

From Pride To Humility

Spiritually Wealthy and Poor

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Given 03-Jan-98; Sermon #320

When we look back in history and consider what many of God's people have had to go through, we feel thankful that we are living at this time. We think of the Inquisition and the oppression described in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*—the tremendous persecution and suffering that had to be faced—and we wondered what it had to be like to live in that time, in that much danger.

And yet, as I was reminded by a close friend the other day, we, the people of God, are living in the most dangerous time ever, and we do not even realize it. We might see possible danger coming from atomic warfare, poison gases, from diseases such as anthrax and Ebola, or some other exotic plague. We may feel danger maybe coming from a collapsed economy, a famine, or from the New World Order that so many are focused on, with the coming of the Beast power. But the danger that I am talking about is an *eternal* danger. It is a far greater danger than any of those. And a great danger, as I was reminded, is that we are living in the Laodicean era.

Revelation 3:14-19 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God [which is Jesus Christ, the firstborn of many brethren.]: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth. [God is really not pleased with what He sees.] Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

So God says there is a problem here. Now the question is, why were they not hot nor cold? It is because they were rich and increased with goods, and they had need of nothing. That is what they felt.

Living in the Laodicean era produces as a by-product an attitude that God hates. He *really* hates it. It is an attitude that if it is not repented of will keep us out of the Kingdom. It is an attitude that God will not tolerate, and that attitude is the attitude of "self pride." This attitude of pride, it does not matter whether you are rich or whether you are poor, can affect you.

Brethren, we live in a nation that is full of pride. It has been said that the principal forces of our age are anti-authoritarian. We live in an age that does not want any authority over it, and I think we all realize that this just does not effect the population of our country, it effects us, the people of God, as well. In short, down deep we do not want anyone telling us what to do or how to live. With all the wealth and power in this nation, we feel we are justified in our attitude, because we are truly rich and increased with goods, even if some are increased more than others.

America is the most powerful nation on earth. We have the strongest economy and the most powerful military in the world. We have wonderful technology, great wealth per capita, a good standard of living. With all of our abilities and pride in ourselves, we subconsciously feel *self*-sufficient, and feel

we no longer have a need for God. It is in this attitude that the Laodicean wants to worship God, and it is in this attitude that we can want to do the same thing if we are not very careful.

Let us turn to Isaiah 66 and look at a people who wanted to worship God. These people had the same attitude as we are talking about here. I do not think I ever really understood this scripture before until I got into this sermon.

Isaiah 66:1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? [There is a little bit of sarcasm in that.] And where is the place of My rest?"

So God is saying that heaven is His throne, and no house that you could possibly build could be representative of His greatness. It could not be grand enough. It could not be splendid enough. It could not be dazzling enough to house Him. Then to add insult to injury, He said "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is where I put My feet." This is what He is trying to get across.

What was the setting that prompted God to ask this question? There are two schools of thought concerning this time period. One is that this is the time period of Israel returning from Babylon and trying to rebuild the Temple. The other consideration is that this people may be a group that chose to stay in Chaldea and erect the Temple there. That is not important either way.

What is important is that in either case their desire to rebuild the Temple to worship God was an affront to God, because they were arrogant, self-willed, and filled with pride. You see, they chose their own ways of doing things, not God's ways. Their ways were far from God, and their true pleasure was not in the worship of God, but in doing things as they felt they wanted to do them and do what was right in their own eyes. They let down, they compromised with God's law. They did not care for God, and therefore God wanted no temple built by them or any sacrifices from them. This was the setting for that particular scripture.

They had the attitude in Jeremiah 7. That attitude was, "The temple, the temple." "If we have the Temple, we're all right." But God was saying, "Get your act together. Start to treat each other correctly, and quit relying on the Temple. The Temple isn't the important part. The important part is that it is your heart that needs changing. You're stuck in your old ways and you won't listen to Me."

In Isaiah 66, they were going to approach God with sacrificing with great formality and great reliance on external services, but their sacrifices had degenerated to forms, and not being from the heart. Its proud and hypocritical attitude was an abomination to God, and correction was going to have to be administered. They felt because of their return from captivity that they were now righteous, and they were going to be great in the external services, but they had degenerated to form, and it was terrible. The cold hard fact that God was trying to get across to them was that with their pride-filled attitude they were an abomination in God's sight, and they could not build the Temple.

Now Isaiah 66:1 is responding to this. In a sense He is saying, that in their present state, they were not worthy to build a place to Him.

Isaiah 66:2 "For all those things has My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

I do not know what is the most valuable verse in the Bible, but I will tell you, that one has got to be close. It really does. So God was saying here, "For all those things has My hand made. I founded for Myself a far more magnificent and appropriate Temple than you can build. I have formed the heavens for My dwelling place, and I don't need a dwelling place constructed by the hand of a man." But He said, "To this man will I look . . ." and this is interesting. He said, "I prefer a *humble* heart—a humble and a contrite heart to the most magnificent earthly temple that could ever be built." This is an attitude that is opposed to the spirit that is proud, self-willed, haughty, self-confident, and self-righteous. It is an attitude that *trembles* at God's Word, and it is a heart that loves and wants to obey God with every fiber of its being.

A commentary made a comment as to what was taking place here, and I thought it was quite good. It said that they were offering sacrifices regarded as lifeless works of men, spiritually dead. Because of their attitude, everything they were offering was useless. It was no good. This is what the Laodicean attitude produces today. It is the very same thing. They, in their pride and their haughty attitude, had forgotten the true nature of sacrificing. It was to be much more than an external show. They had forgotten to come before God with a repentant, humble heart, obedient to God's Word. They were proud, they were haughty, they were self-righteous, and they did not tremble at God's Word at all.

Now this lesson applied to the church today would picture us coming to God on the Sabbath in "show," and not in substance. We would be living all week long, doing our things our own way, and putting on a "Sabbath face," as we used to hear years ago, when we come to church on Saturday. But self-pride is the most dangerous quality that we can possess, and I think that we will be able to see that here shortly. It will fight to defend itself against husband, wife, children, fellow man, and even God. Pride wants to be right. It will do whatever is necessary to remain in us, and it will protect itself at all cost, and if not gotten rid of, it will kill us.

Brethren, we want to rely on our way of doing things. We have done it all of our life. There is something in the world around us that is termed "our empirical self." This term is used of an individual to describe his environment in personal particulars he considers to be part of him. *My country. My city and my company. My baseball team. My house. My car. My education. My way of living. My wife. My family. My intellectual level*, and whatever he might describe. This is all what makes him what he is. The individual is defining what makes him what he is, and what makes him think and act as he does. This is a physical world that he lives in. This is his world of experiences.

Definitions:

Empiric: one who believes practical experience alone is the source of knowledge, not divine revelation, but practical experience alone.

Empirical: relating to, or based upon direct experience and observation alone.

Empirical knowledge: reliance on sensory observation and experiment as the basis of knowledge.

This gives you an idea of where human nature comes from. In other words, what is around us, such as my team, my city, my experience, is part of us. It is what makes us what we are. It is this empirical pride. It is *our* way of handling situations, *our* way of seeing things, *our* way of thinking. It is this

pride on relying on our own thoughts based on our own experiences and background that God wants replaced. He wants us to rely on **His** way of thinking, **His** way of living, **His** way of seeing things, and **His** way of handling situations. He wants us to have the mind of God.

Now here is the definition of pride.

Pride: Undue confidence in and attention to one's skills and accomplishments, state, possessions, or position.

It is this reliance on ourselves and on what we view to be correct, as opposed to what God says, that God hates, and we are called to change.

Pride is easier to recognize than to define. It is easier to recognize in others than in oneself. It is the opposite of humility—the proper attitude which one should have in relation to God. Pride is rebellion against God because it attributes to self the honor and glory due to God alone. Proud persons do not think it necessary to ask forgiveness, but they do not want to be seen as being wrong.

Turn to Luke 18 and see a beautiful example of this; a graphic example. This is referred to as "The Prayer of self-congratulations." It is really sort of a neat one here.

Luke 18:10-12 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

So here we see that he used thirty-seven words in this prayer, and he used the word "I" five times. The other man, the publican, standing afar off, only used seven words, and it was accepted by God.

Luke 18:13-14 "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' [Seven words.] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

There is a principle there for everyone of us. You see, the proud attitude toward God finds its expression in one's attitude toward others, often causing those who are filled with pride to unfairly judge and to have a low estimate of another's ability and worth, therefore treating them either with contempt or cruelty. This is really sort of interesting here. Some have said that pride is to be the very root and essence of sin. Other have considered it to be sin in its final form. Pride in either case is sin.

Now who was the father of pride? Let us turn over to Job, chapter 41. In Job we always take a look at the "leviathan" as being the alligator, and I cannot see how this can possibly be true, because they have been catching alligators for years with ropes. They have certainly speared them and killed them. In verses 33 and 34 we begin to see who the father of pride is.

Job 41:33-34 On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear. [He has no fear. He has no fear of God either.] He beholds every high thing; he is a king over all the children of pride.

Whoever this is, he is king over all the children of pride. I think you know who this is.

Ezekiel 28:11-17 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD; "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and of your pipes was prepared for you in the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; and I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. [And looked what caused it.] By the abundance of your trading [In other words he was rich and increased with goods. He was full of good things.] you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted [puffed] up [and filled with pride] because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor [By reason of your pride, because pride will not listen, and pride will not be taught.]; I cast you to the ground, I lay you before kings, that they might gaze at you."

Isaiah 14:12-14 "How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! 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.' "

Basically Satan, who this is, did not intend to acknowledge *any* to be superior to him in all of heaven and earth. He regarded himself alone as being supreme, and he was filled to the brim with self-pride. See brethren, Satan is the father of pride, and he knows how to use it, and he knows how to infect us with it.

What do we take pride in? He could probably give a much better list than what I have here, but in Ecclesiastes it talks about young people.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.

It says, "Rejoice O young man (and young woman) in your youth." God meant this for you to be a wonderful time, a time when we begin to develop our bodies and our skills. Many young men rejoice in lifting weights, in their skills in sports, and in mechanics and in computers. Hopefully their hobbies will lead them toward a good manhood. Of course girls rejoice in growing up and having grace and a feminine figure, and relishing in their abilities in sports and talents and achievements and learning skills that will help them in becoming an adult.

Now God intended this to be an extremely wonderful time for young people—a time to grow physically and a time to grow mentally. And so God says in those verses that young people are to

enjoy their youth. You young people are to *enjoy* your youth and your beauty and your power. He says let your eyes do what they want, and your skills, but do not be foolish in using your strength and aptitudes and beauty in the wrong way.

Do not be foolish. He said do not use those skills to intimidate others, to attract others for selfish purposes, to put others down, or to get your own way. He said, "Don't do that." Solomon then warned the youth and said that all of us will be brought into judgment for how we conduct ourselves on this earth, even when we are young. He concludes it by admonishing us to remember the days of our youth and act accordingly, because as the days progress, all the things that we were so proud of then tend to just sort of fade away as you get older. At least the muscles do, and all the important things that seem to be there.

He said that difficult times will come. And then as we go into adulthood, and into the workplace, or into our own homes, we can be proud of our position, of our talents, of our abilities, our homes, our neighborhood, our families, the car, our salaries, our clothes, our intellect, and our success. This can all go to our head, and we can start to inflate. If we are not careful we can begin to think that *we* did it all, that we had all the talents that we had, and that we accomplished everything, and we can forget to be thankful to God and think that we accomplished everything we have.

Let us go to Daniel chapter 4. This is the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the dream that he had about the tree, and that the tree was going to be cut down and how it fed the entire earth.

Daniel 4:24-31 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: "They will drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you to eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times [seven years] shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; and break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity." All this came upon the King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" [There was pride in action. And then came the promise.] While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you."

He had to learn a lesson that the gifts come from God.

Turn to I Corinthians 4. The apostle Paul is talking to the brethren here.

I Corinthians 4:6-7 And these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and to Apollos [He said, Things have been given to us.] for your sakes, that you might learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the another. [Verse 7 is the key verse here.] For who makes you

differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? [In other words, what talents have you got that you did not receive, that just were not in you?] Now if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

He said that you have been given talents. In this society we have some people that are gifted at mechanics. Some people are gifted in working with electricity. Some with stocks and bonds. Some with numbers. He said "Why would you be puffed up over that?" He said, "That's a gift that's been given you." Certainly what you do with it is important. So this is the point.

Now I have a question here. Does this mean that we can never take pride in a job well done, and say, "Ah, that wasn't me. That was God"? No. This is not what that means. It means that we should truly realize where our abilities and our skills come from, and based on that not allow ourselves to become puffed up, but to be deeply grateful and appreciative to God for what He has given us. This is what we should be acting like, and this is the attitude we should take when we are successful, and when we blossom, and when we have things that we can do.

Brethren, where does pride reside? It resides in our heart—in the very innermost part of our being. We will do everything in our power to be viewed as correct in all we think and do and say. Pride is at the very center of our nature, pushing us for this.

This next scripture is one that I do not think anybody likes, because it keeps pointing out to us that we just might not be perfect, and that we might have a flaw.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

I am going to read you comments by three commentators on this. The first one is from F. C. Cook:

The train of thought is apparently this. If a man is so blessed who trusts in God, what is the reason men so generously rely on their own ways? It is because man's heart is incapable of seeing things in a straightforward manner, but is full of shrewd guile, and is ever seeking to overreach others," [or to put others down, or to be on top].

Adam Clarke has some things to say here that I think will really surprise you.

"The heart is supplanting; torturous; full of windings, insidious, lying, ever at the catch [meaning ready to do something], striving to avail itself of every favorable circumstance to gratify its propensities to pride, ambition, evil desire, and corruption of all kinds, and it is wretched, or feeble, to stress beyond all things, and consequence of the wickedness that is in it." Now listen to what comes next: "Who can know it?" It even hides itself from itself.

He goes on to say,

A corrupt heart is the worst enemy one can have. It is full of evil devices of deceit, following an ambition, and its owner knows not what is in him until it broils over often passed remedy before the evil can be perceived. (I can say that that is happened to me personally.) Therefore, trust not in man whose purposes are continually changing and who is actuated only by motives of self interest.

This is what pride and the heart wants.

Expositors Dictionary:

If there is such a blessing in trusting in God, then why do people so generally depend on their fellow humans? Why is it that the blessed are not more numerous than the cursed? The answer lies in the innate and depravity of the human heart. The source of all difficulty is the human heart. In Old Testament usage the heart signifies the total inner being, and includes reason. The human heart is more deceptive, torturous, crooked than anything else. It is desperately corrupt, and humanly speaking, incurable. Who on earth can plumb its steps? Who on earth can plumb the depth of the heart's corruption and sickness? Even its owner does not know it.

This is the nature that we find in us. I know this is hard to believe, but I will touch on some more things here.

Brethren, this pride that we do not know we even have is called "self-righteousness." We do not realize that when we are doing things *our* way, as opposed to God's ways, that we are committing idolatry by making an idol out of ourselves. You see, this is why God hates pride so much, because we are going our own way, which has caused all the problems on the face of this earth.

Now none of us wants to admit that we have self-pride. I am just going to read a few things that I have just written down here.

Genesis 6:5 The the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21 . . . although the imagination [intent] of man's heart is evil from his youth.

This is God who is putting this in the Bible, and David, a man after God's own heart, that God loved, in Psalm 51 said. "Behold, . . ." By the term *behold*, he meant "stop and look at this. Consider it." He was talking to God. He said:

Psalm 51:5 Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

He said that sin was in his very nature. He said it was part of him. David understood this. David took one look at Bathsheba, and it was, "Forget what *God* said." He just said, "I've got to have this woman," and then when he had her, to protect his pride, to protect his position, and to be well-thought of, he had Uriah killed. See, that is the heart. This was a man after God's own heart. These are painful things to hear.

Jesus Christ said in Matthew chapter 15:

Matthew 15:19-20 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man."

We learned from Romans 8:7, and I think this is critical to all of us, that "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God."

Here lies the problem. Our heart, our human nature, does not want to be subject to the law of God. Therefore the pride that is in us will do all it can to provide the heart with what it wants. When David saw Bathsheba, he wanted Bathsheba, and his pride and his heart said, "Just go get her," and he just did not think. And even though we have been baptized, brethren, our old human nature still fights against us. We have help from God through His Spirit to strengthen us in overcoming, but He does not take our human nature away because He expects us to fight and overcome it. He is going to help us, but it is that human nature that pushes our pride.

Remembering that pride will fight, that it will not listen to God, that it will always defend itself, that it will make excuses, that it will deceive, that it will greatly resist doing right, I made up a couple of examples here to show you how that works. It does not pertain to anyone in the church, so do not anyone get offended, please.

A man came home from work every night and he'd drink a six-pack of beer. This went on for months, and his wife started to become concerned. She said, "Honey, I think you're becoming an alcoholic, and you're drinking in excess and a large amount of beer. You're setting a bad example for the children, and a bad example for the church. I think you have a real problem."

Humility's answer would be: "You know, this drinking has started to take over my life. I find I can't seem to put it down. I would appreciate it if you wouldn't bring anymore beer into the house and sort of help me fight this, and let me see if I can't put this drinking down."

That is humility's answer. What's pride's answer?

"Get off my back." "I can handle this." "I work hard all day, and this relaxes me, and I'm no alcoholic." That is pride's answer.

A young woman wears very short skirts and very tight, low-cut blouses, and her mother notices that cars are driving off the street when the young woman walks by, and the cars drive into lawns and into trash cans. So she calls her daughter in and says, "Sweetheart, I can tell by the way that you're dressing that you're causing men to sin. They want to get you into bed. You're causing men to commit adultery with their mind."

Now humility's answer would be: "Mom, I guess I was caught up in the world's fashions and I didn't stop to think of what I was producing. I want to represent God correctly and I don't want to cause any man to sin with his mind, so I'll start to develop a better wardrobe."

You can probably guess what pride's answer is. "Well, if they've got a dirty mind, that's their problem."

You see, pride does not want to change. Pride does not want to do what is right.

We have all seen brethren leave the Church of the Great God and other organizations because of their pride, and discoveries of new moons or postponements, or of the Passover and how to keep it, because they have had pride in those subjects. Their study has been oriented as to what satisfies their pride. They have become technically oriented, and then they shut themselves off from the weightier matters that God wants us to study—overcoming and conversion. See, they have to prove themselves right, and so they miss the point of the calling. They miss it, in that we are to be humble and yielded, and that we are to love each other with all of our heart. They miss it because of pride.

Pride affects the other side of the coin as well, because people have come to the conclusion in their own pride that we do not have to obey the laws of God, because all we have to do is to love, and then God's laws are not important if we love, and they have not gone to God and asked Him how God wanted them to live.

Pride works against marriages as well. Couples cannot have a good or lasting marriage when pride is a big problem. God says, "Submit yourself." The wife says, "I won't." He says to the husband, "Love your wife as Jesus Christ loves the church." "I won't." See, humility tries to obey all that God says, but pride will not, and all the counseling in the world will not be of any use if pride stands in the way of repenting of disobedience to God's instructions concerning a problem in the marriage.

Almost everything we see, or that we read about, or that we hear, displays the attitude of man doing things his own way, with no concern for God, for God's laws, for the rights of others, or for common decencies.

Brethren, it is in this environment of self-will and self-centeredness that we live in, that we are supposed to put our pride away, our way of doing things, and humbly come before God for His instruction on how to live.

The world understands the attitude that pride displays, and from *Webster's List of Related Words* I am going to read these to you. I have found a few that fit me from time to time.

Related Words To Pride:

Feeling of superiority toward others. Arrogant. Cavalier. Disdainful. Dismissive. Haughty. High and Mighty. Hubristic. Huffy. Insolent. Lofty. Lordly. Overbearing. Proud-hearted. Supercilious. Vain. Pompous. Contemptuous. Scornful. Ostentatious. Pretentious. Bloated. Important. Self-important. Stuffy. Conceited. Stuck-up. Vain-glorious. Domineering. High-handed. Imperious. Masterful. Big-headed. Cockiness. Over-confident. Self-assured.

Do any of these fit you? Well, they fit me from time to time. Something that we are to understand is that we should not have these attitudes in us, if we look at other people.

Brethren, God will not accept this nation or us as individuals if we are filled with pride. That is an honest fact.

I Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

God says that when you think you are "big time," you had better take a good look around, because you are about to have the stool go out from under you.

Turn now to Proverbs 8. This is interesting because at the Feast we were told that we go to the Feast to learn to fear God. Now here is the definition of "fearing the Eternal."

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

Now turn to Proverbs 16. This really covers the empirical self.

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits.

Proverbs 16:5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they join forces, none will go unpunished.

Though people try to save him, try to hang onto him, try to help him, the proud man is going to be punished.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride goes before destruction. God says that if you are proud, destruction is soon to follow.

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Let us go to Jeremiah 13. I think we will see the full import of this. This pertains to the nation of Judah.

Jeremiah 13:1-11 Thus the LORD said to me [Jeremiah]: Go get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water." So I got a sash according to the word of the LORD, and put it around my waist. And the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a hole in the rock." So I went, and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. Now it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there." Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing. [It was no longer any good.] Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their heart [doing it their way], and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so have I caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the LORD, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for a glory; but they would not hear.'

You see, we have been called, brethren, to be a praise and a glory to God. We have been called to do it God's way, that He can point to us with pride—*His* pride—and say, "These are My people, and they've obeyed Me."

Jeremiah 13:12-17 "Therefore you shall speak to them this word: 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Every bottle shall be filled with wine." ' And they will say to you, 'Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?' "Then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land—even the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness! And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together," says the LORD. "I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will destroy them. " ' " Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, for the LORD has spoken.

Give glory to the LORD your God before He causes darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death and make it dense darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret for your pride; and my eye will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock has been taken captive.

That is how God feels about His people. Verse 18 is touching.

Jeremiah 13:18 Say to the king and to the queen mother, "Humble yourselves, sit down, for your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory."

See brethren, just as with Israel in the past, God is going to humble Israel today, and He will humble the entire world. The world is no good to God at all until they are humble. As for those who are called, God will work to humble us if we insist upon going our own way, that we might not miss out on the call that we have been given. He will do whatever is necessary to make us turn from the way that we are going, and seek His instruction. It could be job loss to bring your attention to Him immediately. It could be family difficulties. It could be divorce. It could be trials of all types. It could be illness. I was impressed the way that God handled Job, and I just learned something here from Elihu.

Please turn to Job 33. Certainly not everybody that gets ill has a problem with pride. That is not what is being said here. That is just one of the tools that God will use occasionally when He has to get through. In this case Job had a great deal to learn here. This is Elihu speaking. He is the one that wasn't condemned with the other three at the end of the story with Job.

Job 33:8-16 "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words, saying, 'I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and there is no iniquity in me. [This was the stance that Job was taking.] Yet He [God] finds occasions against me, He counts me as His enemy; He puts my feet in the stocks, He watches all my paths.' [And now Elihu says:] "Look, in this you are not righteous. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give accounting of any of His words. For God may speak in one way, or another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction."

What he is saying here is that the reason why God brings the affliction is because all the means of reclaiming or restoring men fail. He communicates to them at night through dreams and visions, and of course today in sermons and counselings, and He warns them of the error of their ways, and it is all ineffectual. He brings affliction upon them, whether it be job loss or family difficulty, but in this case He put Job in bed. He lays them down on their bed that they might repent, that there is hope that they might be reclaimed.

Job 33:17-30 "In order to turn man from his deed [from doing what is wrong], and conceal pride from man [to make him humble]. He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. Man is also chastened also with pain on his bed, and with strong pain in the many of his bones, so that his life abhors bread, and his soul succulent food. His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones stick out which once were not seen. Yes, his soul draws near to the Pit, and his life to the executioners. If there is a messenger for him, a mediator, one among a thousand, to show man His

uprightness [and he repents], then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be like a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray to God, and He will be delight in him, he shall see His face with joy, for He restores to man His righteousness. Then he looks at men and says, 'I have sinned [I have been proud], and perverted what was right, and it did not profit me.' He will redeem his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light. Behold, God works all things, twice, in fact, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of light."

We read that God does punish to bring back. Every Passover season we read this in I Corinthians 11: 31-32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." We just heard this.

How can we judge ourselves and repent of pride? I tend to think in rather simple fashions. I have come up with two tests. Self judging is a difficult thing to do, by the reason that pride does not want to be judged. One of the most helpful tests we can take is how we view and treat others. The second test is how we obey God. The two tests we can take: 1) How we view others, 2) How well we keep the commandments of God.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

This is a toughie, but it is a good way to judge. He said do not do anything through conceit. That just simply means vanity, or pride. Do not take advantage of anyone else because of your birth, your property, your wealth, or of your intellect. He said this does not enter into it. He said, "but in lowliness, [in humbleness of mind, and a mind that is opposite of the type of mind that wants to control everything—just an open, honest, gentle mind], let each esteem others better than himself."

This is the test. Who are the "others" that you and I esteem better than ourselves? Everyone we meet is going to be a member of the God Family someday, and have a position, and be God's son. Now whom do we esteem better? Is it those that are at work with us maybe, with the exception of those that are hard to get along with? Is it our neighbors? Or for the most difficult category, is it those in our homes? Do we esteem our children better than ourselves, knowing that God gave them to us to raise, to eventually be His sons and daughters?

Do we husbands esteem our wives better than ourselves, and treat them with honor and deep love and respect, knowing that it can be difficult to be a submissive wife, to be in that role? Do wives esteem their husbands better than themselves, considering the fact that they have to work on behalf of the family, and the difficulty that it is to work today in the workplace, and the difficulty it is to lead a home in this society?

Or does pride, not wanting to do it God's way, stop us from submitting and esteeming others better than ourselves? If it does, then there is pride, and it must be gotten rid of.

Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

We are not just to live for "our" self, unconscious of the needs of others, but to be concerned about their needs. And then in verse 5 he tells us the type of mind that Jesus Christ had.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

In other words, Jesus Christ esteemed others very highly.

In Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly [humble] in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Go to verse 10. Another test.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

This is just what we read in Philippians 2. This is the instruction of God, by the way, and if we do not do these things, then pride has placed us in rebellion against God's instruction.

The second test. How well do we receive instruction? Well, humility is the opposite of the "I know it all" attitude. Those who are humble are teachable. This is why humility is so important.

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom.

Why is that the case? It is the case because the humble do not listen to themselves. They ask the question, "Do I do what I want, or do I do what God wants?" See, the rich and the increased with goods have need of nothing, but the humble realize that they have need of everything. They realize that they are just like the man in Luke 18 who said, "Father, forgive me. I'm a sinner." They realize that they have to have the knowledge of God. They realize that they are empty inside and that they have to be filled by God. You see, God wants us to be receptive to His teaching and to put down our own opinions and ideas—our ways of living—and to have the attitude of David.

Let us look at Psalm 25. David had the right attitude. He said:

Psalm 25:4-5 Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. [David was humble, and he wanted to learn from God.] Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.

David realized that God was his salvation, and he had to have the mind of God to be saved. And so with a humble heart he said, "Please teach me Your ways, and the paths that I should be on."

Now brethren, I think we can use this as part of our test if we are disregarding any of God's commandments or not keeping them to the full. If we do not keep the Sabbath correctly, if we are not fully tithing, or doing a good day's work for our employer, or not working to have genuine love in our homes—if we are not doing this, then we have a problem with stubbornness and self-will and pride, and God cannot accept that. We have to change.

How do we overcome pride? First we must come to understand that we *must* have humility to please God. Before we can even work to overcome, we have to understand that we must have humility.

Please turn to the book of Micah and we will see the three great qualities that God looks for in those who worship Him.

Micah 6:6-7 With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? [He said, "How can I possibly do it?"] Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Those are big prices he is talking about here. And then he shows the three great principles.

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly [based on God's Word], to love mercy [forgiveness], and to walk humbly with your God?

You walk humbly so that you can be taught.

Brethren, whom does God dwell with? Whom will God accept to live with Him?

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

God says that is whom He will dwell with for eternity. He will not dwell with the proud.

Now concerning overcoming, there is a constant battle in each of us for our minds, for control of them. On one hand we have the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three elements reflect the way of man in his bodily pulls and the things that please his senses and the comfort he feels by doing things in his empirical way, the way of this world. Now God, on the other hand, because we have His Spirit, contends with us by that, and thus we have a constant battle. It is a little like being on a teeter-totter. When we are close to God, we are up on the teeter-totter [see-saw], and the world and Satan is at the bottom. When we slip and go down, the world becomes on top, and so we have to do something.

Therefore, one of the finest tools to overcome pride, or being caught by this world's way of doing things, is fasting. Pride puffs up. Fasting pokes a needle in the balloon and brings it down. Fasting humbles us by putting down the physical, helping us to reset our priorities. It makes us realize that we are just human beings, that we are not the king of the hill where pride rears its ugly head. Serious fasting and prayer and obedience to God will help to put pride aside and help to get us back on the right track, because that is where God wants us and it will help to subdue pride.

Brethren, humility is a state of mind. It is a way of looking at things. It is a way of living. The apostle Paul referred to humbleness of mind as a positive quality. And why is that? Because humbleness produces a sensitivity toward God, and that is what God wants us to have. You can read about that in Colossians 3.

Colossians 3:9-12 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.

Why? Because when we are humble we realize our worth. We do not think we are superior to others and we realize that we must live and must learn to live from God and not from this world's way of doing things.

Jesus set the right example for all of us when He said in John 5 that He could do nothing of Himself. The apostle Paul said in Romans 7, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells." "I'm a wretched man." "O wretched man that I am."

Does this mean that we are to feel that we can never raise our head and go around with a whipped hang-dog expression. The answer is "no, it doesn't." What we are to learn from all of this is that by being humble enough to submit to God and to learn from Him we can become of great value through conversion.

In other words, we can let go the ways of our pride, the ways we lived in the past, and we can learn to be God's children. We could become great through the conversion of God making us into the God Family. We are not giving up anything. I used to tell our children what Paul said in Philippians 3:8, that he counted those things that he gave up as dross. I used to tell our kids, "You know, the stuff we picked up in the back yard from our dog." That is what this is going to seem like when we are spirit beings. I said we will not even remember what it was.

You see, it is conversion that we are after. The humble person will realize that he can do nothing without God, but that as we submit, and I hope we can all learn this, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We are developing into a new being. That new being stems from being humble and teachable before God. There is a great reward in the humility toward God.

Zephaniah 2:3 Seek you the LORD, all you meek of the earth [all you humble], who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.

There is great reward in being humble. Whom will God hide when the Tribulation comes on this world? He will hide His people that are humble and trust in Him, and come to Him to be taught. Brethren, we *must*, and I emphasize the word 'must,' be humble before God. We must humble ourselves before God.

Turn to Matthew 18. I think you will all recognize this.

Matthew 18:1-3 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them [Now listen to what He said. I think you all know this.], and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

I do not think there are a lot of different ways you can interpret that. And then He goes on to say:

Matthew 18:4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

What value does humility have? You will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The reason He uses the example of little children is that they are characterized to a great extent as being without ambition, without pride and haughtiness. They are wonderfully humble and teachable. They trust you. They trust what you say. You see, we are to be changed and become like little children, in respect to God. We are to sit at His feet and learn.

Please go to II Timothy 4. The apostle Paul, when he finished the race, was proud. At least I sort of take it this way.

II Timothy 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but to all those who have loved His appearing.

Now Paul was not self-righteously proud here. He was proud, he was pleased, he was satisfied that he kept God's laws. He was satisfied that he had been obedient. He was satisfied that he had been humble. I think that you all know the apostle Paul did not walk around in an extremely weak fashion. He took on his fellow Jews. He stood firmly for God. He raised many a hackle. He was not a weak individual, but Paul was pleased that he submitted all his life, and he was thankful that God had worked with him. This was the pride that he had. It was in God, and in the fact that God had worked with him.

God is building His own Temple now. In the beginning of the sermon we saw that God was not pleased with the Temple being built for Him because of the pride and self-will of the builders. Thus God has called out those who will be faithful in building the Temple that He wants.

For the final verse let us turn to I Corinthians 3. Who is the Temple that is being talked about here?

I Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

You brethren, and I and all that have God's Spirit are the Temple that God is building.

I Corinthians 3:17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

If you destroy it with pride, then that is just going to be how it is.

I Corinthians 3:18-20 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. [Let him humble himself and learn from God.] For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

They lack real wisdom. They do not understand. But you are special.

I Corinthians 3:21-23 Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours. [All are yours, because you are the Temple of God.] And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Brethren, what is the criteria for those who are to be God's Temple? "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."