

The Great Sin of Pride: In Attitude and Action

- **Vs. 6-7a.** Well, duh. If peasant, you know: can't just waltz into castle & plop self down next to kng. If go wed rcptn, you know: unless in wed party, not supsd sit at head table. On 1st day schl, when tchr says pick desk, you know: can't pick tchr's desk. There are cert places you're not supsd be, bec they reservd for smone else. And if you presume elevate self above your place, you're going get humiliatd. J tght same thng: **"When smone invites you to a wed feast, do not take the place/honor, for a prsn more distngshd than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come & say to you, 'Give this prsn your seat.' Then, humiliatd, you will have to take the least imp place."** (Lk 14:8-9). Of course Solomon in Bk/Prob & J in Gos are not just offering Emily Post-esque commntry on proper etiquette and how to avoid social faux pas. There's a much deeper, darker danger lurking beneath surface – a devious sin called pride.
- One of my fav authors calls pride: Grt Sin. CS Lewis, 20th cent Brit author & unvrsty prof at Oxford & Cambridge, wrote not only Chrncls Narnia but also many Xian writing, incl wondrfl intro to Xian faith called Mere Xianity. The ch on pride is titled Grt Sin. *"There is one vice of which no man in the wrld is free; which every one in the wrld loathes when he sees it in smone else; and of which hardly any people, except Xians, ever imagine that they are guilty thmslvs... There is...no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves... The essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride... [Pride] is the complete anti-God state of mind."*ⁱ Is he blowing thngs out prprtn? Today's Scrptr readings show he's not. Today Lord empthclly warns us vs GSP, which manifests itself in A&A.
- So what really is pride? When we say proud of ch/schl; talk re being a proud prnt/grnd; take pride in work – is that the Grt Sin? No, smtms word pride simply means having *"warm-hrtd admrtn for smone,"*ⁱⁱⁱ when you find joy/satsfctn in smone/thng else. So, you're proud of: dghtr for perfrmnc on stage; son for service in military. That's not Grt Sin. Even Ap Paul in NT boasts re fellow Xians he's proud of. So admiring others and finding delight in them is not GSP.
- No, GSP: the conceited, self-cntrd/absrbd, attitude in sinful hrt that loves to elevate self at expense others. Pride makes us think too highly ourselves, too lowly others; makes us think we're better, more worthy/desrvng than others. Pride thinks: what I own, what do, way do things, what wear, where live, ppl around me – better. Pride thrives on comparison & one-upmanship. CSL: *"Pride gets no pleasure out of having smthng, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that ppl are proud of being rich, or cleaver, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If evone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking, there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest."*ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Pride makes you always compare self to others.
- The very 1st ch in history/pride was written even before A&E. When God created wrld, created anpls who sinless/holy. God gave these anpls ability serve God in sinless perfctn. One these anpls, hwvr, compared self to God and hated fact wasn't on same level as God. Thought deservd better from God: more pwr/authrty/rcgntn, greater status; hated being inferior to God – pride in attitude. So, along w/many anpl follwrs, rebelld vs Lord, waged war in hvn – pride in action. This fallen angel Bible calls Satan or devil; and his downfall, very 1st sin in God's perf creatn: GSP.
- That's 1st ch; here's 2nd ch in pride's history. Satan was so bitter re A&E's perf rel W/God: wanted them suffer in hell, just like he had to. So he lied to our 1st prnts, temptd them sin, convncd them rebel vs God; they did; and now Satan's GSP has infected our entire human race. That's why sadly, ch 2: not end/story. We write new chs in story/pride ev snl day. GSP now resides here, in my/your hrt; and tog we are guilty of ugliest of pride. We: compare selves others; think better than others; think deserve more than others; look down on ppl; talk down to ppl; talk bad re ppl; treat ppl w/ disrspct; aggrndize selves at their expense – pride in A&A. And it is Satanic; this behvr orignts w/Satan; came 1st from him; it's the sin that made devil devil; it's the prnt sin to all other sins; it is the GSP in A&A.

- Which is why today J warns vs taking seat/honor; why James warns vs looking down on poor; why Solomon: vs. 6. God knows that GSP was Satan's downfall, and would be our downfall as well, w/o his intervention.
- So Lord stepped in, wrote final ch in pride's history, the ch on J. The answer to prob/pride is J. J is opp pride; he's not pridefully arrogant/self-centrd/condscndng. J is perfectly humble, in A&A. Doesn't elevate self at expense others; just opp: elevates others at expense self. Just look at cross! On cross J willingly humbl'd self to dth, in order rescue us from guilt & disastrous effects of GSP. Php 2: "[CJ], **being in very nature God, did not consdr eqilty w/God smthng to be used to own advntg.**" Didn't pridefully use his divine power to serve self. **"Rather, he made self nothing by taking very nature/srvnt, being made in human likeness. And being found in apprnc as a man, he humbl'd self by becoming obedient to dth, even dth on a cross!"** And this is God, mind you, who created very ppl who rebelled vs him, incldng us! Nvrthlss, J allowed self be mock'd, scornd, torturd, & exectd, in base humlty – why? To forgive us & rescue us fr GSP; to cleanse us of our prideful As&As; and to exalt us to status of God's redeemd ppl. What a turnarnd! The only one wrthy of exaltation was humbl'd, so that we, who deserve nothing but eternal humbling, would be exalted. Surely we do not deserve this grace! But in hulmilty J put our needs above his & paid price to give us an exaltation forever in hvn.
- Today J: **"All those who exalt selves'll be hmbld, & those who hmbl selves: exltd"** (Lk 14:11). And Solomon: vs. 6-7. J is Kng hvn/earth, risen fr dead, exalted on high. When we pridefully think we deserve smthng fr him, we receive nthng. But when we, in faith, humbly recgnz that we deserve nthng fr him, then we receive evthng. **"Come up here,"** says King, to us. **"Friend, move to a better place"** (Lk 14:10), says Host, to us. **"Come, you who are blessed by my Fr; take your inhrtnc, kngdm prepd for you since crtn wrld"** (Mt 25:34), says Lord, to us. That's our exaltation, that our exalted Sav humbled himself to secure for us. And that's the only exaltation that truly matters.
- CSL, in his book *Mere Xianity*, calls pride the "Grt Sin," *"the essential vice, the utmost evil, ... the complete anti-God state of mind."* Wrote, *"As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and ppl: and of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see smthng that is above you."*^{iv} Only by faith do we see that which is above us: a loving Sav, who sacrfd self on cross in humility to exalt us, and graciously forgives us of GSP. May Lord work in all of us the grateful response of true Xian humility, in A&A.

Proverbs 25:6-7a

⁶Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; ⁷it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before his nobles.

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ⁱ C.S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity," *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002) p. 69-72.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} *Ibid.*