

THE SIN OF PRIDE IN THE CHURCH—PRAYERLESSNESS (Part 1)

INTRODUCTION: Here we are—week six in our series, “Be Ye Holy, for I am Holy.”

Why should we be holy? Because God commands it! I Peter 1:15-16 “But as He which hath called you is holy, **so be ye holy** in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

What does it *mean* to be holy? It means to be separated **from sin**—and separated **unto God**. So far, we’ve been focusing on just the first half—being separate **from sin**. What is sin?

“Sin is anything we do (I John 3:4), fail to do (Jas 4:17), say (Mt 12:36), or think (Mt 15:19) that is contrary to the character of God (Hab 1:13), the will of God (Eph 5:10, 17), or the Word of God (Jas 2:10).”

Sin is a broad subject, though, so we’ve narrowed it down to sins **in the church**, specifically the **sin of pride** in the church. Is there **pride** in the church? Many theologians argue that **pride** is at the bottom of **every sin**. If pride is indeed at the bottom of every sin, then **as long as there are sinners** in the church, there will be **pride** in the church! Any **sinners** here, today? **We all are**, aren’t we, so it’s pretty safe to say that pride is in our midst in one way, shape, or form.

How is pride seen in the church? Sometimes it is seen in our **motive for serving God!** We know we can serve God for the wrong reasons because Jesus warned us against it! In Mt 6:1, Jesus says “**do not your alms** before men, to be seen of them.” In Mt 6:5, Jesus says **not to pray** to be seen of men.

Last week we moved away from pride as a **motive** to consider an **indicator of pride** in our life—the **wrong reaction to correction**. If we react **in anger** like King Uzziah did in II Chronicles 26, it is pretty safe to say that we have pride lurking in our hearts.

If we are serious about being holy, though, we will **want sin out** of our lives. And since we often times **don’t see** sin in our lives, we will **welcome sin** being pointed out so we can **get it out!** **Proverbs 27:6** reminds us “Faithful are the wounds of a friend...” May God give us humble and teachable spirits that desire correction—not **lash out in anger** against it!

This morning we are going to look at another sin in the church—the **sin of prayerlessness**.

--Does God want us to pray? Yes, He does! So if **God commands** us to pray and we don’t, it is the sin of **disobedience**. But prayerlessness is not a “stand-alone” sin, meaning there are often **other sins** behind it.

--For example, do we sometimes fail to pray because we **doubt God can or will answer**? Yes, we do! So if we fail to pray because we **don’t believe God** can—or will—answer, that is the **sin of unbelief**.

--There is yet a third reason we don’t pray, though, and it is this—**because of pride!** What does pride have to do with prayerlessness? That is what we are going to be looking at this morning.

Before we look at **how pride stops** us from praying, let’s consider this question: **Why** do we pray?

Maybe I’m being a bit too simplistic, but it seems we pray for **one of four** reasons:

1) To ask God to meet **our** needs; 2) To ask God to meet needs **of others**; 3) To **praise and thank God** for what He has provided for us. 4) **To worship** God for who He is. Does pride affect any of these? It sure does!

Pride stops us from asking God to **meet our needs**—and I’d argue that pride also stops us from **being thankful**. We’re going to focus on just the first one—that pride stops us from asking God to **meet our needs**.

We are going to look at 4 different **areas of needs** where pride stops us from asking God for His help. In each of these 4 areas, we will look at a **bad** example, a **good** example, and **encouragement** from God’s Word to ask Him for help in that area. Since 4 is a lot, we will only look at two **today** and two **next week**.

And all God’s people...breathed a sigh of relief!

1. *Pride stops us from asking God for wisdom*

A. Example of Joshua not asking for God wisdom

Please turn to Joshua 7. In the way of background, Moses had died and God had appointed Joshua as his successor. They had conquered Jericho by following God's instructions to march around the city once/day for 6 days, then march around the city 7 times on the 7th day. They did exactly as instructed and on the 7th day, after the 7th time around the city, they shouted with a great shout and the walls fell down flat. The enemy was defeated, and the city was now theirs.

The next city was Ai. Men were sent to check things out—just like with Jericho—and they came back and told Joshua that it was a small city and that they didn't need to bring the whole army—just 2 or 3 thousand. 3000 were sent—and the men of Ai killed 36 of the children of Israel who retreated in defeat!

Look at Josh 7:6 and follow along as I read through vs 11. They lost because **someone** had broken God's commandment and had **taken something** that was supposed to have been dedicated to God.

After God instructed Joshua how to determine who the guilty party was, he instructed Joshua how to capture the city of Ai.

--Josh 8:1 (mid) "...take **all the people** of war with thee..."

--End of vs 2 "...lay thee an ambush for the city behind it."

Joshua did what God instructed and they again won the battle.

--Now jump ahead now to Josh 9:3-4. Here we see that the Gibeonites—who actually lived close by—came up with a plan to **trick Joshua** into making a **peace treaty** with them. They put on **old, dirty clothes**—and old, **worn-out shoes**—then took some **old bread and wine bottles** and pretended they had come from a far journey.

--Now look at Josh 9:8-14. Joshua had gotten instructions from God regarding two previous battles but **failed to ask God for counsel**—for wisdom—regarding these men. The result? They were deceived! Would God have showed them the Gibeonites deception had they asked Him for wisdom? I believe He would have!

There's our example of not asking for wisdom; let's look now at an... B. Example of asking God for wisdom

An obvious one would be that of King Solomon. God appeared to him in a dream and said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon's response: "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people." (1 Kings 3:9). Solomon asked for wisdom—and God gave it to him.

I want to look in-depth at a different one, though—one that is not as obvious. Take your Bibles and turn to Mark 1. Please follow along as I read vs 29-31. You caught that, right? Simon Peter had a wife! No extra charge; just wanted to point that out 😊!

Now vs 32-34. Imagine the scene. Jesus has had a long day, but the people kept coming to the house of Simon and Andrew to be healed. He healed many of diseases—and cast out many demons.

I can't help but think that Jesus was **tired and wore out**, but He did not "sleep in" the next morning. Notice vs 35. **What** did Jesus pray about? We're not specifically told, are we? But I believe we can make a pretty good guess and I'll share that with you in just a moment.

Now verses 36-37. Let's make sure we don't miss the impact of what is happening. Jesus had healed a bunch of people the night before. Morning came and while Jesus went to a solitary place to pray, Peter finds Him and says, "All men seek for thee." In other words, there are more **people looking for you** and wanting to be healed!

Notice Jesus' response in vs 38. **Luke 4:42** adds a little more detail: "And when it was day, He [Jesus] departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and **stayed Him, that He should not depart from them.**" His response?

Luke 4:43—which is very similar to Mark 1:38—says: "And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent."

Let that sink in...**Jesus said “No” to staying there**—where people wanted Him and had needs and even asked Him to stay—because He needed to go into other towns and cities! Why would He do that?

I like the suggestion that Charles Hummel makes in his book, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*. Of this scenario, Hummel writes: “We might have said, ‘Seize the moment, Jesus! Show your power; win people to God!’

And Jesus would have answered us, ‘Early this morning the Father showed me today’s priorities.’” (Title above, pg 20). Although it is not something we can be dogmatic about, it sure seems like Jesus **prayed for wisdom** when He met with God the Father that morning. Why else would He say “No” to needs at hand and go somewhere else? Jesus got His “marching orders” from the Father—not Himself!

C. Encouragement to ask God for wisdom

Does God want us to ask for wisdom? He certainly does! **James 1:5** “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

So **why don’t we ask God** for wisdom? He will give it **liberally**—meaning generously—and **not “upbraid” us**—meaning scold us—for asking!

But often times we don’t ask. Why? Because we **are proud**! We think **our wisdom** is all the wisdom we need! Many of us **know—in our heads—Proverbs 3:5-6**, but we fail to put it into practice. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and **lean not unto thine own understanding**.⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” Instead, we do what **verse 7** says not to do “Be not wise in thine own eyes...”

Think of all the things we need wisdom for.

--We need wisdom in handling difficult **people** in our lives—like children, co-workers, parents, siblings—and sometimes even spouses and church members!

--We need wisdom in handling difficult **problems**—like health problems, money problems, and work problems.

--We need wisdom in establishing **priorities**. Most of us have **more demands on our time** than we have time—meaning we can’t do everything—so we need wisdom to do **what God wants** us to do.

--And we need wisdom in making **decisions**. Sometimes we don’t know what God wants us to do!

A missionary in Ukraine wrote this about a week ago:

“Some have asked whether I have an exit plan, or whether I will leave soon. Frankly, I am unsure whether I am capable of making that decision. It’s a frequent question in my prayers, but it’s not an event I like to think about. You might do well to pray that, if it would be God’s will at some future time, He would remove all other options so that I know it is by His leading.”

We all lack wisdom, don’t we? Let’s stop being proud and prayerless—and start asking God for wisdom!

2. Pride stops us from asking God for spiritual strength against temptation

A. Example of Peter not asking God for spiritual strength against temptation

You should still be in Mark 1, turn now to Mark 14.

Look at vs 27. Jesus says, “All ye shall be offended because of me.” Does all mean all? Yes, it does! Did Jesus **ever lie**? No, He didn’t! But Peter—in his pride—**“corrected”** Jesus!

In vs 29, Peter proudly proclaims that although **all the others** would be offended—and run away—he would not! **Jesus then corrects Peter** with these **sad but true** words in vs 30: “Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

Who was right: Peter—or Jesus? **Jesus**, of course! **Peter denied that He knew** Jesus that very night—three times—just like Jesus said!

Peter’s pride led him to **trust in himself instead of God**. And because he trusted in himself to fight off temptation, **he slept instead of prayed**! We see that in vs 37.

B. Example of Jesus asking for spiritual strength against temptation

Peter was our **bad** example. Who is our **good** example? Once again it is Jesus! What temptation—what spiritual test—was Jesus about to face? The test of **Obedience unto death**—the death of the cross!

Look at vs 32-34. What did Jesus mean when He said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death...”? Here are a couple of other translations:

NASB: “My soul is **deeply grieved**, to the point of death;”

Holman Christian Standard Bible: “My soul is **swallowed up in sorrow**—to the point of death.”

Weymouth New Testament: “My heart is **oppressed with anguish** to the very point of death.”

How overwhelmed was Jesus with prospect of dying? So much so that He asked God that if it **were possible**, that He would not have to go through with it! We see that in verses 35-36.

So **why was** Jesus dreading the cross? After all, He came to earth to die—and He knew it! He also knew that He would rise again and had told the disciples that at least 7 times! It almost seems “un-Jesus-like” for Jesus to want to avoid the cross, doesn’t it?

The answer—I believe—lies in the fact that Jesus was **fully man**—and **fully God**! What does that mean? It means that **as a man**, He would feel every ounce of **physical pain** that came from having **His beard plucked** from His face...and the **crown of thorns smashed** onto His head...and the soldier’s **whip creating furrows** in His back...and the **nails going through His wrists and feet**...and the pain of **slowly dying** from asphyxiation and dehydration!

As fully man, He would **feel** all those things—just **like any man would**! But He was also **fully God**! I could be wrong, of course, but I believe that **because He was fully God**, He knew exactly what all that would **feel like ahead of time**! The **physical pain** isn’t the only thing Jesus dreaded, though. Jesus also knew—ahead of time—that God the Father **would forsake Him** when He hung on the cross, **being made sin for us**.

How can God the Father forsake God the Son when they are **One in the same**? I don’t know! I can’t adequately explain it—and neither can you! But that is what happened! Jesus **was not pretending** when He cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

That is what happened when Jesus **died for us** on the cross—and that is what **will happen** to all those who reject Jesus in this life and die unforgiven.

What did Jesus do in light of this spiritual battle that was ahead of Him? Verse 35...and vs 39...says **He prayed. He prayed**—and withstood the attack of Satan. **Peter failed to pray**—and fell into sin.

C. Encouragement to ask God for spiritual strength against temptation

Jesus Himself gives us the encouragement. Look at vs 38 “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.”

Temptation is out there; it will come. It is not a matter of “if”—**but when**. It is noteworthy that God used Peter himself—the one who failed to pray and denied Christ because he didn’t pray—to pen these words in **I Peter 5:8** “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

Peter spoke from experience; he had been “devoured.” We need to **be vigilant**—we need to be on the lookout for the attacks of Satan—but we also need **to pray**!

--Do you pray to **avoid temptation** like Jesus did—and said we should do?

--Or do you wrongly think **you are above temptation** and can stand in your own strength like Peter did? God warns us about that attitude, doesn’t He? **I Cor 10:12** “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Pride keeps us from praying, doesn’t it?

--It stops us from being honest about the fact that we **lack wisdom**—and so we don’t ask God for it!

--And it stops us from seeing we need help **against temptation**—and so we don’t ask God for that either!

Does pride have to keep stopping us from praying? No, it doesn’t!

We can **start right now**—today—by confessing our pride and lack of prayer as sin—then start praying!

If we want to be holy, that is what we will do!

So, what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, be honest with the Lord. How's your prayer life? Do you pray because "that is what good Christians do"—or do you pray because you sense your need for wisdom and spiritual strength?

If you don't sense your need for wisdom—and you don't sense your need for spiritual strength—it's pretty safe to say you are proud!

Confess it as sin—and ask God to forgive you of your pride and change you!

2. I mentioned this last week, but I believe it bears repeating: The greatest form of pride is to choose your way to get to heaven over God's way! There is only one way to be forgiven—and His name is Jesus!

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other..."

Don't think that you will be the exception!