

West Side Fellowship

Pride in Decision

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Philippians 2v5-8

This week we will continue to look at how pride affects our lives, for if our goal is to follow after Christ then humility is a requirement in our lives. For as we have seen, pride and conceit is the exact opposite of humility and as such is “anti Christ”, against the ways of God. It is difficult for us to conceive at times just how pride controls the attitudes of our lives, but as we continue to look into this subject let us pray that the Holy Spirit will start to shed light on the areas of our life that need to change, not by adding a set of rules, but by a change in heart attitude. For as we humbly start to see how pride has controlled and motivated us, it should bring us into a greater realisation of the miracle and power of the life of Christ and how he walked his earthly walk facing the same temptations as us, yet was without sin.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy because I am holy”.

1 Peter 1v15-16

As Christians it can be very easy to lose the true focus of holiness. We understand what it means to be consecrated and dedicated to the Lord, but as pride seeps into our life, that dedication and consecration can once again be reduced to a set of rules, a set of “do and do not’s”. We fail to understand that Jesus’s life was not governed by a set of rules, in fact many times we see he came into conflict with the religious leaders of the day on this very subject. Instead his daily life was governed by his relationship with his Father, the time he spent alone with Him and the decisions Jesus made were based on the instruction of His Father. This is true holiness, a holiness that is based on a constant leading of the Lord. It is a holiness of being set apart for the use of the Father to do His will when He wants it done, it is the holiness of servant hood, the holiness that Satan threw off in his pride. This holiness through obedience is the type we are encouraged to pursue in *Romans 12v1* out of thankfulness for all we have received in Christ. The great danger we constantly face from pride is that it causes us to bypass the seeking of the Lords will and move forward in what we assume it to be, and as we shall see in our examples today, this trait is nothing new and can affect even the greatest men of God.

Our first example is found in 2 Samuel 6v1-23 and tells us how King David brought the ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Now David as a man of God wanted to be closer to the tabernacle, to bring the ceremonial presence of God as close to him as possible. Now this in itself was a good thing, we should all desire to be as close to the Lord as possible, but what we see in this passage is that

David failed to seek the Lord. He did the classic example from the Garden of Eden (*Genesis 3v5-6*) and went with his own intellectual knowledge and decision making (*1 Chronicles 15v13*). In his intellectual pride he was trying to be more spiritual, but his pride in turn made him assume he knew what the Lord wanted, without the seeking that comes from a servant heart, and by putting the ark on a nice new cart he could do the job quickly and efficiently. David in his pride thinks he is doing the right thing, he's got the worship group going flat out, a big congregation, everything looks perfect, except he is walking in rebellion to God. He's not walking in holiness before God, even if he looks holy to those around him. He's actually walking in pride, having made the decision for himself on how, when and by whom the ark should be moved. Now we can look at this and ask ourselves, does it really matter? Would God really be upset?

"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?"

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is like the sin of divination and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."

1 Samuel 15v22-23

In our second example we read these very serious words spoken by Samuel to Saul, David's royal predecessor. They show the seriousness of not seeking the Lord and taking matters into our own hands. For no matter how great we might think the praise party is or how great in our mind the offering is or how successful we may judge the event or ministry, if we have not sought the Lord and have gone off in our own direction we are walking in rebellion. What the Lord is saying here is that listening to his word and the obedience, humility and heart change that comes from this is the thing that He values far more than the physically seen things that we can assume are so important, for He judges the hearts of men.

What we see with both Saul and David is that when we run ahead we put ourselves and those around us in a very dangerous place before the Lord. David's sin of presumption, assuming he knew the will of God without seeking Him, came from a root of pride, of self knowing and we see that it led to the death of Uzzah and David actually getting angry with God (*2 Samuel 6v8*). Only later as he cooled down and thought it through did he start to realise the consequences of what he had done and at that point went from arrogant pride to true humility, realising that he was wrong and being in fear of the Lord once again (*2 Samuel 6v9*). Sadly, we live in an age when holy fear of God has been removed from the church, for in our intellectual pride we have changed God and assumed that He thinks as we do. We look at the God of love and transform God's love into a love fashioned to suit our flesh. We miss the fact that a major part of God's love includes discipline (*Hebrews 12v10*), it is His discipline, if heeded, that changes our hearts into the heart of Christ. If God just gave way to our temper tantrums and desires of how we think the world should be run, then our hearts will never be transformed into the image of Christ.

Too often in our presumption, even when we have partially listened to the Lord, we assume the solution is to get the job done in the quickest and most spectacular way possible, at least in the eyes of the world. It is why churches have become more and more drawn in by the "big" event, the "big" speaker, the endless boasting of numbers. What we so often miss is that for the name of the Lord to be glorified, we have to learn humility. The ark needed to be carried on the shoulders of those set apart to serve, lifted high with the priests literally under the feet of the ark, the presence of God. It is this humility that lifts up the Lord today, it's not something physical to see, it's

spiritual, it's of the heart. Without that humility of heart towards the Lord, the humble seeking and following in obedience, we risk wandering into rebellion before the Lord.

Earlier we read how when the Lord rebuked Saul he used the examples of divination and idolatry to describe rebellion and arrogance, these are strong words and at first we may not be able to see what the link is between them, but if we look at the Hebrew word for "divination" (qesem), we see that it is the process of seeking direction through methods other than seeking the Lord, reading the "signs" of the world, and then making decisions based on what we see. Basically excluding the Lord from the decision making process and seeking the gods of this world instead, those gods being ourselves and our own assumed abilities. For we do exactly what David did when it came to moving the ark, we make our plans and preparations, and David had made preparations, he got a good crowd together and had a new cart made. He then proceeded with his plan assuming it was the Lord's plan and when disaster struck got angry and frustrated. In his pride he was making the decisions the Lord should have made based on how the world would proceed. How often have we done the same, moving forward with our own plan and asking for a quick spiritual blessing of our assumption.

When we read *1 Corinthians 1v18-31* about the message of Christ crucified, we read that it is a stumbling block and foolishness to many, for it does not rely on man's wisdom but on the Lord's and the only place we will get that wisdom and instruction is by spending time in the presence of God, not telling Him how to fix the world as we see it, rather seeking Him and allowing Him to show us the workings of the world as he sees it. For God's ways, although they may look weak and foolish in this world, display the power of God by showing that His ways are above the ways of this world, the ways of man's intellect. Only as we are willing to humble ourselves in obedient service is the Lord able to show us the world from His point of view (*Romans 12v2*), until then we will find ourselves, through our own pride and assumptions, fighting against the very will of God. It takes true faith to walk in the paths of God, because they will be in constant conflict with our worldly intellect. The step of faith risks losing in the eyes of the world, of being humiliated before man, and so we try to organise the safe route, then wonder why we don't see the miracles of the Lord's provision. As I learnt in missions over the years, when the Lord speaks you step out in obedience. You don't need to check the finances and other provisions, for the Lord is our provision when we walk in His paths. If we look by the world's standards we will not move forwards, we will stop, waiting for everything to be right and organised to a standard that meets the safety requirements of our pride so that we will not look foolish if God fails!

When king David was willing to humble himself, to walk according to the plans the Lord gave after seeking Him, God was brought into the midst of the people and his name was honoured... except by one person. Michal, daughter of Saul, despised the humility of David before the people. It was below her royal upbringing and we read that as a result of her pride she had no children. Despite being David's first wife, she would not be the one who gave birth to a child that would continue the royal line and the same is true today. For the children the Father desires, the church, are those who are brought up in the humble image of Christ and for that a humble bride is required.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
Ephesians 5v22-24

Humbly submitting to the Fathers will in everything is not something we find easy, but if we truly want to be led of the Spirit it is the only way, this is the way that our hearts are humbled before the Lord.

We may think many of the decisions we need to make are not worth seeking the Lord about, we can manage on our own. What we fail to realise is that the parts of our life, the decisions that we seek the Lord about, those are the parts of our life walked in submission to the Lord. The rest we assume we know what we are doing and exclude Him from our plans. It is a sobering thought to realise just how little of our life is truly lived in the holiness that comes from a humbled heart and how much is lived in divination, making decisions through the ways of the world.