

Sins of the Spirit¹

Today we begin our annual Summer Sermon Series. Instead of looking at a particular passage verse-by-verse, as we usually do, we'll take the months of June, July, and August to consider what the Bible says about a particular topic.

Our topic this summer is sins of the spirit. We'll be considering common sins that affect our attitudes, our thoughts, and our feelings. These are internal sins that often influence our behavior. Sins of the spirit may be happening internally without any evidence externally. Our behavior may be perfectly acceptable, all the while our hearts are corrupt, twisted, and diseased. We may be sitting in church, doing nothing sinful physically, yet in our minds, we may be committing horrible sins.

Controlling our behavior is often difficult, but it's a lot easier than controlling our inner thoughts and feelings. Sins of the spirit are some of the most difficult sins to overcome. And yet we must strive to do so.

2 Corinthians 10:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

As we consider these sins of the spirit, our goal should be that we evaluate our own hearts to see if we are guilty of these sins, and if so, we must seek to eliminate them from our lives. As with all sins, our hope and trust is in Christ to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Faith in Christ breaks the power of sin for believers. Jesus died to forgive these sins and to give us victory over them. God's grace enables us to overcome these sins, and we should be striving to do so. We may be guilty of these sins, and we should be making efforts to reduce and eliminate such sins from our lives.

What are some sins of the spirit? We're talking about sins like:

Pride, jealousy, judgmentalism, bitterness, unrighteous anger, greed, hypocrisy, blame-shifting, foolishness, laziness, pleasure-seeking, anxiety, discontentment, unthankfulness, lack of self-control, superficiality, impatience, irritability, and worldliness. We won't get through this whole list this summer, but we'll explore a good number of them—I hope about 12 or 13 of them before the end of the summer.

¹ These messages are largely based on a series of messages by Dr. Charles Wood, South Bend, Indiana, now deceased.

The goal in these messages is not merely to make us feel bad about our sins and failures. The goal is godliness, increased sanctification. The goal is that we are sensitive to these sins and recognize them when they appear in our own lives. If we are guilty of them, we must repent and seek to change. We must trust in the Lord to forgive us for these sins, and we must make every effort to overcome them and eliminate them from our lives.

I hope as we look at these sins, each one of us will be sensitive and introspective to see which ones apply to us.

And we'll begin with the mother of all sins, the most deadly of all the deadly sins:

PRIDE

Maybe you've seen those bumper stickers on cars that say "Proud parent of an honor roll student" or "The few, the proud, the Marines." Around Independence Day, we hear the song "I'm proud to be an American." We have pride in our country, our children, our soldiers, our homes, our cars, our careers, our achievements, and ourselves. We hardly give it a second thought; pride is ingrained within the human heart. We often think of pride as a good thing. Sign—"Proud dairy family"

Although it is seldom identified or even mentioned as sin in our world today, the Bible repeatedly condemns pride and warns us about all the negative results which flow from it.

Let's consider what the Bible tells us about the sin of pride.

- I. Definitions—we can define pride in various ways:
 - A. Pride is an inflated sense of one's own worth and importance; an unreasonable concern for oneself;
 - B. Pride is inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem;
 - C. Pride is pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements or possessions;
 - D. Pride is an attempt to appear in a superior light compared to others.
 - E. The common theme of pride is the self. Pride is an over-emphasis on the self, a love of self, and a desire for others to validate yourself.
- II. Various forms of pride.²
 - A. The pride of moral self-righteousness

² Some of this is from Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2007), 90.

Luke 18:11 *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.*

This form of pride is a feeling of superiority over others because you are more morally upstanding than they are. Because we don't typically commit flagrant sins like immorality, divorce, abortion, drunkenness, drug use, and fraud, we feel that we are better than those who do. We look at lowly sinners with a feeling of disdain or contempt because they commit sins that we would never commit.

Isa 65:5 ... *Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.* ...

Luke 18:9 *[Jesus] spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*

That's a good definition of the pride of moral self-righteousness—I am more righteous than others, and I despise others who are less moral than I am.

B. **Pride of achievement.**

1. There is nothing wrong/sinful about achievement. In fact, the Bible promotes achievement and excellence. If we work hard and play by the rules, we might achieve great things and become very successful.

Proverbs 13:4 ... *the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.*

2. But we all know that many people have deep feelings of pride in themselves because of their achievements. We hear this from athletes all the time—they brag and boast about how athletically talented they are. But anyone who achieves almost anything in life often feels a sense of pride because of his achievements.

3. Further, there is a feeling we call pride that I don't think is necessarily sinful. It is the feeling of gratification one gets when associated with something good, commendable, or admirable. The focus is not on the benefit to yourself, but on the accomplishments of others. This can lead to personal pride, but not necessarily.

There's a fine line between being glad for someone else and trying to build yourself up on the basis of others' accomplishments. We are guilty of pride when we "attempt to appear in a superior light" because we are associated with something good or someone else's accomplishments. Pride is oriented to the self; if you are trying to appear in a better light because of your association with others, then it's likely pride.

If you are merely thankful or gratified when others achieve great things, then it's probably not pride. The main issue is—who is the center of attention? If you are seeking to focus attention on yourself because of your association with others, then it's probably pride. But if you are simply happy and gratified for others when they succeed, then it's not sinful pride.

- C. The pride of an independent spirit.
 - 1. Proud people often resist authority and are unteachable. This can be true especially with young people who think they know everything when in reality they know very little.
 - 2. For many people today, especially those who were raised apart from a biblical worldview, their own personal opinions are the highest authority for them. Whatever they think is right. They set themselves up as the source of truth, and anything that contradicts them must be wrong.
 - 3. Obviously, pride is what leads people to think that they are right and that those who don't agree with them are wrong. That overly inflated sense of self-worth leads proud people to live for themselves and to disregard what others might want.

Trans: Pride takes many forms. We should be on the lookout for these forms of pride in our life.

- III. Notice several reasons that pride is so deadly.
 - A. Pride was the original sin.

Isaiah 14:12–14 *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 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; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’*

Five times Satan says “I will.” Satan’s primary sin was pride/self-will, exerting his own will against God’s will. Satan rebelled against God’s rightful authority.

And Satan tempted Eve in the same way.

Genesis 3:6. And when the woman saw that the tree [was] good for food, and that it [was] pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make [one] wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Satan appealed to Even on the basis of pride or self-fulfillment. He still does that today. Pride was the original sin.

B. Pride is the essential sin.

Every time we sin, we are putting our own will above God’s or above someone else’s authority. Pride is at the root of every other sin.

Jud 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Virtually every sin that we commit can be tied back to self-centered pride.

C. Pride is personally destructive. How so?³

- ⊗ It believes it is always right; it can’t bring itself to say, “I was wrong.”
- ⊗ It is easily offended.
- ⊗ It won’t ask for assistance.
- ⊗ It tramples on others.
- ⊗ It interferes in the affairs of others.
- ⊗ It specializes in unsolicited advice.
- ⊗ It elevates personal opinions into convictions.
- ⊗ It views self as better than others.
- ⊗ It rebels against authority.
- ⊗ It is insensitive to the feelings of others.
- ⊗ It frequently boasts and brags.

³ This list taken from Dr. Charles "Chuck" Wood’s A PASTORAL PROMPTER, September 10, 2001.

If most of those descriptions are true of you, you are proud and your life will be a mess. Those kinds of attitudes are personally destructive.

D. The Bible never mentions pride in a positive light.

1. We sometimes think of pride as a good emotion or attitude. Our world certainly sees pride as a positive thing. But the Bible doesn't use it in any good sense.
2. According to the Bible, pride is a source of shame, contention, foolishness and destruction.

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.

Proverbs 16:5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; ...

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, ...

3. Pride is listed with other serious sins.

Mark 7:21-23 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Why do you think the homosexuals have labeled June as "pride month"? The entire month, for many, is a huge celebration of depravity and immorality. What does it tell us that the LGBT promoters are proud of their wicked behavior?

People today are often proud of what they should be ashamed of. The whole LGBT lifestyle and worldview is shameful and wicked. Those trapped in that lifestyle should be ashamed of themselves, not proud of themselves.

Php 3:19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

The fact that the homosexuals express pride in their shameful, depraved behavior shows us that pride is a serious sin.

E. Pride prevents people from seeking after God.

Deuteronomy 8:14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, ...

Ps 10:4 *In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

1. Proud people think about themselves, not about God. Proud people take credit for their own achievements; they are not thankful or humble.
2. Proud people don't need God. High achievers often have an inflated sense of self because they think they have achieved everything without God.

F. God resists the proud.

James 4:6 *God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.*

1. Proud people are antagonistic to God, and God is opposed to them.

Isaiah 2:12 *For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.*

We find many expressions throughout the Bible of a great reversal in which the proud will be brought low and the humble will be exalted.

2. If you want God as an enemy, be proud.

IV. How to overcome pride

A. Think about yourself realistically.

Rom 12:3 *For I say, through the grace of God given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

Instead of being proud of ourselves, we are supposed to think "soberly." This word (σωφρονέω) means, 'to be in one's right mind, to be sane, to think straight, to reason correctly;' 'to have right thoughts.'⁴

What is proper reasoning regarding ourselves?

1. All my success and achievement ultimately come from God, not from myself.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 351–352.

1 Samuel 2:7 *The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.*

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, ...*

We should thank and praise God for any achievements or success that he allows us to enjoy. That's right thinking.

2. I am a depraved sinner. Sin has affected the whole of my being—intellect, emotions and will. I am capable of doing some incredibly bad things apart from God's grace. I am "only a sinner saved by grace!"
3. I have no right to boast or feel superior to anyone else. I am no better than anyone; in fact, I'm worse than many. Many people are superior to me in character, spirituality, and behavior.
4. I am not as good as others think I am. There are things in my life which, if known, would humiliate me.

If we would think soberly/reasonably about ourselves, we would not be proud; we would be humble because we recognize all our shortcomings and failures.

B. Pursue an attitude of humility.

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

1 Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*

1. Humility is the opposite of pride. Instead of thinking highly of ourselves, we think of ourselves realistically. Humble people simply don't think much about themselves. They are focused on loving God and loving others, not exalting themselves.
2. God is looking for humble submission and obedience to rightful authority.

Zephaniah 2:3 *Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility;*
....

3. We recognize that without God's grace and mercy, we would not be able to achieve anything. We could all be just as bad as the worst sinner in the world. We think to ourselves, "There, but for

the grace of God, go I.” If we are morally upright, it’s only because of God’s grace. We are not naturally upright and moral; we are naturally depraved, just as much as anyone else. We easily could have been just as sinful as anyone else; even worse.

Quote: Rather than feeling morally superior to those who practice the flagrant sins we condemn, we ought to feel deeply grateful that God by His grace has kept us from, or perhaps rescued us from, such a lifestyle.⁵

4. Humility gives God and others the credit for what we achieve and for all the blessings we enjoy.
- c. Seek to have a teachable spirit.
1. Proud people are usually not good students because they think they already know everything. They are often unteachable and rebel against authority.
 2. If you sense this weakness in yourself, or if others point this out to you, then you need to pursue a teachable spirit.
 3. The Bible emphasizes learning from others and being teachable. Here are a series of verses from Proverbs:
Proverbs 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.
Proverbs 4:1 Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight.
Proverbs 5:1 My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding.
Proverbs 7:1 My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you.
 4. All of these passages, and many others, teach us to learn from others and not to think that we know everything.

Pride is the essential sin. Going our own way, doing our own thing, rebelling against God’s law, demanding our own rights—all this is based on pride.

Many of us commit the sin of pride more often than we’d like to admit. We enjoy getting noticed and being praised. We boast in and take credit for our achievements. We like recognition; we want others to affirm us and validate us.

⁵ Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2007), 91.

In the worst cases, people are proud about what they should be ashamed of.

Remember what God says about pride. Remember that God values humility. Remember how destructive pride can be.

Isaiah 66:2 ... on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.