

**Message no:** 2TS05  
**Series:** Two Important Temptation Scenes  
**Section:** Temptations of the Evil One  
**Subsection:** Major Areas That Can Go Wrong (5)  
**Date preached:** 17 Jul 83  
**Date edited:** 07 Jul 07

## **PRIDE – PART 1**

The two temptation scenes recorded in Genesis 3 and Matthew 4 reveal how Satan works, the areas of attack by the powers of darkness and how we can counter them.

In this message, I will consider another strategy of the evil one, and that is, the attack on men by drawing them in the direction of pride. In Genesis 3, the evil one did this by tempting Eve to want to be like God, knowing good and evil, to have fleshly aspirations, longing for attainments and positions not intended by God for her, and to seek knowledge and wisdom contrary to what God intends.

### **Pride – a major problem of mankind**

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the area of pride is a serious and constant problem for mankind. It is also a major area of spiritual attack and manipulation by the forces of darkness. Pride poses problem for man in three major areas.

Firstly, pride is a significant hindrance to man having a healthy relationship with God. Pride causes a man to think that he is all right, thus hindering him from turning to God and the path of true repentance and reconciliation with God. There are many non-believers who proudly declare that they are self-sufficient and do not need God. They are like the Greeks whom Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 1, who sought worldly wisdom and found the gospel of Christ crucified to be foolishness.

#### **1 Corinthians 1:22-23**

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;  
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

Even as the proud man is hindered from turning to God because he thinks he does not need God, his pride also hinders him from experiencing God's gracious working in his life because "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). Pride thus hinders man from having a positive relationship with God in both directions – his reaching out to God and God reaching out to him.

The same spiritual principles apply to the presence of pride in believers. It dilutes their sense of their great need of God and dependence on Him and hinders their experience of God's gracious working in their lives. It has an adverse effect on their relationship with God, their growth in Him and their effectiveness in service.

Secondly, pride seriously hinders healthy relationship with others. When pride reigns in our hearts, we are unable to properly appreciate other people or properly relate

with them. Furthermore, pride will drive us in the direction of selfish ambition, striving for recognition, position and power, and others will find us difficult to relate with. We have difficulty taking our proper place humbly in society or in the body of Christ.

Thirdly, pride hurts and damages the very being of man. The man who is proud is in an unhealthy state. The spirit of pride has negative effects on a person.

### **Pride – a major cause for the fall of Satan**

It is highly likely that a major cause for the fall of Satan was pride. There are two passages in the Scriptures that many interpret as referring to the fall of Satan. I am in agreement with this understanding of the two passages. The first passage is Isaiah 14:12-15.

#### **Isaiah 14:12-15**

12 "How you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!  
You have been cut down to the earth,  
You who have weakened the nations!  
13 "But you said in your heart,  
'I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.  
14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.'  
15 "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,  
To the recesses of the pit.

The phrase "star of the morning" in verse 12 is translated as Lucifer in the King James Bible. The term "Lucifer" has often been used as a reference to the evil one. If the passage is interpreted as referring to the fall of Satan, we can see in verses 13 and 14 that the problem was one of pride. The evil one said in his heart: "I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God..., I will make myself like the Most High." This does ring a bell as we are reminded of Genesis 3 when Eve was tempted by the evil one to eat the fruit so that she would be like God.

The other passage often cited as referring to the fall of Satan is Ezekiel 28:11–17. There are a few observations about this passage that I would like to draw your attention to.

#### **Ezekiel 28:11-13**

11 Again the word of the Lord came to me saying,  
12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say  
to him, 'Thus says the Lord God,  
'"You had the seal of perfection,

Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.  
 13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God;  
 Every precious stone was your covering...

Verse 12 reads "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre". As we read further, we find that the passage makes references that go beyond the description of the king of Tyre. In verse 12 it is also recorded, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" and in verse 13 "You were in Eden".

Many of the Messianic prophecies of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ are often recorded in the Old Testament as references associated with a king (for example, King David) but we also find in the same context certain phrases that go beyond what is applicable to an earthly king. Subsequently in the New Testament, it is revealed that it was actually a prophetic reference to the coming of the Messiah, for example, to His birth and His resurrection.

Likewise in Ezekiel 28:12-13, it is unlikely that the description "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" refers to the king of Tyre. It is most likely a description of Satan, who was in the Garden of Eden.

**Ezekiel 28:14-15**

14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers,  
 And I placed you there.  
 You were on the holy mountain of God;  
 You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.  
 15 "You were blameless in your ways  
 From the day you were created  
 Until unrighteousness was found in you.

Verses 14 and 15 tell us that Satan was created blameless but he fell because of unrighteousness.

**Ezekiel 28:16-17**

16 "By the abundance of your trade  
 You were internally filled with violence,  
 And you sinned;  
 Therefore I have cast you as profane  
 From the mountain of God.  
 And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,  
 From the midst of the stones of fire.  
 17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;  
 You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.  
 I cast you to the ground...

Verse 17 describes the heart of Satan, which was lifted up because of his beauty. He fell because of pride. He was cast down from heaven and will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire. From the beginning of the creation of man, from the scene in the

Garden of Eden until today, Satan has been constantly seeking to draw us in the same direction, in the same path of destruction that he had taken. We need to understand this and be vigilant so as not to give him ground to work in that manner.

1 Timothy 3:6 could also be an allusion to the fall of Satan because of pride:

**1 Timothy 3:6**

and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

The margin of the New American Standard Bible indicates that the phrase “incurred by the devil” is literally “of the devil”. This means the text rendered “fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil” is literally “fall into the condemnation of the devil”. There are two ways of interpreting this verse. It can mean Paul is saying the overseer should not be a new convert lest he becomes conceited and falls in the same manner as the evil one had fallen (that is, the evil one fell because of pride). It can also mean that the new convert, being conceited, falls into the condemnation by the devil in the sense that the devil now condemns him. Both meanings are possible and relevant.

**God hates pride**

The Scriptures warns us in strong terms of how severely God views the area of pride. Proverbs 6:16-17 and Proverbs 16:5 tell us that a proud person is an abomination to the Lord and he will be punished.

**Proverbs 6:16-17**

16 There are six things which the Lord hates,  
Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:  
17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
And hands that shed innocent blood,

**Proverbs 16:5**

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;  
Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

*God's judgement on King Uzziah*

2 Chronicles 26 records a sad example of someone who became proud and was punished by God. This was King Uzziah. He was described as someone who initially did right in the sight of the Lord and as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him (vs. 4-5). Verses 15 and 16 tell of his downfall.

**2 Chronicles 26:15-16**

15 In Jerusalem he made engines of war invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows

and great stones. Hence his fame spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong.

16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

The problem started when Uzziah became famous and strong, for then his heart grew proud and he acted corruptly. In his pride, King Uzziah did what he was not supposed to do. He entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense, which was only to be carried out by the consecrated priest.

When we begin to contribute something to the Lord's work, we need to exercise great care. In the beginning we may do well and the Lord blesses us and helps us. However, if we are not vigilant, pride can easily creep in.

Verses 18 to 20 describe Uzziah's negative reaction to correction and God's judgement on him.

#### **2 Chronicles 26:18-20**

18 They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God."

19 But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense.

20 Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the Lord had smitten him.

When Uzziah was rebuked by Azariah and eighty other priests, instead of humbling himself and acknowledging his wrongdoing, he became angry. So God punished him and smote him with leprosy. Uzziah was a leper till the day he died.

When we are proud, we tend to get angry when corrected. In such a state, we are unable to benefit from the correction that comes from others. Unless we are repentant, we will not be able to learn and live well for the Lord. Proverbs 11:2 teaches us that when pride creeps into our lives, it leads to dishonour. That was what happened to King Uzziah and it is important we learn well from his negative example.

**Desire for greatness**

The desire for greatness, for recognition and prominence in the direction of self-glory is linked to the area of pride. Eve was tempted in the direction of greatness to want to be like God.

In an incident recorded in Mark 10, the Lord Jesus Christ corrected the attitude and wrong understanding of His disciples in their concept of greatness. He taught them the meaning of true greatness.

**Mark 10: 35-45**

35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You."

36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

37 They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory."

38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

39 They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

40 "But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

41 Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognised as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.

43 "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;

44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, asked the Lord Jesus whether they might sit in His glory, one on His right and one on His left. To them, greatness has to do with power, authority, position and status. They thought it was feasible for them to attain greatness simply by asking the Lord Jesus to grant it to them. The Lord Jesus replied that they did not know what they were asking for.

It is not that greatness is negative. Many have a wrong concept and understanding of the subject. Their idea of greatness and how it can be attained is not accurate. The worldly approach and expression of greatness is one of grabbing for position of authority so as to lord it over others. The Lord Jesus tells us the correct approach that Christians should take.

In verse 43, the Lord Jesus said, "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant." He did not say that it is wrong to desire to be great or that there is no such thing as greatness in the sight of God or in God's kingdom, but that we are not to be like the people in this world who desire to be great in the wrong way. He tells us that whoever wishes to become great shall be a servant and whoever wishes to be first shall be a slave of all.

True greatness is actually one of humble service. It is the attitude of servanthood in all humility, having willingness and a desire to serve. If our hearts are in the direction of humble service, then it is true greatness in the sight of the Lord.

### **Proper exercise of spiritual authority**

Some Christians think that it is wrong to assume positions of power and to exercise authority because these are linked to pride. Is there a proper place for authority and for the proper exercise of authority? It is clear from the Scriptures that there is and it is helpful for us to be clear about the proper approach.

Firstly, authority should not be something that we seek on our own. True spiritual power and authority cannot be acquired by a self-seeking, grabbing kind of approach. They come from the Lord.

Secondly, the approach should not be one of lording over people. Authority and power are to be humbly exercised.

Thirdly, and this is a very important point, the attitude of heart and the approach should not be that of seeking power and authority because we enjoy having it and exercising it. Herein lies the major difference between what is healthy and what is not. This was the problem with Simon the magician as recorded in Acts 8.

The context here, as recorded in verses 14 and 15, is that the disciples were receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter and John.

#### **Acts 8:18-21**

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

Simon wanted to be regarded as someone great. He wanted to have the same kind of authority and power to be able to bestow the Holy Spirit on people by the laying on of hands. He was severely rebuked by Peter as his attitude was wrong. Peter told him: "Your heart is not right before God."

Instead of seeking authority and power for personal enjoyment, the correct attitude should be that we seek to serve the Lord with gratitude for all that He has done for us, and we serve in faithfulness and humility. The Lord may grant to us responsibilities or a certain degree of authority but the authority is something that God gives to us as He sees fit. It should not be something that we want to have because we enjoy having it. If our attitude is self-seeking, we open ourselves to spiritual attacks and manipulations which can result in very serious consequences. The evil one is waiting for opportunities to offer us these things to lead us into bondage and to use us for his own purposes.

The apostle Paul has this to say regarding his authority:

**2 Corinthians 13:10**

For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.

To Paul, his authority was given by the Lord and it was intended “for building up and not for tearing down”. Paul often described himself as “Paul, an apostle”, one called and sent by the Lord. His apostleship was not something that he entered into on his own.

So what is the proper place for authority and the exercise of authority? It must be something that God gives to us as He sees fit, for the building up of His kingdom, and to be humbly exercised. The whole approach should be that of serving with the heart of a servant. It is not lording over others but is self-giving. As the Lord Jesus explains in Mark 10:43-44, “...whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all”.

In Mark 10:45, the Lord Jesus shows us what ought to be the approach in this area. It is an attitude of service to all and is sacrificial self-giving.

**Mark 10:45**

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

In the world, many desire power and position of authority so that they can lord it over others and so that others will serve them. Their motives are basically selfish. The world’s way is one that is linked to pride but the true Christian way is in the context of service and humility. “To serve and to give His life a ransom for many” shows us that it should be a life that is self-giving and not one in which we lord it over and exploit others, and use them for our own purposes.

In fact, the context of this passage is the Lord Jesus talking about the Cross (vs. 33-34), how He was going to suffer, how He would be delivered up to the chief priests and the scribes and be condemned to death, how the Gentiles would mock Him, spit upon Him, scourge and kill Him.



We need to be alert and on guard against any self-desire for greatness, for recognition, for prominence, or self-glory of any sort, and we must take note of wrong desires, wrong ideas and attitudes about authority and power. We should seek humbly to serve the Lord and be careful that we do not give room to the evil one to manipulate our lives. When the Lord does lead us in the direction of service and does grant us authority, we should exercise it with the recognition that it is a serious responsibility to be fulfilled diligently and with all humility. Such authority is given in the context of service, for the building up of the body of Christ, and not meant for self-glory or the indulgence of personal desires.

### **Subtle manifestations of pride**

Some Christians have the aspiration to serve God and to do great things for God. Such aspirations may appear innocent or even commendable, but there are subtle dangers. It is not necessarily wrong to have this kind of desire. To want to serve God, and have our lives count for God, is correct and commendable. In fact, we should all want to serve God. But we need to consider more carefully what this actually means because impure motives can easily be present in such aspirations.

It is the “I” in our motive to serve that we need to be careful of. We may serve with the desire that others may recognise our efforts. Coupled with that, we may also want to have the sense of satisfaction that we have done great things. There is the presence of the desire for recognition and self-exaltation.

The essence of the problem of pride in relation to service has to do with the “I”, the self-desire for greatness and prominence so that people can look up to us and applaud us, thinking that we are great and have done great things.

Thoughts of greatness can easily be planted by the evil one. Thoughts like “You are great and you will do great things” can easily come to us. This is dangerous if we do not know how to handle such thoughts properly, and we can easily become ensnared by the evil one.

The desire to serve God is not wrong and the idea that we can do great things for God, if properly understood, is not wrong either. What we need to ensure is the proper attitude of wanting to do great things for God.

The proper attitude and approach should be a deep sense of gratitude to the Lord in recognition of His greatness and goodness and how much He has done for us. Together with this sense of gratitude to the Lord is a deep love and concern for others and for those who are perishing. We serve God wholeheartedly to the best that we can as part of our expression of worship of God. In this kind of context, if we learn to grow and cooperate properly with Him, we can believe that the great and good God can do great things through our lives. But remember that this is in the context of a belief that God is great and He can do great things not only in our lives but also in the life of anyone who loves Him, who cooperates with Him, who is properly and healthily submitted to Him. If this is our attitude, then it is in order.

It is also important to note that we serve in the context of submission to God and in whatever role and position that He may assign to us. There should not be self-desire for any particular role or for prominence. God's way of leading us may not be to positions of prominence at all. We need to recognise that the things that we are called to do in service may not necessarily be great in the eyes of others or even in our own eyes. The important thing to remember is that God is great and if we are faithful to Him, He can do great things in our life and that is what we desire.

The Lord Jesus says: "If you abide in Me and I in you, you will produce much fruit." If we properly walk with the Lord and serve Him, our lives will be effective. There will be fruit and this is an assurance from the Lord.

In essence, it is really a question of humble submission to the Lord, serving Him as He sees fit, trusting Him to lead and enable us. The Lord assures us that there will be fruit in our lives if we learn to cooperate fully with Him. God being a great God, He can do many things through the lives of those who are submitted to Him and these are the things that will last for eternity.

### **Arrogance and self-exaltation**

The Lord Jesus illustrates various manifestations of pride in the parable He told in Luke 18:9-14.

#### **Luke 18:9-14**

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In verses 11-12, we see the arrogant attitude of the Pharisee. The Pharisee was boasting and exalting himself. He was self-righteous and proud. Because he fasted twice a week and paid tithes of all that he got, he thought that he was all right and faring well. He contrasted himself with the swindlers and sinners. In his arrogance, he displayed contempt and a lack of respect for others. He did not understand himself accurately and thought of himself more highly than he ought to.

Pride is manifested in arrogance and in the exalting of self. It is often accompanied by a sense of self-righteousness, a failure to understand oneself accurately and a failure to appreciate others properly. Like the Pharisee, we think of ourselves more highly than we ought.

Arrogance in our hearts can lead us into a state of deception. In Jeremiah 49:16, it was prophesied of Edom: "As for the terror of you, the arrogance of your heart has deceived you."

Often when our hearts are proud and arrogant, we are in a state of deception and therefore unable to see things accurately. Not only are we unable to assess ourselves accurately, we are also unable to understand others accurately. It is a situation in which we can be easily deceived and manipulated by the powers of darkness in various ways.

People who are under deception will vigorously and stubbornly maintain their position, claiming that they are right and others are wrong even when objectively it is not so. It is difficult to help such people see their true state unless they are open.

Let us be vigilant to guard our hearts against pride and arrogance because it can easily lead us into a state of deception. When others, especially those who love and care about us, try to point out to us that our attitudes are not good or that certain things that we do are wrong, let us be slow to react. If we find ourselves reacting very fast and in a negative manner, insisting that others are wrong and we are right, that others are having wrong attitudes but not us, then let us pause and prayerfully look to the Lord to see whether this is actually the case.

If we are open to the Lord and to what others have to say, then we can be helped to come to the light, we can repent and put our lives right. But if we reject what others have to say and stubbornly insist that we are in the right, we can end up in serious trouble like King Uzziah.

### **A boastful spirit**

Another manifestation of pride can be found in the common tendency in man to be boastful – "Look at me, I have done it! What a great achievement! What a great man I am!" Such an attitude can be displayed in a raw or crude form; it can also be very subtle. Sometimes we verbalise it and sometimes we do not, but it is within our hearts.

We can see this in King Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 4:30, we see Nebuchadnezzar praising himself that he had achieved the greatness of Babylon by his power.

#### **Daniel 4:30**

"The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'

His pride resulted in the judgement of God. From the status of a mighty king, he was reduced to a state like that of an animal. It is pathetic to see a great king, used to splendour, power and authority, driven away from mankind and behaving like a beast, eating grass. The description of him in verse 33 seems to fit that of someone who has become insane.

**Daniel 4:31-33**

31 "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,

32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'

33 "Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

Daniel explains why Nebuchadnezzar fell to such a sad state. We see in Daniel 5:20 that the reason for his downfall was pride.

**Daniel 5:20**

"But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

In Daniel 4, it is recorded that Nebuchadnezzar had been forewarned of the consequences of his pride. He had a dream and Daniel had interpreted the dream to him. Daniel told him what was about to take place and advised him to break away from his sins by doing what is right, and from his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor (v. 27). Nebuchadnezzar failed to heed the warning and continued in his sins.

We may think that Nebuchadnezzar was foolish in continuing with the folly of his ways even after he had been warned. However for ourselves, let us also take heed of the many warnings by the Lord, whether through the Scriptures, through preaching or through fellowship with the brethren. Let us beware of the consequences of pride in our lives. Let us not continue to be careless and arrogantly carry on in ways that the Lord warns us to steer clear of.

As Christians, we need to be vigilant and not allow feelings and thoughts that we have done or achieved great things to creep into our hearts. We must remember that the evil one is actively looking for opportunities to feed us such thoughts in order to stir up pride in us. Instead of giving glory to God, it is very easy for us to go about doing things with a sense of self-achievement and without being conscious that pride is creeping into our hearts.

We may not realise or openly admit that we desire and enjoy being looked up to by others. The Lord warns us in the Sermon on the Mount to beware of practising our righteousness before men so as to be noticed by them (Matt. 6:1). To avoid this pitfall, it is imperative that we adopt the posture of doing things basically in appreciation of what God has done for us as well as trying all the time to bring glory to the name of God, not just with our lips or outward expressions, but with our whole being.

The Lord Jesus says: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). We need not hide our good works but the glory has to go to the Lord, not just in lip-service but in the whole manner of approach. We need to ask ourselves whether the longing of our hearts is that God be honoured and that His kingdom be built up or whether we harbour a desire for the praises of men, that others may think highly of us, that we have done great things.

### **Sense of personal achievement**

Another aspect that we need to be vigilant of is having a sense of personal achievement. It may not be a question of wanting others to think highly of us but there is a sense within ourselves that "I have done something great". This attitude that "I have done it" is wrong because the focus is on personal achievement instead of giving all glory to God.

For a wholesome understanding of this issue, let us consider whether there is any place for feeling a sense of achievement for having done something well. If someone commends us for having done something well, must we always reply, "Oh no, no, it is something terribly done"? There are some who are inclined to think that to be humble, this should be the proper reply. This is a wrong understanding of humility.

What is the correct approach? If we can objectively assess that the matter is actually something done well and we can see that the Lord has enabled us, our proper response should be one of gladness and rejoicing. When God has enabled us to do something well, it is not right to brush it aside and say it is something badly done. Failing to acknowledge that the Lord has enabled us to do something well is not honouring nor glorifying God. It is something we can thank God for and we do so with a deep sense of humility and gratitude to God.

Irrespective of whether God has enabled us or enabled others to do something well, the immediate response of our hearts should be one of thankfulness to God for His grace. We can rejoice in the fact that something has been done well. Coupled with that, we can express our gratitude to God that in spite of our weaknesses and unworthiness, God sees it fit to let us have a part in it. To recognise this is important because if we do not, then pride can easily creep in.

On the other hand, if it is something not done well, we should ask the Lord to forgive us for any failure on our part and look to Him to help us to do it properly.

At the heart of it all, we acknowledge that we are frail creatures with all the weaknesses of the flesh, yet God in His greatness not only moulds our lives but sees it fit to give us a part in the building of His kingdom. We respond in humility and we cooperate with the Lord, thankful that things that endure for eternity, things of great beauty and preciousness, can take place through our lives. We recognise that we have nothing to boast about and that God's working through us is something very wonderful and it testifies to the greatness and grace of God. There is no proper basis for us to say: "Look at me, see what I have done, see my great achievement." Rather, we marvel at God and we rejoice in Him that He has done great things even through frail creatures like us.

### **Danger of pride when things go well**

Deuteronomy 8:6-14 records a warning that is relevant in our consideration of this subject of pride. The passage warns the Israelites of pride coming into their lives when things go well (v. 14).

#### **Deuteronomy 8:6-14**

6 "Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

7 "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills;

8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;

9 a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

10 "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.

11 "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

12 otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them,

13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies,

14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

During times when things go well, we must be vigilant as there is a danger that we may no longer recognise our need of God. Verse 11 warns, "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God". When we forget the Lord, our heart can easily become proud. When we become proud, we feel self-sufficient and self-confident and attribute all the achievements to ourselves, and fail to give God the glory for what He has done.

The context of the warning in Deuteronomy was the Lord's provisions for the Israelites in the wilderness.

**Deuteronomy 8:16-17**

16 "In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

17 "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.'

God's intention in leading them through many difficulties was to humble them and to help them to see their helplessness and how He had provided for them. It was to do good for them. Otherwise, they could fall into the danger of thinking that their own power and strength had brought them their wealth.

The point that we need to take heed of is this: In the midst of the Lord's blessings and of things going on well, we must be careful not to think that it is the result of our own ability. When our hearts become proud, we forget that it is the Lord who has blessed us and helped us.

Sometimes, the Lord disciplines us and brings us through difficulties and trials to teach us humility. He wants to help us recognise our need of Him, to remember that all good things come from Him and apart from Him, we are helpless. So during times of blessings, when things are going well, there must be proper gratitude from our hearts towards God. It would be wrong for us to think that we are well by our own efforts and there is no longer any need for dependence on God.

Generally, for many of us, we have not reached the state of completely forgetting the goodness of God and showing no gratitude at all. However, we need to be alert especially when things are going well for us as some degree of the sense of self-achievement can creep into our lives slowly and subtly.

Whenever such thoughts about personal achievement come into our minds, we must reject them immediately. If we allow such thoughts to linger, the sense of self-achievement can easily seep into our lives and take root. This will be serious as our lives can then easily degenerate without our realising it. Like King Uzziah, we begin to feel proud and act in ways that are not proper, resulting in our going further and further away from the Lord.

**Concluding remarks**

It is a concern in my heart that we need to beware of the danger of pride with regard to the Lord's work in our lives individually and as a congregation. When we recognise how richly the Lord has blessed us individually and together as a congregation, we must not only be thankful for all that the Lord has done for us, we must also recognise our responsibility and the need to respond in all sincerity and humility. In thankfulness for all that the Lord has done for us, we must work hard and respond to

all the truths that the Lord has revealed to us and to whatever we have come to understand.

We need to ask ourselves this question from time to time: How have I responded to the truths that I have come to understand, to the blessings that I have received from the Lord? Rather than allowing pride to come into our lives, our posture and response should be one of a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility. We need to recognise that whatever the Lord has revealed to us, including things that He wants us to do, the mission He has given to us, He intends us to receive them into our hearts and respond positively to them. Instead of being proud, we ought to be thankful, and know that whatever the Lord gives to us, whether it be talents or truths that He has revealed, His intention is that we be good stewards of these things. Our posture must always be one of gratitude followed by faithful stewardship. We need to ask ourselves constantly: Have we responded adequately to the Lord in view of His goodness, all that He has revealed and the blessings that we have received? As a congregation, have we been faithful stewards, have we responded wholeheartedly and adequately to the Lord for all His blessings and revelations?

[www.godandtruth.com](http://www.godandtruth.com)

---

**Copyright**

The content of this message is protected by Copyright © 2007 Lim Kou. Permission is given to print and reproduce part (where the meaning intended is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all the content, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that there is proper acknowledgement, no changes are made and the content distributed free of charge. Please be prayerful and discreet in distributing or making the content available to others. *This paragraph and that below should be included in any and all content reproduced for distribution.*

**Scripture Quotations**

Scripture quotations unless otherwise stated, are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.