

I've told you before that one of these days I was going to tell you a story where I'm the hero; where I do something great and wonderful and we'll all laugh and rejoice and that will be a good day. But that's not today. Years ago, I was asked to teach an adult Sunday School class for the first time at another church I was going to. So, I started doing it and I rocked along for a few months, I guess, and people seemed to really enjoy it and were inviting others and I got some compliments along the way. Do you know what happened? I started believing it. I started thinking, *"Hey, I'm pretty good at this. I gotta admit I'm really bringing it."* Well, you can probably guess the moral of this story but let me give you a few gory details. I got up one Sunday morning just raring to go, teaching on the passage in **Acts 27** where Paul was shipwrecked. I was prepared and ready to bless this little group with my knowledge and grasp of difficult spiritual truths.

I remember standing up behind this little podium and I got all my notes out and I was just as confident as I could be, knowing that God was really using me. But for some reason I had a hard time getting the words out. I managed to say something about where the passage was and that Paul got shipwrecked but that was about as deep as it got. I stuttered and stammered like I was using the dictionary for text. The dictionary would have been more beneficial though. I had notes but they didn't make sense and I got lost and pretty soon it wasn't just Paul that had a shipwreck. I'm looking around for somebody to throw me a life jacket. Finally, somebody did. Somebody stood up and just said what that passage meant to them. Then somebody else stood up and did the same and somebody looked up some words and somebody else testified about it and I remember literally just sitting down behind that podium and trying to hide until I could finally call on somebody to dismiss us. I was humiliated. I left the room and went and found a quiet place and just bowed my head and let God talk. What could I say? *"Why God?"* I knew why immediately. The only thing to say was, *"I'm sorry"* and *"Thank you for showing me."* There are not many weeks that go by that I don't remember that situation and I never want to be there again although it still happens sometimes and I'm sure I need it even today.

Has God ever humbled you? Have you ever found out first hand how God feels about pride? Job found out and the situation God put him in makes mine not worth repeating. I want to ask you to turn to the end of the book of **Job; to chapter 42**. As you do, I'll summarize what happened between the first chapter that we read last week and the end of the book where we are today. Job is in between the books of **Esther** and **Psalms** in the Old Testament. We read last week about how even God considered Job to be the most righteous and upright man on the planet and yet God used Satan to take everything away from Job, including his family, his health and all his possessions. Now what you miss by only reading the first and last chapters is the introduction of Job's three friends who wax poetically for chapter after chapter about how Job has obviously sinned and just needs to repent of that sin and then God would bless him again.

Then over and over, Job answers them by swearing his innocence, as, in fact, he was innocent. But Job's three friends just insist on giving him bad advice. Do you have any friends like that? They mean well but they are just totally wrong. Another friend comes in at one point and basically says, *"Y'all listen to me. I have perfect knowledge."* (**Chapter 36**) His advice is even worse. Do you have any friends like that? If not, then your friends probably do. Now, listen to how Job answers his buddies when they again make the assumption that he is being punished for his sins. In **chapter 29**, he answers them by saying that not only was he not guilty but, *"When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, ⁸the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet;⁹ the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; ¹⁰the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. ¹¹Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, ¹²because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist them. ¹³The one who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. ¹⁴I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. ¹⁵I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. ¹⁶I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. ¹⁷I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth."*

I hope you can get the whole picture here and see what is really going on. Job, as he is saying this, is sitting in dust and ashes, wearing torn robes with a shameful lack of hair on his head and face for the time, owning nothing and covered head to toe with sores and boils...and he is proud. Do you see it? I, I, I...me, me, me...look at who I am and what I have done...as I sit here king of the dung heap.

It would be laughable if I were not just like him. The problem of the sin of pride is that it is so easy to be proud...even of your humility. In "The Screwtape Letters", C.S. Lewis wrote about a senior demon instructing a lesser demon who was having a hard time getting his assigned human to sin. The older demon advised the younger that if he couldn't convince the man to sin then just let the man be proud of that fact. Either way, Satan wins when we give in to the sin of pride.

God says in Proverbs that pride goes before destruction. He says in Psalms that men are so consumed with themselves that their thoughts are far from God. This is proved in the book of Job in that even while Job was so afflicted, he was still proud and from **chapter 2** all the way to **chapter 38** Job and his buddies talk about the situation and what they wished would happen and Job actually says to God at one point in **chapter 13**, *"Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply to me."* (**Verse 22**) Now, I am a big proponent of learning scripture and then praying back to God what He has written in His Word but I do not recommend ever saying this to God. Don't even memorize it. I say that because in **chapter 38** Job gets this wish. I know I told you to find chapter 42 and I will get there in just a minute but you need to see what God says to Job in **chapter 38**. He starts out with the question, *"Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?"* Then He says, *"³ Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me."*

Then for the next couple of chapters Job goes three rounds with the Creator of the universe...and it's not pretty. God asks him something like 150 different questions that are completely unanswerable. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Have you seen the gates of death? Where is the rain stored? Have you seen the storehouses of snow? Do the lightning bolts take orders from you? Did you give the horse its strength? On and on and on He goes humiliating Job with question after question. He ends by talking about how small and powerless man is compared even to some of the animals God has created. He says at the end for Job to consider the Leviathan. This may be an alligator or something like it. We don't know for sure. But God says, *"He looks down on all that are haughty. It is king over all that are proud."* (**Verse 34**)

Do you remember that iconic picture of Mohammed Ali standing over Sonny Liston who is on his back in the middle of the ring? I have a picture in my mind of God standing over Job something like that. Job is done. Stick a fork in him. It's over for him. He finally gets to the point where he can say to God – and here is where we pick up in **chapter 42** – *"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ⁴ 'You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."*

W.A. Criswell said, *"Before God can remake us, He must unmake us. And before God can bring us to life, we must die."* He's not talking about physical death. He's talking about dying to one's self; dying to one's own will, plans, dreams and hopes and honestly saying to God, *"I see Who You are and I see who I am and I despise myself in comparison."* My friend **Scott Parrish** says that Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people alive. But we are only really alive spiritually when we die to ourselves by allowing God to have control over our lives. It's not optional if you want to be a disciple of Jesus and it is exactly what God was teaching Job. We talked last Sunday night about how God is the source of all things and I believe that is important to learn but I also believe that having the knowledge about the proper term for what God does – does he allow it or cause it – is not the whole lesson God wants us to learn.

The lesson He really wants us to learn is that no matter what He does – cause or allow, good or bad, bless or curse – our job is just to trust Him; to trust His character that is love and His judgment that is true. This life isn't about us! Quit trying to be comfortable in this wisp of smoke that is this life and seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. (Matt. 6:33) You have heard it said that it's not about thinking less of yourself. It's about thinking of yourself less. Abraham – the great Abraham, father of Israel – said in Genesis, *"Behold, behold, I have taken upon me to speak to the great High God, I who am but dust and ashes"* [Genesis 18:27]. Do you remember what the tax collector said in **Luke 18**? *"God, have mercy on me, a sinner."* When King David came to God in **Psalms 51** he said he had a broken and contrite heart. Do you know what these people all have in common? Do you know what David and Abraham and Job and throw in the thief on the cross and the prodigal son and Paul when he said he was spiritually crucified with Christ – do you know what all these people had in common?

They heard from God. They knew God in a new and real way. They were able to come before the Creator of the universe, the One who keeps the stars, tells the ocean where to stop and clothes Himself in glory and splendor and truly have a relationship. They were able to talk to Him and hear from Him, receive blessings from Him and trust Him in the tragedies because they knew Him and He knew them.

Andrew Murray said, *"The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised while he is forgotten because ... he has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and who sought not His own honor."*

So, how do you know if you are prideful? Oh, it's easy to see it in other people, right. I have 20/20 vision seeing pride in others but I know I can be a little far-sighted when it comes to seeing it in myself. So I did some research (I Googled it) and found some red flags to look for in yourself. These are not to be used to look at others or to justify making somebody else feel bad. These are scientific markers of proud people to watch out for in your own life.

#1 A lack of empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. This lack of empathy can manifest in various ways, such as indifference to others' struggles, dismissiveness towards others' emotions, or an inability to celebrate others' successes. If someone is hurting, it's not your problem. If somebody is celebrating, it's not your party.

#2 Inability to Admit Wrongdoing

Prideful individuals often exhibit a marked inability to admit wrongdoing or accept their mistakes, primarily because it challenges how they see themselves. *"I've been doing this a long time. I'm good at it. And therefore, it can't be me that made the mistake."*

#3 Disregard for Others' Opinions. This goes right along with number 2. *"I'm so good at this, I don't need your opinion."*

#4 Self-Centeredness. I was watching a Marx Brothers movie the other night and Groucho was talking to a lady and he said, *"Well, I've talked about me long enough. Now, let's hear you talk about me for a while."* It's funny when he says it but if the conversation always has to be about you, watch out. That's a red flag.

#5 Unwillingness to Ask for Help. Ouch! I know I'm bad about that. But that's just because I don't want to bother people, right? Which leads me right into the last one.

#6 Defensiveness. If you have to justify everything. If you always have a reason for what you did just like when I said I don't want to bother people. That may be pride in your life and so I will just sit down here behind this podium and hide for a while. ([Characteristics of a Prideful Person](#))

I believe the book of Job should at least teach us two things. It should teach us that God is sovereign and will do whatever He wants with or without our opinions on the matter and when we understand that God is love that should bring us great peace.

The other thing is that sovereign God will not put up with pride. If you want to truly know God and fellowship with Him you better see yourself as you truly are and humble yourself or He will do it for you. Truly knowing God is at the same time a one-time thing and a life-long process. We have been talking about the process of humbling ourselves and coming to the realization of who we really are compared to Almighty God.

But it starts with a first step. That first step also involves humbling ourselves but it begins with repenting of our sin and trusting Jesus as our Savior. That is lived out in a life that is obedient to what God wants. Just as Jesus Himself said in the garden before His death, *"Not my will but yours be done, Father."*

Can you honestly say that? Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no man comes to the Father except through Him. **(John 14:6)** You too can have a relationship with the Father of all creation through His Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Today is the day of salvation. Do it today.

