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## **PRIDE – PART 2**

In this message, I would like to continue to consider with you the subject of pride. I will cover two main issues:

- I. Why is pride in our lives so serious and problematic?
- II. What should be the proper response and attitude on our part?

### **I. Why is pride in our lives so serious and problematic?**

Pride is a constant problem in the lives of man. It is an area where the evil one often attacks. You may wonder why pride is highlighted as such a serious sin and why it is a major objective of the evil one to stir up pride within us.

*1. Pride is a very serious problem because it involves inaccurate, inadequate and improper understanding of ourselves, of God and of others. These are fundamental issues of life with far-reaching implications.*

Firstly, pride involves thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. We do not have a proper understanding of ourselves or our true condition. We do not properly appreciate the meaning and implications of our being without hope and that we are helpless apart from God and His grace.

Secondly, we do not properly appreciate and understand God, His greatness and His grace in our hearts and minds. A mental recognition or verbal acknowledgement is insufficient. At times, we may express words like: "Yes, I know God is great and God is gracious"; however there is insufficient appreciation of God and His grace in our hearts.

Thirdly, there is a failure to properly appreciate others. In fact, we may sometimes even despise them.

These three areas of improper and inaccurate understanding, coupled with improper attitudes and wrongful desire for prominence, power, position and recognition, lead to adverse effects on our well-being and that of others. Pride leads to improper attitudes and actions, which hinder our fellowship with God and with others. It also

exposes us to spiritual manipulations and attacks leading to destruction.

We may not be immediately destroyed by pride in our lives. However, if we remain unrepentant and persist in being proud and arrogant, then ultimately we will be destroyed.

*Our well-being has to do with our knowing and rejoicing in our proper position in the context of a healthy relationship with God and with others. Pride hits at the core centre of these areas. Many of the basic problems of man arise from a failure on man's part to know and to rejoice in his proper position and a failure to maintain a proper relationship with God and with his fellowmen.*

Satan fell because he did not rejoice in his proper position. He wanted to exalt himself and lay hold of an exalted position far above what God intended for him.

We also see this in the life of King Uzziah. He went beyond his proper position and did something that was designated only for the priest. Similarly, Eve was tempted in this direction of going beyond her proper position and to reach out for things that God did not intend for her.

*Pride hinders healthy relationship with as well as proper worship of God.*

A proud person does not fully recognise or understand his helplessness, sinful state and unworthiness. He thinks of himself more highly than he ought and does not fully appreciate God's grace nor see that he is unable to overcome sin and live a righteous life apart from God's grace. This frame of mind and attitude of heart hinder deep gratitude to God, healthy relationship with God and proper worship of God.

Ephesians 2:12 tells us how we were without hope before we became children of God and Romans 7:18 tells us that in ourselves, we are weak and helpless to overcome sin or to do anything that is really good.

**Romans 7:18**

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Man often experiences this struggle described in Romans 7:18 because of the weakness of the flesh. We can live an overcoming and fruitful life only by the grace of God, as we abide in Christ and are empowered by the Holy Spirit. The proud man does not properly recognise and appreciate this reality and behaves as if he can accomplish many things in his own strength.

The essence of worship has to do with the proper response of the creature man to

our creator God. It springs forth from our understanding of our true state and knowing how to respond in humility to the great almighty God.

When we do not properly understand our own condition, it also means that we do not properly appreciate God's greatness and grace in our lives. We may utter words like: "Lord, I thank You", but is there true quality of gratitude in our hearts? Do we really appreciate who God is and His grace in our lives?

The Scriptures tells us that pride is detrimental to our relationship with God. James 4:6 tells us that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. If God is opposed to the proud, then those who are proud will not be able to have a close relationship with God.

**James 4:6**

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

The Scriptures also emphasises the importance of humility if we want to draw near to God. Those who are contrite in heart and spirit are the ones who can draw near to God and God will draw near to them.

**Isaiah 57:15**

For thus says the high and exalted One  
Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,  
"I dwell on a high and holy place,  
And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit  
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly  
And to revive the heart of the contrite.

*Pride hinders fellowship with the brethren and promotes strife and division*

When we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to and fail to appreciate others properly, we will have difficulty in having proper relationship with other people. Because of pride, we fail to relate with others in a healthy manner. A person who is proud often cannot perceive the truth accurately because the spirit of arrogance within his heart deceives him.

Pride blinds us to many things. It blinds us to our deficiencies, our failures as well as the merits in other people. When we fail to appreciate others, it also hinders us from learning from them and benefiting from their lives because we think we know better.

The irony of pride is that the person who is proud can show intolerance or a hatred for pride. However, it is often hatred for pride in other people but not in themselves.

When the Lord speaks to them, they may try to rationalise it away or say: “Oh, it is a very minor thing and it does not matter.” It is doubly ironic when what they perceive as pride in others is not true.

Pride often gives rise to improper attitudes and actions. It can lead to despising other people. We saw the example of the Pharisee recorded in Luke 18, how he thought so highly of himself, boasting that he tithed, that he was not like the tax collector or other people. Not realising that his true state was actually very terrible, he despised others.

Proverbs 28:25 tells us that pride stirs up strife.

**Proverbs 28:25**

An arrogant man stirs up strife,  
But he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.

The conduct and ways of a proud person can cause much difficulty in relationships. A proud person is often self-centred; he has selfish ambitions and hungers for power in his heart. Such attitudes, whether in the worldly or Christian context, give rise to inconsiderate behaviour and can be expressed in ugly conduct towards others. Pride promotes strife and division in the body of Christ, which grieves the heart of God. With the evil one taking advantage of the situation, believers may even resort to scheming, deceptive ways and despicable conduct in order to attain their personal desires.

Ephesians 4:1-2 emphasises to us the importance of humility in fellowship.

**Ephesians 4:1-2**

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,  
2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

Paul implores us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, “with all humility and gentleness”. This is linked to “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” in verse 3. The context of chapter 4 is about the building up of the body of Christ in love and fellowship, service unto God and outworking together. Paul emphasises that humility is important for such outworking of fellowship. When we are proud, it will hinder the outworking of church life.

*2. Pride has adverse effects on our being and our spiritual development.*

Pride has adverse effects on our being and our spiritual development because God is

opposed to the proud (James 4:6). Our well-being and spiritual development is dependent on God being pleased with us and on His working in our lives and His helping us learn and grow. Pride impedes God working in our lives and our receptivity to what He has to say to us and teach us.

A proud person is boastful and thinks of himself more highly than he ought. His pride and boastfulness would hinder his receptivity, teachability and perception of truth, which will in turn affect his spiritual development. The adverse effect varies, depending on how proud the person is. Any degree of pride that comes into our lives would always hinder us.

The person who is proud may not be very conscious of his own state or admit that he is proud. It is not unusual for a proud person to deny that he is proud. When boasting about his achievements, he may say or think in his heart, "I am not proud. I have only told you a fraction of my achievements."

John 5:44 tells us that the attitude of wanting recognition from men will hinder us from believing in the truth.

**John 5:44**

"How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?"

This desire for glory, honour and recognition from men generally has to do with the desire to feed our pride. Such desire will hinder us from recognising and believing in the truth. If we are hindered from recognising and receiving the truth, our response to God, worship of God and our growth will be impeded. At the same time, we become more vulnerable to deception and the wiles and attacks of the evil one.

*3. Pride exposes us to manipulations and attacks by the evil one.*

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was tempted by the evil one to desire to be like God. The evil one is continually seeking to tempt us with fleshly desires. If we harbour personal ambitions and fleshly longings for greatness, the evil one will promote and feed such longings and we will find ourselves in a very dangerous position.

*Negative example of Simon*

We considered the case of Simon in the last message. Simon was formerly practising magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria. He was able to draw attention to himself and was claiming to be someone great. He liked this kind of attention and was succeeding in the sense that people were thinking of him as someone great.

**Acts 8:10-11**

10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."

11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

When Simon witnessed how Peter and John (vs. 14-15) prayed for the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit fell upon them, he also wanted similar power.

**Acts 8:18-19**

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."

Why did Simon want such powers? It was not primarily because he was concerned about the welfare of other people and that he wanted them to be blessed by the Lord. Rather, his desire for such authority and power was to draw the attention of people to himself so that people will recognise him as someone great. Thus Peter rebuked him.

**Acts 8:20-23**

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.

22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

Peter told him that his heart was not right and he was in the bondage of iniquity and he needed to repent. People who harbour such desires in their hearts are in a very vulnerable position and the powers of darkness can easily manipulate their lives. There is a need for repentance and the forsaking of such desires.

*Negative example of King Saul*

Although we are not clear as to the degree and the manner in which the evil one had manipulated the life of Simon, the Scriptures records how the powers of darkness manipulated and took advantage of the weakness of King Saul. Pride was a major problem in Saul's life. He failed to repent and the Spirit of the Lord departed from him and an evil spirit manipulated him.

Let us refer to 1 Samuel 15 to see the indications of pride in Saul's life.

**1 Samuel 15:12**

Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal."

Saul set up a monument for himself. Why did he do so? This is an indication of pride in his life. This expression of pride is even more significant as this act took place after the pronouncement of God's judgement on Saul that his kingdom will not endure because he had foolishly disobeyed the Lord by presenting the burnt offering himself instead of waiting for Samuel to do it (1 Sam. 13:11-14). Even after Samuel had pronounced God's judgement, Saul still acted in this way.

**1 Samuel 15:23**

"For rebellion is as the sin of divination,  
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.  
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,  
He has also rejected you from being king."

Samuel restated God's rejection of Saul from being king because he again disobeyed the Lord's specific instruction to "strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has" (v. 3). In verses 27 and 28, it is recorded that as Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of Samuel's robe and it tore.

**1 Samuel 15:27-28**

27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.

28 So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.

After this second pronouncement by Samuel of God's judgement on Saul, he was still preoccupied with being honoured before the elders and the people of Israel:

**1 Samuel 15:30**

Then he said, "I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the Lord your God."

Instead of deep repentance on his part, Saul was still thinking of being honoured before the people.

In 1 Samuel 16:14, it is recorded that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorised him. The phrase “an evil spirit from the Lord terrorised him” is an emphasis from the angle of God’s sovereignty. God is the sovereign ruler of all creation and in the ultimate sense, we know that unless God permits, no evil spirit will be able to operate in the lives of men.

Saul was very seriously manipulated by the evil spirit such that he became very violent.

**1 Samuel 18:10-11**

10 Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul’s hand.

11 Saul hurled the spear for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David escaped from his presence twice.

Because of his failure to repent, the powers of darkness were able to continue to harass and manipulate Saul and his life became uglier and uglier.

What was the context in which Saul did these things? Verse 10 says, “Now it came about on the next day...” Now what was it that happened the previous day? The preceding two verses tell us what took place the day before.

**1 Samuel 18:7-8**

7 The women sang as they played, and said,  
“Saul has slain his thousands,  
And David his ten thousands.”

8 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?”

David was becoming more and more popular in the sight of the people. Saul became very angry because the women were singing praises of David. His pride was hurt. His self-desire for power and authority was threatened, as he wanted to cling on to the kingship.

If God wants us to be in a certain position, it is proper and correct that we faithfully seek to fulfil our part in that position. But if God no longer wants us to be in that position, it will be wrong for us to cling on to it.

We see a very different attitude in David. David knew that the Lord wanted him to be king, and he trusted God to open the way for him. David did not do anything



improper to attain it. In spite of many attempts by Saul to kill him, David did not retaliate or try to take over the kingship from Saul by his own effort, but patiently waited for God's timing and undertaking.

But in the case of Saul, he was very angry and jealous because he heard the people praising David. He felt that his position and authority were being threatened. In such a state, it was very easy for the evil spirits to manipulate him. In verse 10, it is recorded that an evil spirit came mightily upon Saul the next day. From then on, he sought relentlessly to kill David and in the process he destroyed his own life.

*4. Where there is pride in our lives and there is failure to repent and take corrective measures, we will move in the direction of destruction.*

If we refuse to repent, we may not be immediately destroyed, but the direction is degeneration and destruction. Sometimes in serious areas of pride, very serious consequences can take place very rapidly. The life of Saul is an object lesson for us. The Scriptures portrays an unrepentant Saul. He was guilty of terrible wrongdoings, but did not repent. Instead he degenerated, came under the judgement of God and was killed.

We have also in the earlier message looked at the life of Nebuchadnezzar who was proud and God punished him. However, he repented and was restored to kingship. But this was not the case for his son, Belshazzar. Belshazzar was proud and unrepentant and was eventually destroyed.

Daniel pronounced God's judgement on Belshazzar for exalting himself against the Lord and failing to learn from what happened to his father Nebuchadnezzar:

**Daniel 5:20-23**

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.

21 "He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.

22 "Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this,

23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from

them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.

Daniel interpreted the meaning of the inscription on the wall to Belshazzar, telling him that God had pronounced judgement on him. He told him in Dan. 5:26-28:

**Daniel 5:26-28**

26 "This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

27 " 'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

28 " 'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."

Verse 30 tells us:

**Daniel 5:30**

That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

The scriptural teaching is clear: pride destroys us, and the judgement of God will come upon those who are proud.

**Proverbs 16:18**

Pride goes before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

**Jeremiah 50:32**

"The arrogant one will stumble and fall  
With no one to raise him up;  
And I will set fire to his cities  
And it will devour all his environs."

The one who is arrogant or proud will stumble and fall and the judgement of the Lord will come upon him unless he repents and takes corrective measures.

The prime example for us is Satan. The Scriptures records that Satan fell because of pride and that he is destined for destruction in the lake of fire.

**II. Proper response and attitude**

How then should we respond to the Lord and what kind of attitude should we have?

### **Example of King David**

David is an example of one who has good attitude of heart. We will refer to two occasions recorded for us in 1 Chronicles 17 and 1 Chronicles 29.

*David's response to God's appreciation and blessings*

#### **1 Chronicles 17:3-4**

3 It came about the same night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

4 "Go and tell David My servant, 'Thus says the Lord...

God spoke to David through Nathan about what He had done and what He would continue to do for David and Israel.

#### **1 Chronicles 17:7-9**

7 "Now, therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader over My people Israel.

8 "I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a name like the name of the great ones who are in the earth.

9 "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and not be moved again; and the wicked will not waste them anymore as formerly,

In verse 7, the Lord told David how He took him from tending sheep in the pasture to lead Israel. The Lord was with David wherever he went and had helped him to defeat his enemies. The Lord also indicated to David that He would make him great on earth (v. 8). In verse 9, we see God's promise to watch over Israel.

In verses 11-14, God revealed to David what He would do for him in the future:

#### **1 Chronicles 17:11-14**

11 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.

13 "I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you.

14 "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and

his throne shall be established forever.” ’ ’ ”

In my understanding of this passage, there are two parts with regard to the fulfilment of God’s promise to David. The first part was fulfilled by Solomon, the son of David. The second part is fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, whose throne and kingdom will last forever. The Lord highly exalted David. God blessed him during his lifetime and also promised him that the Messiah will be his descendant. This is indeed a great honour for David.

How did David respond to all these? Great things were happening in his life. He was a great king over the land of Israel and the Lord had blessed him greatly. He had done many great things. The following verses record how David responded in a spirit of deep humility:

**1 Chronicles 17:16-19**

16 Then David the king went in and sat before the Lord and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that You have brought me this far?

17 “This was a small thing in Your eyes, O God; but You have spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the standard of a man of high degree, O Lord God.

18 “What more can David still say to You concerning the honor bestowed on Your servant? For You know Your servant.

19 “O Lord, for Your servant’s sake, and according to Your own heart, You have wrought all this greatness, to make known all these great things.

What comes through in David's response is a deep sense of unworthiness. There was no trace of pride of any sort in David’s expression. Rather, his response was, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that You have brought me this far?” (v. 16). It was God who had done it: “You have wrought all this greatness” (v. 19). He was deeply grateful to God and knew that he was undeserving of what God had done for him or what God would do for him in the future.

David was deeply impressed with the greatness of God and the spontaneous overflow of his heart was an expression of worship, praise and gratitude to God for who He is and what He has done:

**1 Chronicles 17:20-22**

20 “O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

21 “And what one nation in the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make You a name by

great and terrible things, in driving out nations from before Your people, whom You redeemed out of Egypt?

22 “For Your people Israel You made Your own people forever, and You, O Lord, became their God.

David recognised that God had not only done mighty things for him but for the people of Israel as well. He did not forget God’s goodness and he saw all these things in the right perspective. He did not draw attention to himself nor exalt himself. The whole focus was on God and what God had done. God was the One who had delivered the people of Israel. God was the One who had blessed him and the nation of Israel. God was the One who had done all the great things.

**1 Chronicles 17:23**

“Now, O Lord, let the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house be established forever, and do as You have spoken.

David trusted God and was confident that all the great things that God had said would come to pass not because he was great but because God had spoken.

**1 Chronicles 17:24**

“Let Your name be established and magnified forever, saying, ‘The Lord of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel; and the house of David Your servant is established before You.’

We read in verse 24 again the focus and attitude of David’s heart. His primary concern was for God’s name – “Let Your name be established and magnified forever.” To him, the important thing was to magnify the name of the Lord.

If we reflect on the life of David, we can see that David had actually accomplished a lot. He was a great king. He defeated many of his enemies and established the kingdom of Israel. It is recorded that he “administered justice and righteousness for all his people” (2 Sam. 8:15). He was also a gifted musician and a great psalmist. But David knew it was all by the Lord’s enabling and there was none of the “I have done it” kind of attitude. There was no sense of pride or boasting in self-accomplishment. There was also no trace of such attitude like: “Oh, it is only proper and fair that God should treat me in this way after all that I have done.” David expressed that he was unworthy and undeserving and it was God who had blessed him richly.

*David’s attitude in giving and service*

We read in 1 Chronicles 29 the attitude and response of David in another context.

This context has to do with providing and offering for the building of the temple. David had been trying his best to provide for the house of God (v. 2) and had challenged the people to consecrate themselves to the Lord for this project (v. 5). In verses 5-9, we see the people rejoicing because they had offered generously and wholeheartedly. King David also rejoiced greatly with them.

The verses that follow reveal the heart of David towards service to God. This is an example to us on the attitude and spirit we should have in serving the Lord and giving to His work.

**1 Chronicles 29:10-14**

10 So David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever.

11 "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.

12 "Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.

13 "Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name.

14 "But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.

David and the people had contributed significantly to the building of the temple. But instead of drawing attention to what they had contributed, David led the people in blessing the Lord; they worshipped and praised Him for His greatness, power, glory and majesty. Instead of claiming credit for what they had done, David affirmed the truth that all things come from God and whatever they were able to give and whatever they had given, they were able to do so because God had first given to them. There was no sense of pride as he gave and served the Lord. In fact, he thanked the Lord for the great privilege that he and his people could offer something to the great almighty God.

*In order that pride may have no place in our lives, it is important for us to recognise this fundamental truth: We are able to give and to serve only as God has given to us and as God has enabled us. We are not able to give anything to the Lord if He has not first given to us. We are also not able to serve the Lord if God has not in the first place enabled us or given us the capability to do so.*

In other words, there is nothing any one of us can boast about because whatever good things or capabilities we have, we have received them from God above, from the Father of lights. Whatever we are able to attain to and to accomplish is by the grace of God.

We should regard it a privilege that God should see it fit for us to participate in and contribute something to His work and eternal kingdom.

### **Example and teachings of Paul**

*What do you have that you did not receive?*

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4 that there is no place for boasting in what we have or in our capabilities. 1 Corinthians 4:7 impresses me deeply in relation to this issue of why there is no place for pride in our lives. If we are deeply convicted of the truth in this verse, and learn how to go through daily situations with greater consciousness of its implications, it will be a very helpful safeguard against pride coming into our lives and the evil one manipulating and attacking us in this area.

#### **1 Corinthians 4:7**

For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

The whole context of 1 Corinthians 4 and the earlier verses has to do with service and stewardship. Paul was warning the Corinthian believers against being arrogant as they compared themselves with one another with regard to the area of service and accomplishments. He puts the truth across clearly: there is no place for pride or boasting because there is nothing we have that we did not receive.

#### **1 Corinthians 4:6**

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

As Paul explained to the Corinthian Christians, if we realise that all we have is from God, including all our capabilities, then we will realise that there is no place for boasting at all. There is only place for rejoicing and praising God for all that He has accomplished in our lives. Even though we are weak, helpless and sinful, in His grace and goodness, God has cleansed us and has seen it fit that we have a part in His work.

*Glory in the Cross and in Christ*

It is clear to Paul that he should never boast in anything pertaining to himself or his accomplishments but only in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Galatians 6:14**

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

The word “boast” here can also be translated “glory” – glory in the Cross. The same idea is expressed in Philippians 3:3, where it is translated as “glory” in Christ.

**Philippians 3:3**

for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

Following this verse, Paul went on to describe how he counts all his accomplishments, his status and position in life as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, he puts no confidence in all these things that belong to the natural man or in his personal accomplishments in the flesh.

**The teaching of the Lord Jesus***We are unworthy slaves*

The Lord Jesus teaches us in Luke 17:10 what ought to be our proper attitude and response. He teaches us that no matter what we may have done or accomplished, the proper attitude is to recognise that we are unworthy slaves, even if we have done all that God has commanded us.

**Luke 17:10**

“So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’ ”

When the Lord blesses us or enables us to do things, it is easy for us to think we have done well and for pride to come into our lives. We saw this in the case of Uzziah. Initially he did right in the sight of the Lord but when the Lord prospered him, he began to feel proud. It is easy for us to become proud too if we are not careful. When the Lord enables us and we begin to accomplish or are able to do various things to contribute to the Lord’s kingdom, it is easy for pride to creep into



our lives and we begin to have the sense that “I have done it, I have accomplished it.”

If we look at the teaching of our Lord Jesus here, it is quite clear that no matter what we have done or what we have accomplished, our attitude should be: “We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.”

The question that I want to pose to you to reflect upon is: Have you done all that the Lord has commanded? Has any of us done all that God requires of us, or desires of us? Even if we have, our attitude should still be that we are only unworthy slaves.

It does not mean that God will treat us as unworthy slaves. If our attitudes are right, and we walk humbly with the Lord, He will draw us into a very deep level of fellowship. The Lord Jesus tells us that He wants to treat us as His friends. But on our part, our attitude must be one of humility, that no matter what we have done, or even when we have done all that God has commanded, we are still unworthy slaves.

It is quite clear that none of us has done everything God has commanded or desired of our lives. If this is so, how can we still feel proud? Instead of being proud, we should be humble and come before the Lord, on the one hand thanking Him for His grace and enabling, rejoicing in whatever the Lord has done in and through our lives, and on the other hand expressing to Him that we are sorry for all the failures in our lives and for areas where we have not done our best. Not stopping at that, we press on, calling upon the Lord to help us to be more diligent and to know how to strive according to His power, which mightily works within us.

Instead of patting ourselves on the back and saying: “What great things I have done”, we should from time to time reflect on our lives and, while rejoicing in whatever the Lord has enabled us, also realise that we are unworthy slaves. Where we have failed or have not done our best, we should feel sorry. It is important to maintain the sense of unworthiness to serve and to receive all the blessings. We acknowledge that it is a privilege for us to labour together with Him and that God in His grace and goodness has given us a part to fulfil in His kingdom.

### **Having sound judgement of ourselves**

*We are not useless*

Adopting the posture of being unworthy slaves does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and feel that we are useless. Although man is helpless in himself, he is useful in the Lord's work if he abides in Christ and walks with God.

Romans 12:3 is a helpful verse to reflect upon so that we will have a wholesome

approach to the subject of pride.

**Romans 12:3**

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

This verse tells us that we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. One aspect of pride involves thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. But this verse also tells us that we should “think so as to have sound judgment”. It means that we should learn to have an accurate understanding of ourselves. We should not think that the right attitude is to have a low view of man, and to think of ourselves as lower than the objective reality. A humble spirit does not mean we think of ourselves as useless.

We are not useless as God has allotted or given to each a measure of faith. Paul tells us that we are members of the body of Christ. We have gifts (Rom. 12:6) and we have a place in the body of Christ. Each one of us can be useful and we should seek to serve the Lord as He leads and enables us. We must not be proud and think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but at the same time we must realise that we can be useful as we walk with God because He will enable us to bear good fruit. All these are in the context of consecrating our lives unto the Lord as a living sacrifice and being transformed and renewed in our minds (Rom. 12:1-2). In this context of transformation, renewal and consecration, we seek to walk humbly with the Lord and to serve Him.

This is the attitude we should adopt as we seek to contribute to God’s kingdom. We recognise that we have a place in the body of Christ and we can contribute to the building of God’s kingdom.

*By the grace of God I am what I am*

As we seek to contribute, we should constantly recognise that it is all by the grace of God.

**1 Corinthians 15:10**

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

It is always by the grace of God that we are able to attain to anything. On the other hand, we need to labour and cooperate with God. But even as we labour, we still

recognise that it is not just a question of “I labour”. As Paul says, “Yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” It is labouring by God’s grace.

### **Concluding remarks**

We see that pride can be very destructive in our lives. It hinders our relationship with God and with other people. It has adverse effects on our lives as well as on the lives of others. Pride will destroy us unless we repent and take corrective measures.

As we reflect on the example of David, we see clearly what ought to be the proper response and attitude. From the Scriptures, we learn that there is absolutely no place for pride or arrogance in our lives. There should not be any trace of pride or arrogance because whatever we have, including our capabilities, we have received from the Lord. Whatever we are able to accomplish is by God’s grace.

Rather, we should rejoice and worship God, and thank and praise Him for all that He has seen fit to do in our lives. Even in the context of what we are able to accomplish and do, we should still have the attitude that we are unworthy slaves, even if we have accomplished all that God has commanded us. In reality, we know that we have not and so there should be no place whatsoever for any trace of pride or arrogance in our lives.

### *Countering the attacks of the evil one*

If we are not careful in this area, various aspects of our lives can begin to go wrong. The evil one will try whenever he can to attack us in this area of pride. To counter the attacks by the evil one in our thought life in the direction of pride, there are two steps that we can take.

Whenever we recognise that the evil one is trying to plant thoughts in our minds in the direction of pride, whether obvious or subtle, the first step is to straightaway reject firmly all such thoughts in the name of Jesus our Lord. The second step is to counter all such thoughts with the truth. We need to see clearly and affirm categorically that there is no place at all for pride in our lives. We acknowledge that we are unworthy slaves, that we are weak and helpless in ourselves, and that it is all by God’s grace that He has enabled us to do anything useful. It is a great privilege to contribute something to the Lord’s work and there is absolutely no place for pride. At the same time, we also meditate on the greatness and the grace of God and our own unworthiness, weaknesses and helplessness.

At times taking the first step of rejecting the negative thoughts may not be effective as these thoughts may keep coming. This may be due to the fact that our understanding and conviction of the truth on this subject is not strong and clear and

we may be subtly affected by the thoughts which give rise to a sense of self-importance and accomplishment. When we complement the first step with the second step in a decisive stand and affirmation of the truth, we can effectively counter the attacks of the evil one.

Let us praise God and worship Him and thank Him for all that He has done for us, for His provisions and blessings. Let us ask the Lord to examine our lives to see whether we have harboured unhealthy longings or personal ambitions for positions or anything in the direction of pride. We should confess any area of failures and take corrective measures. At the same time, we can rejoice wherever the Lord has enabled us.

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