

New Covenant Priesthood (Part Eight)

Pride, Continued

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We're going to begin this sermon by turning to Proverbs 6:16-19.

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things does the LORD hate: yes, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren.

It's very clear from Proverbs 6:16-19 that God is displeased with forms of pride. Turn now to Psalms 101:5. This Psalm is a description of the *perfect* king. It was written by David, and it was what he expected of himself. It was what he wanted to achieve by showing the approach he would have to various aspects of carrying out that responsibility. It also then becomes the way Christ will rule as well.

Psalm 101:5 Whoso privily slanders his neighbour, him will I [the king] cut off: him that has a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer [or endure].

This psalm shows that God is not very well pleased with some forms of pride.

In Proverbs 6:16-17 we saw the word "hate." This is interesting because it fits right into the general tenor of Psalm 101, because that word *hate* is not to be thought of in an absolute sense. "***I HATE this!***" is the way we would say something, meaning we really are disgusted with it. This word actually means, "*I will reject from fellowship.*" This is very interesting, for it leaves the door open for repentance, but for the immediate presence, then he rejects from fellowship. This is going to become more important as we move through this sermon because it shows the effect of pride, and why it is so damaging to us. So right from the very beginning, if we understand that word *hate* means *to reject from fellowship*, God is saying that anyone who has a

haughty look and is proud of heart He is going to reject from fellowship with Him.

The reason the perfect king gets rid of someone who is of a proud heart is because if that person is allowed to continue, justice will not be served. A king has to think of the well-being of the people he is ruling over, and he cannot allow someone who has a proud heart to exist, because he knows that justice will not be served in his kingdom. That person is going to be causing all kinds of trouble, as we will see.

In the previous sermon, we saw that pride is an invisible, internal, spiritual condition that is generated by Satan. The Bible shows that it began in him, and is communicated by him to mankind. We also saw that pride prepares the way for more sin by cultivating a perverted comparison upon which we base a destructive act of some kind. Pride all by itself is sin, but it also prepares the way for many other forms of sin to be committed.

Pride is the father of much stubbornness, vanity, conceit, anger, temper tantrums, self-righteousness, fighting, critical judgment, impatience, persecution, self-confidence, competition, lying, presumptuous sarcasm, narcissism, and unwillingness to forgive, a rejection of correction, and bitter resentment. Pride destroys patience, making people become easily irritated and allowing one's temper to blow something that should be just a minor irritation all out of proportion to its real importance. In short, it provides the foundation that makes people go to war against God and each other.

The natural corollary of pride is prejudice. Prejudging is prejudice. You might remember a very popular novel of a number of years ago written by Jane Austin, titled *Pride and Open-mindedness*. No, it was titled ***Pride and Prejudice***. Prejudice falls on the heels of pride. Prejudice means to prejudge without evidence. Prejudice is a perverted judgment.

Pride is the father of numerous emotional disorders because it brings people into conflict openly or psychologically (internally), whether it's at home or on the job. Good personal relationships are almost impossible where pride and it's "first-born"—prejudice—exist, because pride produces a persuasive desire to have one's own way. The next step then is to go into some degree of war. Perhaps one of its most damaging children is intellectual arrogance,

because it produces an inability to learn, either from one's own experiences or from those of others, as well as a very strong resistance to being criticized.

It's very interesting that America offers few rewards for modesty and moderation. The big rewards in this nation go to the arrogant. We have produced a competitive and violent society that slides right in on the tail of that attitude. Perhaps this is nowhere as clearly seen as in movies and in sports. Since I was a boy, things have really slid downhill in those areas.

When I was a boy, the heroes of the movies were both valiant and modest, and they were usually played with an understated strength, like Jimmy Stewart, Gary Cooper, Alan Ladd, or Spencer Tracey. Today the role models are the arrogant Rambo, RoboCop. Out on the courts and on the field they are the trash-talking athletes, goading somebody into a fight.

The more intense one's pride, the more dangerous the consequences, as one should be able to judge from one's experience in marriage, in business, in politics, and on the battlefield. Pride manifests itself in a wide variety of competitive, self-centered and destructive-to-relationship conduct, because pride diminishes or totally destroys cooperation. Though Satan generates pride, it must have something within man that it resonates with and takes root in, in order to produce the perverted judgment. This is the area that this sermon is going to search out.

Everywhere that I looked in the Bible, it showed the same factors in relationship to one another. We're going to begin in Isaiah 2. I am going to use the translation that appears in the *New International Version*. It just makes it a little bit clearer by changing some words and smoothing out some of the sentence structure.

Isaiah 2:6 (*New International Version*) You have abandoned your people, the house of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East. They practice divination like the Philistines, and clasp hands with pagans.

This means they make deals and shake hands with pagans. As we go through this I want you to think about the scene here in the United States and Canada, because those are the nations we are most familiar with, and both of

those nations are Israelitish nations. I want you to see what God says, and the qualities that He links together.

Isaiah 2:7 (NIV) Their land is full of silver and gold. There is no end to their treasure.

Have there ever been nations richer than the United States and Canada and Great Britain? Not on your life! Nobody at anytime in history has ever come close to these nations in wealth.

Isaiah 2:7 (NIV) Their land if full of horses. There is no end to their chariots [their automobiles].

Isaiah 2:8-18 (NIV) Conversely, their land is full of idols. [We're even wealthy that way.] They bow down to the work of their hands to what their fingers have made. [We bow down to our accomplishments.] Men will be brought low, and people humbled. But do not forgive them. Go into the rock. Hide in the ground from the dread of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty. The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled, and the pride of men brought low. The LORD alone will be exalted in that day. The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty [in the United States of America] for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled). For all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty [which are symbols of beauty that we have created, and we have created beautiful things], and all the oaks of Bashan [a symbol of strength—sturdy, strong]. For all of the towering mountains and all of the high hills, for every lofty tower [a place of safety] and every fortified wall [the strength of our military power] For every trading ship and every stately vessel that we take such pride in [which is our business power]. The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled. The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear.

I began here in this context because it shows pride associated with something with which the Israelitish people are very familiar. But in many cases they do not even begin to realize the negative spiritual effects possible that these

things can be used to create in us. Pride and wealth go hand-in-hand, unfortunately. We're going to build on this association, because it's very clear that God ties them together. Turn now to Deuteronomy 32:15. This is the Song of Moses.

Isaiah 32:15 But Jeshurun waxed [grew] fat, and kicked [which is a symbol of rebellion]: you are waxed fat, you are grown thick, you are covered with fatness: **then** he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

We need to consider this because "Jeshurun" is a code name for Israel, and fatness symbolizes wealth. This is especially important to us because "Jeshurun" literally means *upright*. "*The upright ones grew fat.*" When we look at this in its spiritual implication, it is something that is aimed right at the church. I want you to think about this, because what does it say in the book of Revelation about the Laodiceans? "*You say you are **rich** and increased with goods, and you have need of nothing.*" Feed that right into Deuteronomy 32:15 about Jeshurun. Jeshurun grew fat. The upright ones grew rich, and then they kicked, and said, "*We don't need God anymore. We have need of nothing.*" Israel, the nation, forsook God, and put Him at the rear of their thinking, and wealth became the father of scorn. Why do I say scorn? Because that is what the word "*lightly*" in verse 15 means. Look in your margin.

When we get to the place where we feel strong within ourselves, then God begins to be scorned, because who needs God when we are filled with strength? The Laodicean doesn't think so. Is there not a perverted judgment there? God says, " **You** say you are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and don't even know, and are blind to the fact that you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked." The judgments are entirely different. Incidentally, Laodicea means, "*judgment of the people.*"

The Laodiceans judge themselves **rich**, and say they don't need God. God judges them entirely differently, and [says] their judgment is perverted. Whose [judgment] is right, and whose is wrong? Are we going to call God

wrong in His judgment of the Laodiceans? We really need to consider Deuteronomy 32, because the last year of the church fits right into Deuteronomy 32:15.

Pride takes root in the matrix that it grows in, which is *wealth*—a feeling of strength and accomplishment which is then used as a basis for comparison with others. Now don't get your hopes up that this does not afflict you, until we allow the Bible to explain this sense of wealth a little bit further.

We're going to go back to Ezekiel 28 again to look at Satan, because he is the father of pride. There is much we can learn from him, because in our carnality he is the one we imitate.

Ezekiel 28:12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus says the Lord GOD, You seal up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Anybody ought to be able to understand that God is not talking about a man here. What man has been in Eden, the Garden of God?

Ezekiel 28:13-15 You [Satan] have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were *perfect* in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

Ezekiel 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness: I will cast you to the ground, I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you.

Carefully observe how God draws our attention to Satan's glorious gifts: His great intelligence, his beauty, his authority, his power and privileges. A sense of wealth as a medium for pride takes root, and includes much more than money. There is a direct line from pride to the sense of wealth—a feeling of strength or accomplishment to all the manifestations that produce division and warfare.

All one has to do to find the source of many sins is to follow the process of Satan's sin. The process went from pride in his gifts to resentment because of some perceived mistreatment, to bitterness, to a lust to set things right according to his judgment, and then to war.

It does not have to be this way, but because of either ignorance or neglect of God's will, perverted judgments are made, and then acted upon.

Sometimes the wealth of gifts is real, but now here comes a curve: Sometimes they are imagined. Even under the best of circumstances, they are always relative, depending on against whom the comparison is made. But whether real or imagined, a confidence in one's wealth begins to arise that is perverted if it produces the wrong manifestation.

Do you think the judgments that led Satan to make war against God were perverted? Were they twisted all out of any sense of reality—that he could feel that somehow or other he could be able to make war against God and defeat Him? Is there any reality at all for that kind of thinking? Pride led him to make him think that he could do it. This is *exactly*, in principle, what we do when we choose to avoid or not even seek God's will and think that somehow we're going to get away with sin. Didn't God say to Adam and Eve, "In the day that you sin, you are as good as dead"?

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with having confidence in our ability to perform something well. However, that does not make one intrinsically better or more deserving than anybody else. There's the problem: a perverted judgment. The wealth of gifts rather should be understood to impose responsibilities. Gifts are provided by God for service. It is our responsibility, and we should strive to perfect them.

But even as they grow within us because we *are* striving to perfect them and becoming better at what we're doing, we should always understand what Jesus said, that "even though you do all that God commands, you are only doing what is expected of you anyway." There is nothing to brag before anybody, or to set ourselves above anybody else in any area.

We always have to understand this, and it should be an overriding understanding that wealth of gifts and/or skills of some sort does not equate with intrinsically better or right. If the comparison that arises is wrong, it will almost invariably lead to division (like a divorce within a family, or warfare politically) somewhere along the line.

This leads us to understand that among men, the perverted comparison will have its roots in things like the accumulation of money, which is one of the more easily seen. It can also be position at work. ("I am the boss!") It can be IQ. It can be athletic skills. ("I'm really strong!") It can be other natural abilities. It can be social status. ("I am descended from so-and-so.") It can be knowledge. ("I have a doctor's degree.") It can be physical strength. It can be beautiful hair, beautiful eyes, a finely-shaped nose. It can be clothing, a house, an automobile. The list of things that can be used for a perverted comparison is almost endless.

In the New Testament one of the words indicating pride is translated from the Greek *huperephania*, (*Strong's* #5243). It means, "*to show one's self above* ." It is not used to indicate a person that others look up to as better or superior in some other way, but one who stands on his own self-created pedestal, looking down on others. Even human psychologists tell us that pride is actually a mark of inner inferiority and insecurity. Such people over-compensate by emphasizing or flaunting the qualities they think they possess that will make others think well of them, while at the same time they deprecate others. The sense of wealth that one bases his perverted judgment on is highly subjective and relative, because each person is capable of setting his own standards of comparison *regardless* of his real accomplishment.

Let's look at Proverbs 26:16, and I will give you an example of what I mean. A person doesn't have to have accomplished hardly anything, except to get himself up in the morning.

Proverbs 26:16 The sluggard [a guy who accomplishes nothing; a lazy bum] is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Human nature is so twisted that it doesn't need much in the way of reality to build a case that will produce great pride in one's self. The sluggard produces nothing, but he's conceited. Human nature is so tricky, so deceitful.

But whatever the standard one sets, if not held in check, it will lead the person to think that he deserves more and better. For example, it will lead the sluggard to think that he is such that he doesn't need to work unless conditions are absolutely perfect. He wants the *right* job, at the *right* time of day, at the *right* pay, with the *right* boss, with the *right* fellow-employees, and he is making oodles of money. He has nothing to offer, but he is proud that he has nothing to offer.

Now get the point here. The point to this proverb is that we don't have to really have any accomplishments to be proud, because human nature will set its own standard. This is why Jeremiah 17:9 says what it says: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is sick to death, and it is incurable. We're beginning to learn that most sin probably has its roots in pride. It is indeed *the father of sin*. Was it not the *proud one* who made Adam and Eve sin? "*You shall be as gods*." The top blew off their heads figuratively. "*I am really somebody!*" What happened? God was forgotten.

Go now to Proverbs 18:10-12.

Proverbs 18:10-12 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

In both Hebrew and English, "name" expresses character and personality. All I have to do is say to you the name of some person and you immediately begin to get a picture in your mind of that person. It may be how that person looks physically, or it may be something that the person has done, but it is

expressing much more than just the **word** —the symbol that represents the person. I could say the name "Kevin Costner," and you would immediately begin to think of something. Then there is the word "tower." In the Bible it is a symbol indicating a place where one feels confident, and therefore one feels safe there.

The proverb is showing the difference between a righteous person (whether rich or poor) and an unrighteous **wealthy** person, and in what each puts his confidence. Each relies on or resorts to what he thinks is his strength. The unrighteous wealthy person takes confidence in his wealth. Therein lies a picture of pride's power to manipulate one into a vain reliance, or confidence, upon something that is very insecure, i.e., human powers. We might use the term **mammon** .

I'm going to read these verses now out of the *New International Version*. At first when it starts out, it sounds very similar.

Proverbs 18:10-11 (*New International Version*) The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscaleable wall.

They think they're really safe with money. Money is power in this world. There is no doubt about it. But what the proverb is saying is that those who are proud will put their confidence in something very insecure: money, wealth, physical strength. The righteous will not. Their reliance is on the Eternal God, because they know that, really inherently, they have no strength within themselves, and that men are nothing to rely on, but only God and His word.

Proverbs 18:12 (NIV) Before his downfall a man's heart is proud.

Do you want to know why people fail? They fail because pride destroys them.

Proverbs 18:12 (NIV) But humility comes before honor.

That's quite a comparison from God's word. What the world looks upon as strength, God says is nothing. What the world looks upon as weakness, God says is everything.

Do you see the process that is developing here? Pride is a sense of wealth or other perceived strength, and it is followed by destruction. We're going to look at a clear example that appears in Daniel 4:27-30, and verse 37. This is a chapter in which a vision was had by Nebuchadnezzar of a great tree. The tree was chopped down. Nebuchadnezzar didn't understand it, and so he called upon Daniel to explain it to him. Verse 27 is part of that explanation.

Daniel 4:27-31 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of your tranquillity. All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from you.

Daniel 4:37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

This little episode shows that through the dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, and its interpretation, that Nebuchadnezzar was very mercifully and clearly, pointedly warned by God through Daniel that he was conducting his life in pride. If he wanted to continue as powerful and mighty ruler of the kingdom of Babylon, he was supposed to change his ways. He was to repent, and begin to be a merciful and kind king. God gave the man twelve months to think it over. In the end of that twelve-month period, Nebuchadnezzar was still confident in his own wealth of position and authority among men. He would not be corrected, and so God forcibly abased him in order for him to learn a very valuable lesson.

Pride precedes destruction. It's a simple statement. No one proud is going to be in the Kingdom of God. Now why? Because pride produces sin. It *is* sin, and it produces more sin. Such a person being in the Kingdom of God would then sin over and over and over again for eternity, and so God will break off a relationship with that person. He will reject fellowship with the proud because of what pride produces. Pride would produce in the Kingdom of God exactly what it produces in the earthly realm. It produces division and warfare, and it would continue to do it there.

Do you understand this is why Satan is going to be thrown into the Lake of Fire? It's because of his pride. That's what made him sin. It's no wonder that Romans 8:7 says "the carnal mind is at war against God."

Let's go now to Proverbs 20:29.

Proverbs 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

Understand that the word "glory" can be translated "*pride*." *Strong's* will tell you that. It will say: "glory (pride)." I want you to understand that the proverb is not saying that these qualities are inherently evil. Actually both of them are useful, and they are good. What the proverb is doing is pointing out what each age category tends to put its confidence in. By virtue of that fact, pride has an opportunity to take root in it and produce sin.

Besides "*strength*," that word means, "*vigor, capacity, course, might, and ability*." It almost always indicates the ability to do something, with the emphasis on "*doing* ." It will be activity-focused. The pride of a young man is what he is able to do actively, whereas with the old folks it's not active, it is cerebral. This doesn't mean that young people don't have any brains at all. Young people depend upon their physical activity far more than old people do.

The word "*beauty*" that is used in relation to the older people, the emphasis is not solely on physical attractiveness, because beauty makes us think of that. Actually, in the Hebrew, the word indicates a combination of physical attractiveness, rank, and privilege.

In a community, it's rarely the young who are the political civic leaders. It's usually the old. With that come those perks, and so there is persuasive power, recognition in the community, and so forth, with those who are older. That word indicates a combination of those three things. The proverb is contrasting not only what the two age groups tend to take pride in, but also *why* they take pride and confidence in them. It is indicating the general way that the two age groups tend to get things done. That in turn brings them recognition, fame and fortune, and this is what puffs them up. When the recognition comes, and the fame comes, and the fortune comes, then pride usually follows right on the heels. Therein lies the danger.

This next series of verses I think is very interesting. We're going to go back to the book of Revelation. Please understand what I am doing. I am showing you place after place after place in the Bible where it is showing the same thing. It is showing that pride always has an association with something that we think of as being complimentary: strength, wealth, recognition. Those kind of things. Revelation 18:4-8 is describing where God says Babylon's problems lie.

Revelation 18:4-8 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she has filled fill to her double. How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine: and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

I'm going to read these verses from the *Amplified Bible*.

Revelation 18:4-8 (*The Amplified Bible*) To the degree that she has glorified herself . . . [Pride glorifies the self.] . . . and revels in her wantonness, living deliciously and luxuriously to that measure.

Impose on her torment, and anguish, and tears and mourning, since in her heart she boasts, "I'm not a widow. As a queen on a throne I sit, and I shall never see suffering, or experience sorrow."

Contrast that with the servants of God. In the sermonette today we heard about Job. We always hear about the sufferings of Job. He was a servant of God. He suffered. He was also a humble man. Jesus was a humble man. He suffered. He didn't boast about His authority, or power, or greatness, or wisdom, or anything. We'll see this in another sermon down the line where He said, "*I am lowly, and meek.*" Babylon is just the opposite. All of the characteristics that come out of her are ones of pride and boastfulness, and making use of that in the way she lives.

Notice the hallmarks that God gives of godless Babylon: luxury, a sense of wealth, followed by pride. She boasts a feeling of self-sufficiency: "*I shall not see any suffering.*" The Laodicean says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Each of these expressions clearly shows that Babylon, as a culture, puts its confidence, and therefore its security, in its wealth. What happens to God? The same that happened in what we read in Deuteronomy 13:15. We saw that when Jeshurun waxed fat, God was scorned. So, in Babylon, God is shut out.

Let's look at another one right along this same line. Go to Ezekiel 16:1-2. This is the one that describes God finding Israel in the desert. He cleans her up and then produces in her a great amount of beauty and wealth, and adorns her with all kinds of riches. We're going to read verses 1 and 2 to get the setting.

Ezekiel 16:1-2 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.

Jerusalem is the capitol city representing the nation. This is addressed to Jerusalem. Go to verse 46. It is as though Jerusalem is being personified with a human being, and they are standing on that spot where Jerusalem is, and they are looking toward the east. Looking toward the east, Samaria would be on the left side of Jerusalem. Samaria (the capitol of the northern ten tribes) is also being looked upon here as the elder sister.

Ezekiel 16:46-47 And your elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at your left hand: and your younger sister, that dwells at your right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. Yet have you not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, you were corrupted more than they in all your ways.

What is God saying here? He is saying that compared to what Sodom did, and compared to what Samaria did, they were nothing compared to what Jerusalem did. He is saying Jerusalem is the most vile of all. He is going to give a description of Sodom within the midst of this explanation of what Jerusalem is like.

Ezekiel 16:48-49 As I live, says the Lord GOD, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom:

Was there ever a city like Sodom? It is the biblical example of **the worst place** ever to live on the face of the earth—the most dangerous, spiritually, of any city that there ever was, and yet God says that compared to Sodom, Jerusalem was worse. It might be one of those things where it was worse because of the greatness of what they were given in the way of knowledge and understanding, and a recognition of the true God and His way of life. "To whom much is given, much is required." In Sodom, what produced the homosexuality and all of the other things that were going on?

Ezekiel 16:49-50 Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom [compare this to Babylon in Revelation 18]: pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

So there it is. Jerusalem paralleled that. They were haughty, arrogant, overfed, and lazy, which led to a false sense of security, spiritual apathy, and disdain. Again, God is shut out. The result was that Jerusalem outstripped both of the other cities in depravity, and her chief sins were pride and self-

exaltation. These stemmed from their over-weaning materialism, and produced sexual perversion and neglect of the poor, along with apathy toward God and disdain of fellowman.

We're not done with Ezekiel because we're going to go to Ezekiel 28 again. This is the beginning of the chapter that has Satan's sin in it. What we're going to read is not aimed at Satan. It is aimed at Tyre.

Ezekiel 28:4-5 With your wisdom and with your understanding you have gotten you riches, and have gotten gold and silver into your treasures: By your great wisdom and by your traffick have you increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches.

Again we see pride bloomed into other sins in the rich breeding ground of a sense of wealth. I don't want to overload with this, but again want to remind you that the wealth and gifts that give a sense of strength into which we may put our confidence are of and by themselves not intrinsically evil. But if left unchecked through ignorance, neglect, or willfulness, it becomes the breeding ground that nourishes pride, thus allowing it to be expressed. When it is expressed, pride will then cooperate with God and fellowman only to the extent it takes to get something for the self. Otherwise, it turns against God and fellowman, because pride influences us to not make the sacrifices needful for the well-being of others that cooperation and service demand.

Our human nature has a powerful tendency to ignore a reality that we must come to grips with. Paul wrote of this, and it is in I Corinthians 4:6-8. This is a reality that we must deal with if we are going to keep pride in check.

I Corinthians 4:6-7 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that you might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?

Do you hear what he's saying? He is saying, "I will make it very plain that what we tend to take pride in was **given** to us. It is not ours inherently. It was **given** to us! Nobody stands alone. So what do you have that you have not received? If we have been given the things that we boast in, how can we honestly, boastfully misjudge that they are our own inherent greatness?"

Our heart is lying to us once again, because the reality is that at the foundation of these things that we take confidence in, and therefore pride in, is the fact that they all have an attachment to somebody else. It does not matter who that somebody is, because the reality is that nobody stands alone. Nobody is self-made. Such a person does not exist.

I Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

This chapter focuses on spiritual gifts even as Paul focused on spiritual gifts and God in chapter 4. The principle extends though into the physical realm.

I Corinthians 12:7-8 But the manifestation of the Spirit is **given** to every man to profit withal [for the good of everybody]. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom: to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:14-18 For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the members every one of them in the body as it has pleased **Him** .

The gifts are given by God. Who designed your ear? Who designed your mouth? Who designed the processes that make it possible for a woman's egg to be impregnated and a body, a human, to be formed in her womb, and then be born? How can we say that these things were not given to us when our

parents gave them to us, and God created the processes that bring them forth? The things that we build upon were all given, and even the building that we do we would never be able to do if God hadn't given the gift to enable us to do it. There is absolutely no excuse biblically for having pride—the pride that produces sin—in anything that we have accomplished.

I Corinthians 12:19-21 If they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Do you see what Paul is creating here? He is creating an understanding of the interdependence of everything that God has created, and God has given gifts to every part of that creation in order to function for the well-being of the whole. It doesn't matter whether it's the church, whether it's the political government, the military, the family, or husband and wife, or whatever. Everybody has been given gifts to function within the role God has appointed. We have absolutely nothing withal to brag about, because of the things have been given.

I Corinthians 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary.

It's very easy for human nature to look down on somebody after making a prejudgment that the person is not up to our standard because they are different from what we are, and so we, with our great gifts, tend to want to use them, and say, "Well, we can just brush them off." God says, "Oh, no. If it weren't for them you couldn't accomplish what you're accomplishing." God is saying, "You need them."

Just as surely as your ear needs your feet in order to be locomotive so you can go hear things, to hear different things from different places, the ear without the feet would never get to those places. Do you get the point? So how can the ear brag, because it needs the feet to get it to the places where it can hear?

I Corinthians 12:24-26 For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

As I said earlier, "*Nobody stands alone.*" I Corinthians 4 focuses on God, but it can be parent, it can be teacher, it can be coaches. It can be co-workers, neighbors, partners, spouse, pastor, friends. Again, the possibilities here are almost endless. Paul puts the focus on God because that's the area of his instruction. Paul rightly points out that God is *the* major player in all of life. He is the Potter. He is molding and shaping for His purposes. We are the clay, being gifted, and being put through experiences in order to be shaped.

But there is a tragic circumstance that takes place. I want you to see it's very clearly drawn in Isaiah 10. It's a lesson that we all have to learn.

Isaiah 10:5-6 O Assyrian, the rod of my anger, and the staff in their hand is my indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

We all know that this is Assyria being used by God, gifted by God, empowered by God to teach His covenant people Israel a lesson in humility.

Isaiah 10:7 Howbeit he means not so, neither does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

In modern language this means that Assyria doesn't intend to do what God wants them to do, and so refuses to do. But we find, as we move through the story, that God makes them do it anyway. He's the sovereign God, and His will is going to be carried out.

Isaiah 10:12-13 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord has performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout [proud, arrogant, haughty] heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he says, By the strength of *my* hand I have done it.

Is that not what we do? We take the gift given by God, given by parents, given by teachers, given by coaches, given by friends, and all of the sacrifices and time they have invested in us to help to make and shape us into what we are now, and then claim we did it ourselves. God says, *"You're not going to get away with that, Assyria. So I'm going to punish you."*

Isaiah 10:13-14 For he says, By the strength of *my* hand I have done it, and by *my* wisdom; for I am prudent: and *I* have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and *I* have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: And *my* hand has found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathers eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

And God says:

Isaiah 10:15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith?

That's what we do. Who is it that is molding and shaping us?

Isaiah 10:15 Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shakes it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.

We have to acknowledge that we are the product of other people's labors and other people's gifts.

Isaiah 10:16-19 Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire, And the light of Israel shall be

for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer faints. And the rest of the trees of his [Assyria's] forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

Pride precedes a fall. There is the proclivity of human nature very clearly drawn. God gives the gifts. Others invest in us time and energy to help form us into what we are, and then *we* take the credit, when as God says, "Hey! It's all been given to you. Who in the world do you think you are?" But if we feel that way, we're going to go the same direction that God took Assyria, because after they did their thing, God blew them right out of the water for their pride.

I don't know whether you know it, but historically, shortly after Assyria destroyed Israel, Assyria ceased to be itself. This is what triggered the wandering of the children of Israel who eventually ended up in northwest Europe and in the American continent.

Pride results from arrogating to one's self something for which one is indebted and would not have except for others' benevolence, primarily God's. Who gave Satan his intelligence? Who gave him his beauty? Who gave him his authority? Who gave him his power? You see, Satan allowed pride to pervert his thinking to where he clearly rejected his dependence, and he elevated himself above God.

Let's be instructed, because this is exactly what Psalm 10 (which we went into in the last sermon) described what happens to a man. Men begin to think that they are God, and their perverted thinking elevates them to being above God, above law, and to have no responsibility toward it, and therefore that's what provides the door to sin. That's what happened to Adam and Eve. The pride of life entered into them—"*You shall be as gods*,"—and immediately, that quick they sinned. They elevated themselves above the word of God. The process is simple, and this is why pride is so dangerous. It opens the door, it cultivates, it provides the foundation for the sin that we see on the outside.

Pride is an invisible spiritual influence that takes root in a sense of strength, a sense of wealth, a sense of accomplishment. Those things may be true. They may be real. We may really have wealth. We may really have knowledge. We may really have accomplishments. Those things may be real, but they don't have to be. We have to be careful to hold it in check, recognizing that everything we have has been *given*. We simply took advantage of the gift. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in that, but when we start using them to put down others through a perverted judgment, or to elevate the self, it will always result in other sins which will create division, which will create war.

I think this is a good place to stop. Hopefully the next time I'll be able to pick up, and we'll go on because we haven't drained the subject of all the instruction that is yet there.