

Living By Faith: Human Pride

Pride and Humility Contrasted

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We learned in the previous sermon in this series that there are two things the Bible is clear about. The first is that God the Father, who created all things through Jesus Christ, is sovereign over all; and His sovereignty reaches into every nook and cranny of His creation. Jesus Christ is very often shown as *equal* with God and is to be given the same respect and honor. His word is to be given the same dignity as if it came directly from the Father's mouth. He Himself though said, "The Father and I are one," but He also clearly stated that "the Father is greater than I." This is easily understood.

They are one in that they are in perfect agreement in regard to the purpose they are accomplishing, and to the plan in terms in how that purpose is to be accomplished; thus they work in perfect harmony as if they were one being. But He still looks up to the Father. He said, "I always do what pleases the Father."

The second item is that the Bible is exceptionally clear in that the angels and mankind are responsible to, answerable to, and accountable to both of them. We must come to know them and their purpose, and voluntarily submit to their authority and creative activity in our lives.

We are going to begin in Romans chapter 8, verse 7. It is a verse we all know by heart. This verse has very much to do with the beginning half of this sermon. I am going to be giving you more scriptures than I normally do, and I think I am going to be doing less expounding on each of these scriptures than I normally do, but I want you to especially pay attention to what the verse is saying in relation to the subject, and to understand that it is perfectly applicable to the subject, therefore follows the reasoning involved here.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Once we are called, and They have revealed Themselves and some of Their purpose to us, this verse very succinctly describes a major impediment to our submitting to Them. Remember, I just said angels and man have to submit to those two God-Beings. That is our responsibility. So this verse very succinctly describes the major impediment to our submitting to Them. This resisting influence from within each of us is a major barrier to perfect deference and compliance to Them.

There is of course Satan and the world influencing us, but the major impediment to our responsibly submitting is what is already part of our character even as we are being converted. It was already there. Carnality is what we quickly revert to when confronted with something we do not want to do.

Carnality is complex, and it is made up of many elements, but there is a specific element in our carnality that *drives* our resistance.

Solomon states in Ecclesiastes 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Vanity implies something that is useless—as useless as a vapor rising from a pot of boiling water; something of little or no value. That word "all" in Solomon's statement includes us. We are vanity. We are nothing. If you take that word "nothing" exactly as it means, we are nothing more than steam that is rising off a pot of boiling

water. There it *is*. It is gone. We are not worth very much, are we? And yet this steam, this mere breath, resists the Great God of heaven and earth. Nothing versus *everything!* Who can win *that* battle? It is laughable.

I want you to go now to Psalm 39, because David had something to say, and he caught the essence of our value before God.

Psalm 39:5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths [That is all we are compared to the length of God's life; just a handbreadth, and we are gone.], and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Selah.

And then after those verses, "Selah." David says, "Think about that awhile." At man's best state he is but a breath. Modern translations translate that word "vapor" as "breath." How long, brethren, does a breath last? If we do not hold it, it is gone. Not much value there, is there?

David spoke again in Psalm 62.

Psalm 62:9 Surely men of low degree are a vapor, men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor.

Lighter than vapor. Such an illustration! You cannot possibly weigh a bit of steam rising off a boiling pot. It will not last long enough to even do anything, and David said that we are even *lighter* than that.

Brethren, these are pretty blunt statements, showing that unless something is done to change the value of what we in reality are, what good reason is there for God to work with us?

Every once in a while John Reid calls me, and he will say to me, "I've been thinking again," and then say, "Why in the world would God even want to have anything to do with us?"

Jeremiah 17:9 says our heart in the midst of this vapor is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; not merely wicked, brethren, but *desperately* wicked. Do you know what "desperately" means? It means that our heart is without care for danger. Think about this. How often do we think that "the wages of sin is death" before we sin without care for danger? It also means recklessly, badly, extremely, furiously, impetuously. What can stop it? It is beating away in there, and it wants to get out and do something carnal.

Jesus adds insult to this injury by confirming in Matthew 15 that our heart is the place from which our evil resistance to God is generated. But at one and the same time, the heart is also the same place that generates the evidence to us when our thoughts believe that we really are something pretty good. What a contrast!—both being generated from the same place. But brethren, that is quite an effective combination toward producing sin, and this is because our heart produces our self-esteem right to the end of our life, and its ideas and actions are focused on self-satisfaction, and to meet *that* need we will sin as a way of life because the one impulse pushes the other toward sin.

We have not gotten to the bottom of this yet, because the next question we have to answer is, "What is it in us—in this heart of ours—that generates these drives?"

Let us begin with this section of the sermon in Ezekiel 28:17 where something significant to this subject appears. God is speaking, and He is speaking to someone—a third party.

Ezekiel 28:17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.

What we are looking at here is the original source of the self-centered influence in mankind’s heart. Here is where sin began—way in the distant past. It is from this being talked to here by God that sin spread to other angels, and from them to mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve; and from them onto all of the rest of mankind. Sin began with Satan, and it began whenever his heart was lifted up. Do you see that word “lifted up” in verse 17? In the margin of my Bible it says “became proud.” It was not originally proud, but it *became* that way, lifted up by his beauty. He really enjoyed that beauty I am sure, but it proved to be a trap for him because he could not control the urge to admire himself.

Let us go now to the book of Job where we can further identify who this being is. We know already that it is Satan, but there is another descriptor that is given in Job 41. We will read the first two verses so that we can get the sense of what the chapter is about. Job is asked this question of God.

Job 41:1-2 “Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, or snare his tongue with a line which you lower? Can you put a reed through his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?”

Thus begins a long description of Leviathan, and you begin to get the feel right away that God is describing a being, an animal—whatever you might want to associate it with—as being someone extremely powerful that drives fear into the heart of mankind, and so powerful that he cannot be harnessed by anybody or anything.

Job 41:33 On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear.

We always wonder how in the world could he face up to God knowing who God is. He does not have any fear.

Job 41:34 He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride.”

Now we are beginning to advance away from Satan to his children. You know who or how children is used in the Bible. It is used to indicate those who have characteristics of a family, or characteristics of another person with whom they are associating.

Speaking of Leviathan, in these verses God portrays this being clearly representing a being of awesome power and influence over mankind. God’s description of Leviathan must not be misunderstood by focusing merely on looks, but rather his looks representing his powerful influence.

Now Leviathan strikes fear into men. What for? To bring them into submission and therefore control them. He is the king of pride, and he rules the children of pride—that is, the children of pride are those who have the same characteristics in them that the father, or the king of pride has. The children of pride are the overwhelming masses of unconverted people not submissive to God, and they—their king and father—are the enemies of God. Jesus made this very clear in John 8 when He told the Jews, “You are of your father the Devil.” Jesus was pretty bold there calling the Jews that, and they eventually took up rocks.

I have drawn you to something here because I want to lay this next scripture on you which is in the book of Luke. Jesus is the one who said it, and it has quite a bit of weighty meaning to it in regard to you and me. Turn to Luke 14. I will read verse 25 so you can begin to get the feel of what the other verses say. Verse 26 is heavy, but verse 27 is the one I want to concentrate on here.

Luke 14:25-27 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

What is the cross we all bear? I am describing it to you, brethren. For the rest of our lives, after baptism, after receiving God’s Holy Spirit, we still have to bear up with this carnal mind that we carry about with us everywhere we go. Every minute of every day it is there. Jesus said we have to bear it. It is part of the price of responsibility that we have toward God.

God knew all this before He embarked on this purpose that He is working out, and between what God asked of us and our own willingness to submit to whatever it is He requires of us, He wants us to know He is laying down our responsibility to enter into the covenant with Him, that we are going to have to carry that carnal mind with us all the time. But be of good cheer, it can be overcome. It is not impossible.

So the cross we bear is our desperately wicked heart with its deeply ingrained baggage of self-centered anti-God habits of thinking and conduct. At the base of this stirring mass of baggage is pride. Pride separated Satan from God, his Creator. It is a powerful influence and it continues on in us, motivating us away from perfect compliance to the Father and the Son. It is borne about by us at all times, and without really stopping to evaluate why, we are proud of what God described as nothingness, a vapor.

It is pride that resists the sovereign Almighty God and greatly hinders us from fulfilling our responsibility to submit. What is this subtle, yet powerful influence? Most commentators, from their studies into the Bible, believe that pride is the father of all other sins. I think there is good reason to proclaim that as a truth.

The Hebrew language, the Greek language, and English language share the same sense of the same basic meaning of the word. In that sense, according to five resources that I researched into, it means “to be lifted up.” We just read that in Ezekiel 28:17. To be lifted up is to have an undue sense of one’s importance or superiority.

Pride motivates us to exaggerate the value of our thoughts. The emphasis there is on the word “our.” In some cases, depending on context, we could substitute “me” or “my” or “mine.” Pride causes us to elevate our opinions and the fulfillment of what we perceive as *our* needs as higher and more important than even God’s, and of course decidedly higher than fellowman.

Now to be even-handed, the Bible shows that there is also a narrow, positive application of the word, and thus depending upon the context, it is capable of being translated as “dignity” and “glory.”

Proverbs 16:31 The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, . . .

Glory looks like a good word, but it can also be translated “pride.” Here it is translated as glory. Now God says He will allow that. If we read the second line, though, it puts a little bit of a damper on that.

Proverbs 16:31 . . . if it is found in the way of righteousness.

That makes the field for glorying in ourselves a bit narrower than it otherwise would be. This verse is some small insight that there is a natural pride God gives His approval to, but He qualifies it as we have seen—“if it is found in the way of righteousness,” because that makes it considerably narrower. But the overwhelming number of usages of the Hebrew and Greek words translated as “pride,” or its application in the relationship between God and man, are negative and damning.

There are 16 Hebrew words, and 4 Greek words translated either as “pride” or as one of its many synonyms. A synonym may be like this: arrogant, lifted up, presumptuous, loftiness, proud, proudly, exalted, overbearing, condescending, haughty, superior, disdainful, scornful, boasting, self-esteem, and contemptuous.

All of these synonyms do not appear in the KJV or the NKJV, but they are scattered through various modern translations and used depending upon the context, because pride carries with it not only a lofty self-centeredness, but there is something else too, and that is a lively competitiveness against others that easily becomes a lustful, destroying enmity. It is highly critical, envious, impatient, and effortlessly stirred to anger, possessiveness, and being suspiciously on guard against those perceived of as having taken advantage of us. All of these characteristics are part and parcel of Satan’s spirit, which permeates this world that we live in. Once you begin to see this, there is no reason to misunderstand why there is war.

We are going to go to Isaiah, chapter 2, and we are going to read quite a number of scriptures there, beginning in 6. The speaker is God. He is speaking to Judah actually. By this time Israel had gone into captivity. He is speaking to the Jews and Benjamites who remained in Judah.

Isaiah 2:6 For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways; . . .

This means that they had been invaded by foreign thoughts and ways. You can see this happening left and right. Now our judges are calling upon foreign laws by which to judge cases which should be judged by *American* law. That is the kind of thing He is talking about. American law from the Constitution at least in many cases has a basis somewhere in the Scriptures, but what is the basis of *their* judgment and *their* law?

Isaiah 2:6-22 . . . because they are filled with eastern ways; they are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners. [Talking about the leadership in our nation.] Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots [Boy, how many automobiles do we have on the road?]. Their land is also full of idols; [Churches on every corner practically.] They worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. People bow down, and each man humbles himself; therefore do not forgive them. Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks [the pride] of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud

and lofty, upon everything lifted up [another form of pride]—and it shall be brought low—upon all the cedars of Lebanon [a symbol of beauty] that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan [A symbol of strength.]; upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; upon every high tower [Military defenses.], and upon every fortified wall [A symbol of power and defense.]; upon all the ships of Tarshish [A symbol of commerce.], and upon all the beautiful sloops. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, but the idols He shall utterly abolish. They [the proud] shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold which they made, each for himself to worship, to the moles and bats [because now they are going to be worthless.], to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty when He arises to shake the earth mightily. Sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for of what account is he?

He finishes that long exclamatory outburst against the pride of Israel, and what that pride has produced, and He says, “Why did you rely on these people? Why are you confident in them?”

Salvation is from God, not from this nation. Our leadership is so messed up, it is incredible.

Do you understand what God is doing in this chapter? He is showing in His own unique and picturesque way that pride emanating from within man, driving man’s conduct, is the basis and foundation of all sin. He just covered about every aspect there: manufacturing, commerce, military power, religion.

We get a small sense of this in the original sin of Adam and Eve when Satan held up to them the promise, “You shall be like God, knowing good and evil.” They would have control, and they would understand things. That helped motivate them to become greater than what God the Creator had assigned to them. After all, they deserved it, did they not? That is what pride does. It makes us feel we deserve more and better, because we are worth it. “Look who I am!”

We find in Genesis 2:31, that when God saw everything that He had made, He saw it was very good. Pride is *not* very good, as we just saw in this chapter.

Let us go to Isaiah 14:13-15. This is another look at Satan, this time from Isaiah’s point of view. We looked at Ezekiel the last time.

Isaiah 14:13 For you have said in your heart: . . .

Satan’s life does not depend on a physical heart beating away, but we are seeing here the center of our thinking. Our thoughts are generated in our heart, even as Satan’s, who did not have a physical heart.

Isaiah 14:13-15 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

What we see here is when Satan originally uttered that statement, “I will be like the Most High,” we see an echo of this in what he said to Adam and Eve: “You shall be like God.” He was offering to elevate them above what God had assigned them to be. So the evil pride of which the Bible speaks was not created within man. Pride is not very good. Pride entered into their thinking in Satan’s presence, with the help of his enticement, and so he corrupted them with what had corrupted him—his lofty feelings of superiority. In this case it was because of his beauty. It deceived him into wanting even greater splendor. After all, he deserved it, did he not?

Pride is capable of producing many things. We are going to look at some of them. We saw some of those things in terms of community activities and business, and so forth, but I want you to go to Daniel, chapter 5. This involves the *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* writing that appeared on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast. The king here is Belshazzar. In verse 18 God is explaining things to Belshazzar, and it begins all the way back to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was actually Belshazzar’s grandfather.

Daniel 5:18-21 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when **his heart was lifted up**, and **his spirit was hardened in pride**, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. [emphasis ours]

I do not know how it happened. Some miraculous occurrence. Here he was, behaving like a beast, apparently eating like a beast, walking around like a beast, but he was able to think. That would be pretty distressing to one’s thoughts about himself, would it not, especially since this one had been on the throne. And then Nebuchadnezzar, like the prodigal son, came to himself. He began to see things in their right position. Daniel related this to Belshazzar, and notice what followed.

Daniel 5:22-24 “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart [Nebuchadnezzar did that], although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

Do you see this example? Do you see that pride has the power to create in man evil ambition, persuading him to rise above what he now is to something greater, to become something that he thinks he deserves? But what is so interesting here is that this kind of thinking even occurs to kings who seemingly have everything. It is never enough! That is incredible! Pride is insatiable. We wonder why these tremendously wealthy men just cannot stop. Their pride is driving them always to more, to more, to bigger, to better, to greater power, to greater grandeur, and on and on. Brethren, we have to understand how pride works if we are going to stop it from keeping us from growing.

From here we are going to go back to the New Testament again, to I John 2. In verse 15 we are warned not to love the world.

I John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

That is a warning to us from the apostle John that the budding kernel of pride leads from one sin to other sins in order to accomplish one's ambition in the world—in *Satan's* world. But there is more to come. All kinds of things. No good things at all can be produced from this evil ambition that pride works in and through. Another is given here in Luke 18:11-12. This is one of the more obvious ones, but it is important.

Luke 18:11-12 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

Pride leads one to condescending self-righteousness, and from there to self-centered abuse in the use of others. That is a mean one, especially in personal relationships.

Go now to Jeremiah 49. This prophecy is made against Edom. Remember Edom? You might say distant cousins of the Israelitish people. They had a national characteristic, and there was probably a personal one as well. It says here in verse 16:

Jeremiah 49:16 Your fierceness has deceived you, the pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill! Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there," says the LORD.

One of pride's most destructive fruit is self-deception—a blindness of one's own spiritual condition. Do you know what it does? It slowly but surely begins to give birth to a sense of infallibility: "I can't possibly be wrong." That is what God is saying to these people here—the Edomites. I tell you, brethren, they do not have much of a future before them if we understand some of the prophecies that are in the Bible about Edom. You can see it here that in them was developing a sense of infallibility, that they could not possibly be wrong.

Let us go to our fellow Israelites in Hosea 7 as we continue to unfold what characteristics pride produces. In verse 8, the first word "Ephraim" stands for all ten of the Northern Tribes. Ephraim was the leading tribe amongst those ten, and so God addresses them all by using the term "Ephraim." It is also possible that it is a double-edged sword there. He not only means all of Israel, He especially means Ephraim, the one nation, Joseph's son and Manasseh's brother.

Hosea 7:8 "Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned.

Do you know what He is describing there? Have you ever seen a pancake cooking in a skillet? I know you have. What happens to it? The whole top of it becomes filled with hot air, and it bubbles out. God is saying there, "Ephraim, you are full of hot air. You're pretty proud of yourself, but you're full of hot air." He is a cake unturned.

Hosea 7:9-10 Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it. [He is blind to his circumstances, blind to his spiritual condition before God.] And the pride of Israel testifies to his face,

God says, “Ephraim, it's written all over your face.” We can look at people, and say, “Boy! That person looks proud, doesn't he?” Well, God is saying it, and it is true. He is saying directly to the Israelitish people, “It's written all over your face,” just like in Jeremiah He tells the Israelites, “You have a whore's forehead.”

Hosea 7:10-12 But they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek Him for all this. “Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. Wherever they go, I will spread My net on them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard.

What this does is it helps define and clarify the self-deception. This is so clear. That is what He is talking about. Pride has deceived the Israelitish people into thinking that they are really *it* among the nations of the world. God is saying that the signs are everywhere for all to see, but the proud person or nation is oblivious to them.

We are not done yet describing what pride produces, and why it is so resistant to God.

Proverbs 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

That is the way the Ephraimites are. They are wise in their own eyes, and it is foolish. And so pride keeps the proud one from real progress—the kind of progress I might say that would please God.

Now back to Jeremiah again, in chapter 43. This is happening here as the Israelites are being driven out of their land, and they are trying to make it to Egypt to escape from the Assyrian king who is coming down on them. Now God sent a message to Jeremiah: “Pass this on to My people,” and here is part of the message:

Jeremiah 43:2 . . . that Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, “You speak falsely! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to dwell there.’”

What is this telling us? It is telling us that pride's blinding power motivates us to reject God's Word either given through His servants or through His Book. Pride is enmity against God.

Now back to the book of Proverbs again.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction . . .

It means that pride *precedes* destruction. It means that a proud person is on the road to destruction even though he may be blind to the direction he is going in, even though he is blind to the fact that it is pride that is influencing him to go that way in his life. So what the person is doing is following the path pride is leading him on.

Proverbs 16:18 . . . and a haughty spirit before a fall.

So there we are. The inevitable result occurs unless it is somehow, by God's mercy, seen and repented of before the person is destroyed.

We can begin to see here that people of pride may get away with it for a very long period of time—maybe their entire life—but eventually, brethren, they are going to have to pay the piper.

We are going to go to Psalm 73, and we are going to give this subject at least a little bit of a summary.

Psalm 73:1-3 Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

We can understand that people of pride can be very prosperous—*tremendously* prosperous and secure in their efforts, and have a great deal of power and rule over many people, like Nebuchadnezzar who had the power of life and death in his hand; and yet there was pride drawing within him, and what he already had was not enough for that pride to be satisfied. Look how Asaph describes it.

Psalm 73:4-6 For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; . . .

Why do people wear necklaces? It is ornamentation. That is what it is. He is saying that the wicked are ornamented. They are proud of their pride. That is how deceived they are that pride is driving them. But it produces more.

Psalm 73:6-9 . . . violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.

We can make an association here that is made by the psalmist, and that is this. What the psalmist is doing is showing that pride and wickedness fit together hand-in-glove. In fact, as I mentioned, God describes pride as a wicked ornament. God is saying that the wicked are always proud. They are giving vent to the pride within them. That is why, and they are always led into wickedness by their pride. They scoff at God's Word, and they speak against God, and they gossip against fellowman.

Now there is a summary to what we see on the outside of a person, his attitude and conduct; however, what is motivating from the inside is pride, and so Psalm 73 makes very clear that pride identifies the wicked. They always are associated together.

The proud offend against God by self-exaltation. He offends others by haughty preoccupation with himself which leads him to rudeness, impatience with them, gossips about them, and all the while ignoring God's instruction. All of this, brethren, is based upon a delusion of grandeur, that if allowed can lead to what we see in the book of Obadiah. Remember, I told you before about Edom from the book of Obadiah.

Obadiah 1:1-4 Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, “Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle”): “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’ Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” says the LORD.

If you continue on reading here, it looks very much as though Edom is going to be obliterated from the face of the earth, never to exist again. Pride is their downfall, and they are blind to it.

II Corinthians 5:9-10 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

This has to be our guide regardless of where we are, regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in. It is good to remember that there always is in us a measure of resistance against God, and at the foundation of this resistance is pride—pride that came into us as a result of contact with Satan the Devil and/or his world. Most likely, just this world.

It comes into us and becomes a part of us at a time when we are most vulnerable to it, and that cannot be long after birth, while we are still a baby. Some of that resistance to God to us as parents actually begins to show up in the relationship of a child to the parent. To us, though, who are now children of God, we have been given the opportunity to know this. To make the proper use of it we have to understand that this is a reality that pride is always with us.

The world is saturated with it, and it is driving much of the activity in this world. People want to accumulate, nations want to accumulate power, more power, more influence, greater, bigger, better, stronger, faster, whatever it is. Therefore we make it our aim, (Paul says) whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him like Jesus was.

Jesus said, “I always do what pleases Him.” He meant that. “I *always* do what pleases Him.” He *always* submitted to the Father under every circumstance for—(and here is the reason)—we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Everybody must be vetted and passed upon, and we are going through that vetting process now, and God in His mercy is not writing us off; rather He is helping to isolate to us the things that need to be worked on so that we can be ready for the Kingdom of God, and then by His grace He will pass on us, and on we go.

But now the vetting is underway, and we are being evaluated. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” We are accountable to the Creator for our conduct, and we know that standing between us and God is an internally-generated pride that greatly hinders our desire to please Him by submitting.

Understanding that God is calling us, understanding His granting repentance to us and providing us with His Spirit, has given us an edge. It has given us the wherewithal, the power to meet our responsibility to Him.

Now what is the solution? The solution, brethren, is to exercise humility before the Holy One of Israel. There is a major difference between pride and humility. Because of our exposure to Satan and the world, pride is within us almost from birth. Humility is most definitely *not* that way. Spiritual humility is most definitely a developed characteristic because of contact with God and our choosing to be that way. It must be chosen. That is the subject we will go into the next time, God willing, as we continue this series on what makes it possible for us to really live by faith.

Number one: We absolutely must hold in our mind the sovereignty of God—that He is great beyond our ability to think, and He is great and supreme over everything in His creation, including the characteristics that we so greatly admire. He is supreme in love. He is supreme in kindness. He is supreme in mercy, and these are the characteristics He wants to put in us. That is the beginning.

The second is: “How can pride be nullified?” It is through humility, and God makes that humility possible—that we, like Jesus, can be pleasing to God all the time. We will go into that the next time.