

Introduction:

- It's no secret that pride is a dangerous sin.
- The Bible puts it forward as the most dangerous.
- All the warnings of sinful pride in God's word tells us this: a man's greatest danger is himself.
- This is one of the major differences between true biblical Christianity and superficial cultural Christianity:
  - True biblical Christianity, while standing against cultural sins, rightly applies Scripture, seeing oneself (our own pride) as the chief danger to ourselves.
  - Cultural Christianity tends to see cultural vices as one's greatest danger.
- God hates pride and opposes it

God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5)

- To address one's pride is the epitome, spiritually speaking, of the saying, "Don't work harder, work smarter": if a man crucifies unwholesome speech, he crucifies that one sin, but if a man crucifies his pride, he begins to crucify every sin in his life, by the grace of God.

There are many aspects of pride & men that we could discuss. We will briefly look at a few:

**1. Pride and thinking**

a. Scriptural support

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup> but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- The context is battling our own sin. Our thoughts are a subset of our “body.” Sin occurs in the thoughts. Therefore, obediently battling sin involves fighting pride in our thinking.

1 Pet 1:13 Gird up the loins of your mind...

- To “gird up” means to pull in the loose ends that would cause us to trip up and run in an ineffective manner. Among other things, this would involve fighting prideful thoughts.

1 Peter 5:5 ...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

- Clothing ourselves with humility involves humility in all aspects of our lives, including the thinking

b. Pride and the mind

Pride is the sinfulness of sin. It is the nature of sin. It is the soil from which all other sins (whether thought, word, deed) will grow.

Pride originates in the flesh of the inner man. It rises up from the inside and plagues the thoughts.

The thought life is where a man must work the hardest to assassinate his pride. He must learn to take his thoughts captive.

c. Definition

**Humble thinking** could be defined as:

Thoughts that see God as supremely exalted in all things; a love for biblical ideas; thoughts of how to apply Scripture and correct theology to the practicalities of life; a quickness to override my own thinking with Bible verses rightly applied; a lowly mindedness; a cautious view of my opinions; an openness to correction and broadening of my opinions; a tendency to give others as much grace as myself; frequent thoughts of humility towards others in the privacy of the mind (e.g. tenderness towards others in the Body of Christ, thinking often of how people are doing with a hope that they are well in Christ, tenderness towards others in the mind, guardedness to be quick to put off and crucify uncharitable or hurtful thoughts about others); a mindset that sees oneself as a servant and slave; frequent thoughts about the strengths and godliness of others; fixating little on the faults and blemishes of others; joy in seeing others

participate with the Body of Christ; comfort and happiness in the spiritual flourishing of others in the church

**Proud thinking** could be defined as:

Thoughts that favor self over others; infrequent thoughts about the greatness and glory of God; infrequently applying Scripture and correct theology (and its implications) to the specifics of life; a high view of my own opinions that results in a slowness to override my own thinking and opinions with Bible verses rightly applied a high-mindedness; a tendency to assume oneself as righteous over and above others; a habit of giving oneself extra grace while giving others little grace; the mindset that focuses little on the fact that we are to be servants towards others; infrequent tenderness and compassion in the thoughts towards other believers; slow to be convicted by, loathing of, and putting off of uncharitable thoughts about others in the Body of Christ

d. Habits of the Christian man

As it pertains to his thought life, the mature Christian man will do things like:

- i. Admit and understand that pride is active in his heart, attempting to weave its way into his thinking, desires, and ideas.
- ii. Be growing in identifying the ways in which pride is actively attacking and attempting to influence his thinking.

Example: Instead of generalities that are unthreatening to our personal pride like, "I was prideful there," thinking in specifics, "The way that I assumed that my brother in Christ was ignorant, foolish, and sinning, was prideful, because I actually have no idea what he has been going through..."

- iii. Go beyond admitting, "Yes, I know I have pride," in general terms. Rather, in his many daily thoughts, he can identify the specific manifestations of pride in his thinking.
- iv. Loathe and sorrow over the ways in which his thinking is proud and high-minded.
- v. Be actively and regularly attacking his proud thoughts, using Scripture to destroy them.

- vi. Understand that it is not enough to not think a proud thought.
  - vii. Be actively replacing prideful thoughts with biblical thinking, so that his thinking is growing in humility (which shows in more accurate thinking about God; more Scripture-filled thoughts; increasing loving thoughts about others in the privacy of his own mind where only God can see; etc).
- e. The man understands that to win the battle in his thinking is to win the battle. To attack and subdue proud thoughts is great victory.

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is

- f. Additional thought-fighting which the man of God engages in:
- i. He fights to control his thoughts; to take them captive to the truth.
  - ii. He fights to have a correct epistemological hierarchy in his thinking (e.g. Scripture is superior to all opinions; he fights to prohibit emotionalism and sentiment from controlling his thoughts over truth and love).
  - iii. He fights to think correctly and charitably about others.
  - iv. He is skillfully and frequently applying Proverbs 18:13 and 18:17 to his thinking, especially potentially difficult interactions with others (e.g. No matter how people-wise he may be, he is mature by not making conclusions about others until he has received all of the information about situations and asked the individuals involved. Thus, he often applies Proverbs 18:13 and 18:17 to his thinking about people:

Proverbs 18:13 He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.

Proverbs 18:17 The first to plead his case *seems* right, *until* another comes and examines him.

- v. He fights against speculating (unfavorably) about what others mean by what they say, until he has asked.
- vi. He fights to recall situations in a manner that accords with grace and truth (e.g. When he thinks back on difficult or uncomfortable

interactions with others, he seasons those memories with grace, so as to avoid sculpting what happened in a way that increasingly condemns the other person and exalts himself. He avoids what the Israelites did: “We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic” (Num 11:5)).

- vii. He fights to give people the benefit of the doubt (cf. 1 Cor 13:7).
- viii. He fights against potentially divisive thoughts that would bring unnecessary division and strife among others (cf. Titus 3:10 “Reject a factious man...”).
- ix. He understands that being easily offended and quickly hurt by others is a forsaking of masculinity and strength, and thus fights against such things (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5 love .. is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered)

## **2. Pride and teachability**

### **a. Scriptural support**

- 1) “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life” (Prov 6:23).
- 2) “Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold” (Prov 8:10).
- 3) “Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning” (Prov 9:9).
- 4) “He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who ignores reproof goes astray” (Prov 10:17).
- 5) “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid” (Prov 12:1).
- 6) “A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke” (Prov 13:1).
- 7) “Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored” (Prov 13:18).
- 8) “A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible” (Prov 15:5).
- 9) “He who hates reproof will die” (Prov 15:10).
- 10) “A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, he will not go to the wise” (Prov 15:12).

- 11) "He whose ear listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom and before honor comes humility" (Prov 15:31-33).
- 12) "A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool" (Prov 17:10).
- 13) "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days" (Prov 19:20).
- 14) "Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge" (Prov 19:27).
- 15) "When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge" (Prov 21:11).
- 16) "Apply your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge" (Prov 23:12).
- 17) "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy" (Prov 27:5-6).
- 18) "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend" (Prov 27:9).
- 19) "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy" (Prov 29:1).

- Therefore, spiritual correction is a grace of God: it is a way that God sovereignly works through people, by the Spirit, to bring sanctification, and, sometimes, salvation.
  
- Therefore, to reject spiritual correction is to spurn God's grace.

b. Observation

- Some men esteem themselves as strong. However, an unteachable demeanor is a great weakness.
  
- This weakness can show in response to spiritual correction. Some men turn emotionally volatile. Some become hardened. Some distance themselves from the grace of correction.
  
- Instead of answering the reproof with sincere gratitude, some of us might demand that it be packaged in praise.

- Many of us guys need a spiritual Mary Poppins to hold our hand in reproof: without a spoonful of sugar-coating, the correction-medicine will not go down. Unless the one correcting us give us at least three gold stars, we cannot bear to receive a check-mark.
- Inability to receive correction is spiritual immaturity and fragility. This might show, for example, in response to spiritual correction from our wife, brother in Christ, co-worker, or ministry-partner, and we can become hardened; distant; offended; proud; self-isolating; volatile.
- Sometimes we might mull over what was said, how it was said, and the nerve of so-and-so to say it. If we're not careful, we might embark on a private investigator quest, attempting to prove our correctors wrong because we cannot stomach the idea that someone else would see imperfections in our lives which we do not (or will not).
- We have to be careful about responses such as blameshifting, getting emotional, or spinning reproof around.
- When a man is unreceptive to spiritual input, he might suppose he is a valiant warrior of sorts, when in reality, he is a valiant blame-shifter, self-defender, and correction-goalie.
- When it comes to receiving reproof, we have to be careful that we are less like "Glass-Jaw Joe," and more like, "Take-A-Hit Tom."
- Teachability is a sign of masculine strength, spiritually speaking. When a man is teachable, it means that he can receive a spiritual jab and an ideological take-down.
- When a man is teachable, it will look like a man who will respond to correction in many ways: thankfulness; not being offended; not distancing himself from those who offered the correction; look for ways to pray about and apply the correction.
- We cannot do this in our own strength, but by the grace of God.
- Spiritual teachability comes from things like:
  - a high view of God (knowing I have much to learn about God)

- a right understanding of Jesus (knowing that I am to always strive to become more like Christ. He was perfect, I will never arrive at perfection until heaven. Therefore, striving to be like Christ means, among other things, welcoming input for my entire life)
- a thorough understanding of biblical anthropology and hamartiology (understanding that man is desperately wicked, radically finite, and in great need of constant learning)
- a right understanding of sanctification (I never need to stop learning and growing, even if I lived 10,000 years)
- a proper understanding of the local church (God's ordained means of growth, "green-housing," and building up in the faith)
- a regenerate soul (an unregenerate soul is irresistibly closed to the grace of correction, guarded, and driven by self-exaltation because it sees all things as for self and unto self for the glory of self)

### **3. Pride and the local church community**

#### a. Biblical support

Proverbs 18:1 He who separates himself seeks *his own* desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.

The 40 one-anothers (e.g. 1 Pet 5:5 all of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another)

#### b. Observation

##### i. Chris Mueller (*Let the Men Be Men*):

"[Y]ou must be interconnected in a local church before you can grow to be God's man ... he needs to be immersed in the ministry and community of a healthy local church made up of born-again believers under a plurality of biblical elders" (pp. 60-61).



“..a truly masculine man .. will require more than having Christian friends your own age to ‘hang out with.’ You will need to develop friendships with older and younger believers in the context of a church family, all of whom are committed to growing in Christlikeness and eager to talk about it” (p. 68).

- ii. There are times when less involvement in Christ’s Body is appropriate (e.g. illness, severe family trial, unforeseen/rare work circumstances). However, the New Testament never permits nor favors the practice as a pattern of life.
- iii. The man who seeks to separate himself from Christ’s Body is not fulfilling God's purposes of masculinity. Notwithstanding how much culture has propagated that attitude of masculinity, it is a forsaking of it.
- iv. The man who seeks to separate himself from people (kind of the lone ranger loner attitude) is not fulfilling God's purposes of masculinity. Notwithstanding how much culture has propagated that attitude of masculinity, it’s a forsaking of it.
- v. The man who is a lone ranger has a higher susceptibility to esteem himself as usually being right and others wrong.
- vi. A village isolated and cut off from the rest of the world is, harmfully, confined to its limited understanding and views.
- vii. The flesh, which resides in all people until death/glorification, is naturally self-favoring; self-praising; self-benefiting; self-congratulating.
- viii. The flesh also tends to favor 2 things:

1. Self-isolation:

It knows that other spiritual individuals can pose a threat to its self-protecting, self-praising thoughts.

Just like a tyrannical regime will exterminate people and ideologies which pose a challenge, the flesh will oppose things that challenge it (e.g. godly humility, spiritual spurring on, criticism). Therefore, the flesh seeks to operate

like a spiritual tyrannical, communist dictator: do away with anything that opposes its reign and regime.

2. Community with self-flattering individuals:

If it does community, the flesh will gather people around itself in a very calculated way. It will be ok with individuals who do not challenge its presence and manifestation.

Thus, the flesh will deceive itself into concluding things about individuals who flatter it, and do not hold it accountable, like: "These people are my friends. They really are loving. They understand what it is like to love someone."

In reality, they have accumulated individuals around them who do not fully love them in a biblical way, but, who, instead, join them in flattering them, in part, so that they will be flattered in return. And, so that they will not held accountable.

In these types of fleshly relationships, even in the name of Christianity, there is an unspoken community ethic: "you do not pose any challenges to me; you do not hold me accountable, and I will not to you either."

Notwithstanding the prominence of this type of "community" within professing Christian churches and relationships, it is, in reality, a form of mutual self-worship; fleshly-protection; and fleshly-greenhousing, where sanctification, and at times, salvation, is severely hindered.

- ix. The more a man isolates himself from the local church, often the more he can get caught up in his own head; entangled in his own thoughts.

B/c of the flesh that all men have, we are inclined to believe our thoughts; we tend to ascribe righteousness to our unchallenged thoughts.

This is one of the quick pathways by which a man spirals into the fog of self-deception.

Few things are worse than a man, a lone ranger, who isolates himself from much-needed spiritual sparring; the correction; the sharpening; the broadening which Christ hardwires into a New Testament local church, all which attacks and confronts the fleshliness of isolationism.

- x. A man who isolates himself from the New Testament local church may feel good about himself, but, like a man sitting under a bridge sniffing toluene, he is, in his isolation, numbing and damaging himself.
- xi. When a man calculates and isolates himself, he will often seem right and righteous in his own eyes.
- xii. Self-isolation conditions a man, often imperceptibly, to operate with a dangerous man-centered epistemology: the man has conditions himself to evaluate what is right, true, and needed for him by whether or not it aligns with his pre-conditioned, high opinion of himself, which was cultivated simply by isolation.
- xiii. The man who isolates himself from meaningful local church involvement may counter and say: "Well, I listen to sermons, I read books, I watch YouTubes, I go to conferences, I speak with other believers."

But this approach is catastrophically flawed. Why?

c. Tendencies of godly masculinity in community

- i. He loves godly friendships that center on Scripture, Christ, and acknowledge God in all things (Acts 20:4).
- ii. He surrounds himself with spiritually stable men in the church (Prov 27:17).

Proverbs 27:17 As Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another

- iii. He understands that he needs men to serve as spiritual mirrors in his life, especially in the local church (Heb 3:12-14).

Hebrews 3:12-14 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

- iv. He understands that he needs godly, biblical men around him to help him stay on course and finish the race (Heb 3:12-14).
- v. He sees himself as being able to learn from every man in the church (Rom 1:12, 12:3).

Romans 1:12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

- vi. He invites guys into his life. He does not push them away. He knows that he is not above needing other brothers (Heb 3:12-14).
- vii. He seeks to be obedient to the commands of having godly, biblical unity with brothers, as opposed to superficial unity (Ps 133:1, Eph 4:3).

Psalms 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!

- viii. He also seeks out men to encourage, influence, and pass on what God and other men have passed to him (2 Tim 2:2).
- ix. He seeks to pray sincerely and worship heartily and biblically with other men (Ps 95:6-7).
- x. He enjoys learning the things of Christ with other godly men (2 Tim 2:2).