

Rev. Shaun Arndt
August 28, 2022
Proverbs 25:6-7
Pentecost 12

Pride's Downfall

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Sometimes the downfall caused by pride can be almost humorous. The soccer goalie makes an amazing play! He dives to block the ball from hitting the goal. He then jumps up and looking to the crowd, pats himself on the chest. Meanwhile, the still spinning ball rolls backwards across the now undefended goal.

Other times the downfall from pride is horrible tragedy. They said the mighty Titanic was an 'unsinkable' ship. So clearly there's no reason to have enough life boats to fit all the passengers and no reason to slow down at the reports of icebergs in the area. And so human pride contributed to the death of more than 1500 people!

Pride is destructive. It has brought about the downfall of companies, kingdoms and careers. It has ruined friendships, marriages and worst of all, has doomed countless souls to eternal loss. So let us be warned by the **downfall pride** causes and encouraged by the only One who has won and brought about the **downfall of pride**.

Using language from the royal court 3,000 years ago, our first lesson warns against pride: **Do not honor yourself in a king's presence. Do not stand in a place reserved for great people, because it is better to be told, "Come up here," than for you to be humiliated before a ruler.**

'**Honor yourself**' means pushing yourself forward, pointing to yourself to say how good you are, how much you've done and how much you deserve. Another Bible translation relates the thought of this verse this way: ***Don't boast about yourself before the king*** (CSB).

Now the reason a person would want to **honor themselves** or **boast about themselves before** a king is so that they could get something for themselves from the king, like money, power or position. Pride that thinks highly about oneself goes hand in hand with greed and selfishness, for pride says: "Hey, of course I should get that, after all *I* deserve it!"

Now I don't think any of us are going to go around **bragging** about our accomplishments in front of a king or a president to try to get some favor. And yet these verses still speak to us.

After all, we are always **in the presence** of God, the King of all who sees and knows everything, including how that old sin of **pride** also lurks within our hearts.

To recognize our gifts and talents and thank God for them is not wrong. But I think we all know how easily we can start to think of such blessings as a source for personal pride that quickly forgets all we are and have is an undeserved gift of God!

Pride makes it easier to spot the faults in others, but overlook and excuse our own sins. Pride makes us slow to admit we were wrong and even slower to want to apologize for it. We even have a saying that talks

about admitting you're wrong as "swallowing your pride." And its pride that makes it hard for us to let go and forgive when others have wronged us.

And not only can such things cause strife in relationships, but it can lead to the deadly sin of thinking that maybe we aren't so bad and so maybe we can in some way do something to earn God's favor.

Pride goes hand in hand with jealousy, envy, self-pity and complaint. It's pride that makes us upset when the other person gets the bigger piece of cake, the better place on the team, the job promotion, the bigger fish as pride screams: *I deserve better!*

Pride can make us angry with God and doubt His care when He allows trouble in our lives, because deep down our sinful nature thinks it knows better than the Lord of all!

Consider how much of our impatience comes from pride – whether we're stuck in a line, or traffic, or when someone wants some of our time, at least part of that impatience comes from pride thinking my time is more valuable than *theirs!*

Martin Luther once spoke of pride as the mother of all sin. Pride was at the heart of the very first sin. The devil's temptation to Adam and Eve was not "here's some yummy fruit", but this: **when you eat of it, you will be like God.** In other words, 'don't listen to God, you be god for yourself and you call your own shots!'

Such horrible prideful rebellion still stands behind our every sin. Pride makes us want to be god for ourselves and call our own shots when we don't agree with the commands God gives in His word. Sinful pride resists what Jesus tells us about humbly putting others first, because we're afraid we'll lose out on what *we* think we deserve.

Now if for some reason you don't think you have any problem with the sin of pride, then I cannot give you better advice than something Martin Luther once said: ***No one is more arrogant than the fellow who dares to say that he is free of all arrogance.*** In other words, to say we don't have sinful pride is to call God a liar when He tells us we **all have sinned and fall short** of his **glory.**

How great is **pride's downfall** that it causes so much sin, pain, and dissatisfaction in the world, in our lives, in our hearts! But worst of all, the **downfall** our pride has earned is for us to be eternally **humiliated** in the shame and punishment of hell. And we can no more save ourselves from that than we can get rid of our old sinful heart's tendency toward self-serving pride.

But what we couldn't do, *God did!* Sinful **pride** met its own **downfall** in Jesus Christ, the King who is infinitely greater than us and yet chose to humble Himself to save us from the eternal downfall our sinful pride deserved!

The Son of God is rightly number one over all creation. He made it all and holds it all together. He has every right to the uninterrupted honor and glory of his eternal throne. And yet He chose to leave it for a time, to come down from His infinitely greater place *not* to be honored and served, but *to serve* us and to give His life as a ransom to save us.

Just think of it. Jesus leaves heaven to come to a world of suffering and death. He chooses to put His glory aside to be wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger. He demands no golden palace, but lives in a poor Jewish family.

Jesus Christ, God's Son came and lived in the true humility that is the polar opposite of sinful pride that puts self-first. Jesus never said *I deserve* better, even though He of course did! Instead, He put us, His by nature sinful, pride-filled enemies first and did what was best for us to save us!

Christ lived His entire life free from even the slightest trace of sinful pride, impatience, and jealousy that fills our world and lurks within our hearts.

For example, the disciples wanted Jesus to soak up the glory in Capernaum, but He humbly turned aside to teach and preach in tiny backwater villages. On another occasion, when a crowd offered Jesus an earthly crown, He refused to instead take the road to a crown of thorns and the throne of the cross.

Few things hurt our pride as much as getting blamed and punished for something we didn't do! But Jesus humbly took the guilty verdict He did not deserve. He willingly took the hellish punishment our 'I know better' and slow to admit 'I'm wrong' had earned. Putting you and me first, Jesus did not complain, but took the death we deserved to give us the life He alone earned!

And though Jesus now has all the glory for His defeating death and rising to life on Easter morning, yet see how He uses that glory and power all for us, to take care of and rule all things for the eternal good of His Church. Yes, He takes his victory over sin and death, He takes His accomplishment- His sinless life and death and counts it as ours, choosing to *honor us* with what only He has earned and deserved!

And so in Jesus, our sinful pride that should drag us down to hell meets its **downfall**, for Jesus takes our every pride-fueled sin away.

Christ who could have left us to the depths of hell, instead says, '**Come up here...** I forgive you and raise you up to life with me forever! **Come up here...** for I am the one who raises you up to life with God. **Come up here...** for I robe you with my perfect life of humility to cover your every fault.'

'**Come up here...**' Jesus says, 'I give to you a status and an identity to which nothing in this world can compare – I give you the status of child of God and heir of heaven!'

See, dear friends, you do not have to honor yourself or boast about what you do or push yourself forward, for Jesus has already given to you a life in me and an everlasting future greater than you can imagine.

And in Jesus' peace and promises, He gives you the power to humbly live like him, loving and serving others. And no matter how many people you put first and no matter what you give up, you will never out give the eternal joy Jesus gives you!

So dear friends in Christ, let us always look to Jesus as the one who brought about **Pride's Downfall**, defeating it along with every sin and giving us the eternal victory.

With the faith the Holy Spirit has given, let us cast down our **pride** as we daily confess our sin and our need for Jesus. And then lifted up by His forgiveness, strive to honor Jesus by humbly loving and serving others until that day when Jesus our Savior King says to you once more:

"**Come up here**, to the place I earned and prepared for you. **Come up here** to my heavenly banquet hall and the endless joy and celebration of my eternal home!" Amen.

Lord, increase our faith. Amen.