyramids. Yet, as with the others, their greatness became their downfall as they were infested with the greatest plague of all – pride. *“Thus says the LORD: ‘Those who uphold Egypt shall fall, and the pride of her power shall come down. From Migdol to Syene those within her shall fall by the sword,’ says the Lord GOD.”*

### **Pride Is the Ax that Fells Every Man**

2 Chronicles 26:16: Uzziah was a king who turned his heart from God when he became strong. His pride was his destruction when He forsook the Lord’s ordinances for offering sacrifices, entered the tabernacle, and burned incense on the altar. For his pride God plagued him with leprosy the rest of the days of his life. No amount of pride can lift a person above God’s law.

Daniel 5:20-21: Nebuchadnezzar, one of the great kings of the Babylonians, exalted himself as if a god. Thus the Lord God struck him and he was forced to walk the rest of his days as a man withered into the appearance of an animal. Such is the fate of all who exalt themselves above God (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

### **Overcoming Pride**

We see the destruction that can be cause by our pride if we let it fester in our hearts. We see how the greatest of nations and of men are torn down on account of their pride. But let us not fail to also see that when pride begins it is near impossible to detect unless we are watching for it, ready to smother it at the first sign. How can we do this? How can we overcome pride?

Jesus gives us the answer in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-5: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek”* Unless we are willing to look at ourselves in the light of truth we can never overcome pride. Pride is when we see ourselves as better than we ought to. But when we are poor in spirit we will be willing to acknowledge our sins and even mourn over them. When we are willing to see ourselves in this light then we can approach God and serve Him with meekness and godly fear. We will be like Jesus who said of Himself, *“I am gentle and lowly in heart”* (Matthew 11:29). We know that we are on the right track when we are willing to obey the command of the Lord to confess our sins. *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed”* (James 5:16). Remember, pride is what causes us to not want others to see our faults. Pride is what prevents us from admitting we are wrong even when we sin in public. Pride is what prevents us from seeking help from our brethren to overcome sin in our lives. But if we put off pride and put on humility then we can pray for one another. If we desire to cast of our pride we must learn to confess our sins.

In order to overcome pride we must be willing to let go of our own desires so that we may accomplish the will of God. It is impossible for men to please God who are too busy seeking their own benefit. Therefore Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-25, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My*

*sake will find it.*” When the Lord’s will is our desire then we can overcome sin, fear and bitterness. When we learn to seek God in all things then we will be able to walk as Jesus walked.

Just as Jesus served other we must be willing to serve others also. It is sad that many members of the church rarely help their brethren or do kinds deeds for their brethren. Many would blame this on personal differences. There have been members of the church who have said, “I do not want to go to their house; they are annoying,” “they bug me,” or “I don’t like how they treat me.” To the world these may seem like valid reasons. But when it comes to God these are clear signs that pride has entered our hearts. However, if we are to overcome pride we must learn to view our brethren in the same light that Jesus does. Thus Paul wrote, *“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:16a, 17). Jesus does not refuse salvation if we are annoying; He does not withhold his grace based on our personality quirks unless they are sinful. But even then Jesus strives to correct us and instruct us out of love so that we can become better. Such should be the desire of every Christian for their brethren. How can we overcome pride? By becoming a servant to all of our brethren, just as Jesus taught us. John 13:14-17.

So long as pride is in our hearts we cannot serve God. He cannot take this pride out of our hearts. Our neighbors and our brethren cannot help us when there is pride in our hearts. Only we have the ability to see the warnings that God has given us, to believe in the power and severity of God and to cast ourselves in tears upon His mercy.

### **Conclusion**

Pride is a fearful thing. We can see how it seeps in unknown. Let us watch for it in our lives so that we do not become like Uzziah or Nebuchadnezzar.

If you are reading this but you are not a Christian understand that pride is what prevents men from turning to the Lord. We have learned of the outcome of those who allow pride to persist in their lives. When God teaches us what to do to be saved it is pride which causes us to turn and scoff at His commandments. Therefore take serious consideration of your own life. All men need salvation. Jesus died so that we can have that salvation and He was raised from the dead by the power of God. He is with God now and is able to forgive our sins. Concerning this salvation He has said, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). This is the command of the Lord. How will you respond?