

991121 AM Fall-2

# PARADISE LOST SERIES

## MESSAGE # 2

### "SATAN'S WEAKNESS"

God is in an all out war against PRIDE this morning.  
He wants to stamp it out in our lives this morning.  
Let's let Him give us an exam this morning and help us cure our "I" problem today!

The most glaring portrait of pride is Lucifer, Satan, the devil. His downfall was deadly pride:

In this angelic<sup>1</sup> host of the Lord God in heaven, above the archangels and above the seraphim and above the cherubim, there was one that God chose to be the crown prince of them all. His name was Lucifer, the star of the morning, the leader of the host of heaven, the guardian of the throne of God. Into Lucifer's hands was committed all that the Lord God had made and all of the angels that He had created. He was beautiful. He was perfect. And in his beauty and in his perfection he said in his pride that he would be like the Most High God.

Look with me at Isaiah 14:12-15.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!  
How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!  
For thou hast said in thine heart,  
I WILL ASCEND (that is self-assertion) into heaven,  
I WILL EXALT (that is self-promotion) my throne above the stars of God:  
I WILL SIT (that is self-centeredness) also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:  
I WILL ASCEND (that is self-exaltation) above the heights of the clouds;

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<sup>1</sup> W.A. Criswell, p.

I WILL BE LIKE (that is self-delusion) the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

This morning, please stand with me and listen as I read James 4:1-12.

In our text this morning look with me and see that -  
A Genuine Christian RECOGNIZES AND TURNS FROM PRIDE AND ITS EVILS 4:1-12

Like ink blots on a lovely white wedding dress, these verses in James stain his words to those 1<sup>st</sup> century church members. When Satan comes into the scene as John 10:10 says he comes "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

NKJV. And what is Satan's calling card? PRIDE

What will pride do if allowed to seep through my life?

1. PRIDE POISONS MY RELATIONSHIPS v. 1a
2. PRIDE POLLUTES MY LIFE v. 1b
3. PRIDE PRODUCES ANXIETY IN MY LIFE v. 2
4. PRIDE PLUNDERS MY PRAYERS v. 3
5. PRIDE PROVOKES GOD'S ENMITY v. 4-5
6. PRIDE PREVENTS MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH v. 6a

But what will pride resisted, or humility do?

1. HUMILITY PROMPTS THE GRACE OF GOD v. 6b
2. HUMILITY PROVIDES THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD v. 7
3. HUMILITY PROSPERS INTIMACY WITH GOD v. 8a
4. HUMILITY PROMOTES CLEANSING FROM GOD v. 8b-9
5. HUMILITY PREPARES US SUCCESS THROUGH GOD v. 10-12

## **PRIDE POISONS MY RELATIONSHIPS**

v. 1a Where do wars and fights come from among you?

- ✓ "wars" (polemoi) and "fights" (machai) It is the incessant pursuit of pleasure that drives people to abandon partner, family, home and church.
- ✓ Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. NKJV

## **PRIDE POLLUTES MY LIFE**

v. 1b Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? NKJV God's Word declares that the essence of sin is selfishness.

- ✓ Isaiah distilled down sin to one universal indictment of mankind "We have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).

## **PRIDE PRODUCES ANXIETY IN MY LIFE**

v. 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. NKJV

- ✓ God ended His Ten Words with "Thou shalt not covet" because the idolatry (Col. 3) of covetousness can make a person murder, tell lies, dishonor his parents, commit adultery, and so on.
- ✓ The last command if broken is an open door to a person eventually violating all of God's moral law. Selfishness begets war on the inside. And if unstopped it breaks into war on the outside.

## **PRIDE PLUNDERS MY PRAYERS**

v. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. NKJV

## **PRIDE PROVOKES GOD'S ENMITY**

v. 4-5 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.<sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? NKJV

- ✓ "adulterers" the Word of God speaks often of our new relationship. 2 Corinthians 11:1-2 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. NKJV

## **PRIDE PREVENTS MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

v. 6a But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, NKJV .

- ✓ The word "opposes," or "resists," is antitassetai, a military term meaning "to battle against."

## **HUMILITY PROMPTS THE GRACE OF GOD**

v. 6b But gives grace to the humble." NKJV

## **HUMILITY PROVIDES THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD**

v. 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. NKJV

- ✓ In verses 7-9 a whole series of commands (10 aorist imperatives) are given which, if followed, contribute to harmony and holiness.

## **HUMILITY PROSPERS INTIMACY WITH GOD**

v. 8a Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. NKJV

## **HUMILITY PROMOTES CLEANSING**

v. 8b-9 Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded

- ✓ v. 9 Lament "affliction" (talaiporein) is a word for an army without food and shelter exposed to the ravages of stormy weather. James uses it as a call for voluntary abstinence from the luxuries of life. Much like the concentration of study that makes a scholar; the rigorous training that produces the athlete; and this is the chosen way of life under the Holy Spirit's fruit of self-discipline that produces the spiritual giants to live for Christ in a wicked world!

- ✓ and mourn “mourn” as John Wesley saw the white streaks formed as tears coursed down the blackened faces of Kingswoods miners in the 18th century, so James says to his 1st century luxury living, unconcerned and unmoved church goers – let God rend your hearts until you mourn over sin.
- ✓ and weep! “weep” these are the tears of sympathy that move us to action welling up from a compassion filled heart. No longer unmoved and uncaring, the heart mourning before a Holy God soon becomes filled with the compassion of Christ.
- ✓ Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. NKJV

## **HUMILITY PREPARES US FOR SUCCESS**

- v. 10-12 How? Godly humility is everywhere called for by God:
  - ✓ Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. NKJV

## **BY TURNING CRITICISM INTO HEALING**

- v. 11-12
  - ✓ “slander” is katalalein which most oftens means to speak evil of someone who is not present to defend himself.
  - ✓ Psalm 101:5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure. NKJV;
  - ✓ 1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, NKJV

Pride is the supreme temptation from Satan, because pride is at the heart of his own evil nature. Consequently, Satan makes sure that the Christian is never entirely free from the temptation of pride. We will always be in a battle with pride until the Lord takes us to be with Himself. Our only protection against pride, and our only source of humility, is a proper view of God. Pride is the sin of competing with God, and humility is the virtue of submitting to His supreme glory.

Pride comes in many forms. We may be tempted to be proud of our abilities, our possessions, our education, our social status, our appearance, our power, and even our biblical knowledge or religious accomplishments. But throughout Scripture the Lord calls His people to humility. "Before honor comes humility" (Prov. 15:33); "The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life" (22:4); "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (27:2).

## **THE KEY TO GOD'S BLESSING: HUMILITY**

Humility is an ingredient of all spiritual blessing. Just as every sin has its roots in pride, every virtue has its roots in humility. Humility allows us to see ourselves as we are, because it shows us before God as He is. Just as pride is behind every conflict we have with other people and every problem of fellowship we have with the Lord, so humility is behind every harmonious human relationship, every spiritual success, and every moment of joyous fellowship with the Lord.

**Humility** begins with proper self-awareness, "the virtue," said Bernard of Clairvaux, "by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness." It begins with an honest, unadorned, unretouched view of oneself. The first thing the honest person sees in himself is sin, and therefore one of the surest marks of true humility is daily confession of sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9). "We are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves," Paul says; "but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12). It is not only unspiritual but unintelligent to judge ourselves by comparison with others. We all tend to exaggerate our own good qualities and minimize the good qualities of others. Humility takes off our rose-colored glasses and allows us to see ourselves as we really are. We are not "adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves," says Paul, "but our adequacy is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

Second, **humility** involves Christ-awareness. He is the only standard by which righteousness can be judged and by which pleasing God can be judged. Our goal should be no less than "to walk in the

same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6), and Jesus Christ walked in perfection. Only of Jesus has God ever said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Third, **humility** involves God-awareness. As we study His life in the gospels we come to see Jesus more and more in His human perfection—His perfect humility, His perfect submission to the Father, His perfect love, compassion, and wisdom. But beyond His human perfection we also come to see His divine perfection—His limitless power; His knowing the thoughts and heart of every person; and His authority to heal diseases, cast out demons, and even forgive sins. We come to see Jesus Christ as Isaiah saw the Lord, "sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted" and we want to cry out with the seraphim, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory," and with the prophet himself, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:1, 3, 5.)<sup>2</sup>

What's the cure for the "I" problem? A chosen, personal humbling of ourselves. Then we partake of God's great grace!

But<sup>3</sup> there is this warning to add as we come face to face with Jesus this morning. There was a day in history when two kings confronted one another for the first time. One was a proud earthly king. He sat that day at the pinnacle of power. His name was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great.

- ✓ Herod the Great had slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem in his desire to exterminate Christ.
- ✓ His successor, Antipas, was no better. He had beheaded John the Baptist and had been called "that fox" by Jesus (Luke 13:32).
- ✓ Antipas had everything he wanted. His income, would be in excess of 6 million dollars a year. All the pleasures of life were his. If anyone stood in his way ... well, the life of that person meant as little to him as the lives of the innocents of Bethlehem had meant to his father. The motto of his reign was: "What will it profit me?"

The other king was Jesus. He was the King of Kings, according to His divine nature, the supreme King over all the kings of this earth. But

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<sup>2</sup>MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Boice, *Minor Prophets*, I, 201.

He did not look like a king. He stood in humble clothing. He had been rejected. Within hours He was to die a felon's death.

If Jesus had wished, He could have called forth legions of angels who would have vindicated His cause instantly. But Jesus did not want the throne in that way. He did not want the throne until you and I could share it with Him. To make that possible He would die.

Herod said, "What does it profit me?" Jesus said, "What can I do that will be the greatest possible benefit to My brethren?" God vindicated Jesus! Jesus went to the cross. He died. But His death was followed by a resurrection, and today He lives to enable those who believe on Him to behave as He did and bring a true, supernatural brotherhood to this world. For his part, Herod went on with his revelry but soon was banished to Lyons, France, where he died in misery<sup>4</sup>. This is the choice before you: to go Herod's way of pride or Jesus' way of humility. You cannot do both!

Can you sing to Jesus, "King of my life I crown thee now?"

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<sup>4</sup> I am indebted for this comparison to a small tract written years ago by Joseph Hoffman Cohn for the American Board of Missions to the Jews, entitled "The Man from Petra," No. 65 in the series "What Every Christian Should Know About the Jews" (revised 1961, no original date of publication).