

Pastor's Perspective

by Robert S. Rayburn

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and selflessness in the Christian life, highlighting pride as the root of all sin and the need to mortify our pride in order to live for God and others.

Scripture: Genesis 3:5, Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 16:18, Micah 6:8, Matthew 23:12, Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Philippians 2:3, 1 Timothy 3:6, James 4:6

Topics: "Pride And Humility", "Christian Living"

Description

Robert S. Rayburn preaches on the destructive nature of pride, highlighting how it leads to self-worship, dishonesty, and a lack of appreciation for God's grace. He emphasizes that pride is the root of all sin, tracing back to Satan's primary sin of pride and man's fall in the Garden of Eden. Rayburn stresses the importance of humility in the Christian life, noting that true goodness requires the killing of pride and living for God and others rather than for oneself.

Transcript

Pride is the idolatry of the self. It is the nature of pride as competition with God -- the displacing of God by the self at the center -- that has led many Christian thinkers through the ages to regard pride (superbia) as the mother sin and the essential element in all sin. It is strongly suggested in the Bible that pride was Satan's primary sin (1 Tim. 3:6), and from that pride in his case came every manner of hostility to God and man: evil desire, hatred, cruelty, and deceit. In the same way, man's fall resulted from his being persuaded by Satan that he might throw off his creaturely limitations and be "like God" (Gen. 3:5). From that pride has come all the rest of the evil that men think, say, and do, much -- if not all -- of which is motivated by the desire of men and women either to serve themselves or to protect their place at the center of their existence. Whether lust, greed, anger, or indifference toward others, it is not hard to see such sins as the expression of self-worship. A person does not necessarily deny that God is immeasurably greater than himself, but admissions of that type are no match for raging self-admiration in the heart.

The worst sin of pride consists in its breathtaking dishonesty: constructing a view of oneself in defiance of the facts. Pride, as Aquinas put it, is an offense against right reason. Or as Mother Teresa once said, "I am always very glad that my slanderers should tell a trifling lie about me rather than the whole terrible truth." It is the testimony of the Christian ages that the holiest men and women are invariably the most keenly aware of the humiliation they would suffer if others ever discovered the enormity of their moral failure.

Samuel Rutherford was only speaking for a great company of Christians when he wrote, "despair might almost be excused, if everyone in this land saw my inner side." And William Law said that he would rather be hanged and his body thrown in a swamp than that anyone should be allowed to look into his heart! It is man's most monumental effrontery to imagine that a selfish, petty collection of unworthy desires such as himself belongs in the center, even of his own life. The insidious nature of pride is such that men and women rarely appreciate how proud they are, and the index of pride's power over the heart is that even the purest motions of the Christian soul are deeply affected by it. Indeed, it is possible to be proud of one's confessions of sin and unworthiness or secretly to congratulate oneself on one's "brokenness." As anyone knows who has struggled against it, one of pride's most sinister effects is its dulling our sense of appreciation for the kindness and mercy of God.

A Christian, of course, would never say that he deserved salvation, perhaps never think it; but the difficulty every Christian has in being and remaining genuinely amazed and heart-broken at God's grace to him or her is evidence enough of the pride that still fills the heart. We think so well of ourselves; it is very hard to think that God should not as well.

It is the power and prevalence of pride as the principle sin of the human heart that explains the concentration on self-denial and humility in the Bible's teaching on the Christian life, what Charles Simeon called "growing downwards." It is not too much to say, as Augustine did (Letters, 118), that humility is the first, the second, and the third part of godliness. If, he said, humility did not precede, accompany, and follow every action we perform, it would not be a good work. Paul said that it is in living for God and others rather than for ourselves -- the Bible's simplest definition of humility -- that we are most like Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:3-4). If someone so worthy of the worship of all nevertheless devoted Himself to the life of others, how much more ought we sinners saved by grace cheerfully live the life of a servant? And our lives cannot be a fit response to God's grace if we do not live in heart and behavior as those who know very well that we have nothing that we did not receive (1 Cor. 4:7).

But to put pride to death is lifelong work of the most difficult kind. We get no help from our culture. Pride is a topic of little interest to modern psychology or the self-help industry, and self-congratulation has become an accepted art form in the era of the "touchdown dance." Nowadays, low self-esteem is likely to be thought a far more serious problem than pride. But the godly have always known that true goodness requires the killing of their pride, and they learned soon enough that there was no gentle way to go about it. It had to be hacked to death. One good man after another has instructed himself in these or similar words: "Talk not about myself"; "Desire to be unknown"; and "Lord, Deliver me from the lust of vindicating myself."

Once Francis of Assisi became a celebrated figure and the object of constant adulation, he is said to have assigned to a fellow monk the task of reminding him of his failures and of how little he deserved the praise he was receiving. There are other reasons to confess our sins to one another constantly, but the mortification of our pride is chief among them. Hard work; but the selflessness of the truly humble is one of the most beautiful things in the world and one of the greatest honors we can pay to our Savior.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-s-rayburn/pastors-perspective/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net