
PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION

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Or you can call this, *How to Destroy a Pastor!*

I often speak against pride, and I often receive objections for it. The two most common objections are: *"I do not see any problem with pride, I'm proud to be a Christian, to be an American..."* and *"Is pride really a problem? After all, we need to have self-esteem and God loves us, so what is wrong with a little pride?"* I also receive this question a lot: *"Why is pride in the same category and listed with all the heinous sins such as sexual immorality in Romans 1?"* Pride is at the root of every conflict and problem I have ever observed in the church and is the least thing looked at or combated. So it would seem that pride wins out.

Pride is defined as the attitude that oneself is superior to others, even to the extent of the regarding of others with contempt as if they were unworthy of any relation or interaction with them. Pride shows the basic thinking "I am better than you are!" Other Biblical synonyms for pride are arrogance, insolence, boastful, stiff-necked and haughtiness. These aspects of pride clog us up and away from our loving Savior as they restrict the flow of His character in our lives and inhibit goodness from going to others through us. It is like not allowing Jesus Christ to be the ultimate plumber and unplug our spiritual drainpipes. So, all we can do is pour our waste all over the floor of life, and refuse godly characteristics to flow in our relational pipes.

Pride unveils and lifts our self-interests and our self-sufficiencies, which seem necessary and good. But, when we are self-sufficient, we will not only fail to see our need for redemption but also fail to see our need for growth in spiritual matters. Therefore, self becomes the god, and any work of the One True God is muted and put aside. Yes, God can break through like a hot knife through butter, but He usually does not. He lets us stew in our own self-created delusions until we are so beaten down we have nowhere else to go. We have the ability through His Spirit to look up and see His grace, thus not experience the chastisement and lonesomeness of pride if we choose.

The reason pride is listed with the other sins of Romans 1 is because it is a sin, a very dangerous sin, that leads to the production and fueling of other sins. This is clear in the Greek syntax, and why it is listed with the other *heinous* sins. We consider working hard and having a healthy dose of confidence as being good Americans or what ever culture we may be. And, to a degree, there is nothing wrong with patriotism and a healthy positive outlook of oneself and country as long as it does not elevate one as better or more worthy than others, since *we all have fallen short...*(Rom 3:23). But all too often we miss the evil

nature that pride represents. It lifts us up beyond what we are and deserve, and cuts us off from godly character. It also fuels other sins.

The laundry list of sins in Romans 1 starts off with the reason we get into them, which is the “*reprobate mind*.” This means being a degenerate, which is just a plain ole’ good-for-nothing to God and to those around us. The Bible describes this as heathen. People who refuse to believe or bow to God do in fact know who God is because He is written in their hearts and revealed by creation. However, they do not wish to uphold that knowledge of who God is, nor do they seek goodness or virtue or any fruits of the Spirit. They refuse to see who they are, and lift themselves as a god, yet they are not God. All of life’s goodness and opportunities are muted because pride is in the way.

Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness, Full of envy, Malignity, Backbiters, Haters of God, Despiteful, Boasters, and Implacable, to name a few, all have pride at their foundation. It is pride that creates them and pride that fuels them! Thus, God gives them up to sin. You may not be practicing those heinous sins, but if you have pride in you, then they are but a hairsbreadth away. They can spring up at any time and destroy the work of Christ in you and in others around you. Beware lest this happen to you or your church and family!

We need to see the imperative where God warns us in regards to pride. Even when we are not a *reprobate* or practicing these sins, we are still in rebellion against His degrees and His best for us when pride is ruling our thoughts and actions.

Let us look at the Scriptural references, especially in Psalms and Proverbs. They give an extreme case for what God hates, and that is **pride**. Check out these passages which we rarely preach on! (Job 41:34; 2 Chron. 26:16; 32:26; Psalm 10:4-5; 18:27; 31:18; 56:2; 59:12; 62:10; 73:6-12; 101:5; 131:1; 6:17; Prov. 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 16:18; 21:4; 24; 29:23; 30:13; Isa. 2:11-21; 13:19; 16: 6; 23:9; Ezek. 28:2; Obad. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:6; 2 Cor. 5:12; 7:4; Gal. 6:4; and these are just a few!)

Here are some Scriptural Highlights on Pride:

Psalms 10:4: *In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. NIV* A person’s pride comes between him and God and distorts the Word and work He has for him. It cancels out relationships, growth and purpose in life. People who practice arrogance and condescension toward others will not surrender to God as Lord. They think of themselves as self-reliant, which is a slap to the face of God.

Proverbs 3:34: *He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble. (NIV)* When we are infested with pride, we are hindered from one of the primary duties

of the Christian walk, which is self surrender (Gal. 2:20). The mature Christian will be surrendered totally to Christ, with both self-will and actions. Thus, he will not be bragging, gossiping, spreading dissension or puffing himself up. Instead, he will be presenting honesty, goodness, love and virtue where pride cannot live or function. Seek His face and He will equip you to go through everything that life throws at you. You will not even need pride.

Psalm 119:21 *You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed, and who stray from your commands. (NIV)* It is clear from this and many other passages that God hates our condescending actions with a passion. These actions move us far from His love and what is best for us and for others around us.

Proverbs 8:13 *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate. (NAS)* A mature Christian will hate any form of arrogance. We cannot rely only on our education and experience in life and forget faith and trust. Neither can we exclude one over the other. Faith and reason are like shoes. We can walk further when we have them both on. Pride is the factor that will cause us to exclude reason by saying all we need is faith. The opposite is true also. We cannot have ethics and morality based on reason alone. Neither can we grow in maturity by faith without the study and practice of the Word.

Proverbs 16:5: *The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. (NIV)* Everyone who is proud, especially Christians, are a disgrace to God! Beware, because they will not last long in it. God will see to it that they are punished.

Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling. (NAS)* God hates pride and cannot put up with arrogant and prideful people. The sin of pride is perhaps more destructive than any other sin. It is the root cause of the malice and evil in the heart of humanity. It is the malevolence that people commit! It is the main reason for the fall of Satan and humanity. It is what separates us from God.

Proverbs 21:4 *Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin. (NAS)* This passage is describing a light guiding the wicked. That light is pride versus the Light we are to follow, Christ's!

Proverbs 27:2 *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips. (NAS)* To be a wise person, we need to put our pride away, for it will make us truly foolish. We gain much more respect when we listen than when we speak what we do not know or understand. The same is true when we hog the spotlight from others.

Proverbs 28:25-26 *An arrogant man stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will prosper. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks*

wisely will be delivered. (NAS) Pride will distort and even destroy our reliance and faith with our Lord faster than anything else. When we place our trust in ourselves, we are replacing God and His eternal truths for temporary untruths and foolish endeavors that lead us nowhere.

Job 35:12-13: *He does not answer when men cry out because of the arrogance of the wicked. Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it. (NIV) When people who are filled with pride seek God for help out of desperation He may not listen to them. Pride can even block our prayers.*

Job 40:12 *Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him; And tread down the wicked where they stand. (NAS) The context of this passage is about dinosaur-like creatures whose power is greater than man can conceive. Yet God is in control of them. Thus, pride is in our ability to control too. God's power is ultimate and pride is a massive delusion to ourselves.*

Isaiah 5:21 *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight! (NAS) It is God who knows all things, so what do we have to be prideful about? When we try to walk the Christian life by ourselves, without help from anyone else, we set ourselves up for a lonely journey to nowhere that will lead us off a cliff! We cannot achieve any progress in our spiritual maturity when we try to bear it all ourselves. A leader cannot do it all, nor can a pastor or anyone else who claims Christ as their Lord.*

Habakkuk 2:4: *See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous will live by his faith. (NIV) Babylonians were the quintessential picture of the exercise of pride. It may seem to work for awhile, but the cost is so high and the fall is so far, it is never worth the effort. Pride causes people to see the world and think incorrectly. It is so blinding that prideful people will be the last one to see their own sin before it is too late.*

Mark 9:35 *Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." (NAS) Self-giving is the prime characteristic of our Lord and Savior. Pride is the complete opposite, the antithesis of that character that we are to emulate.*

Luke 16:15 *And He said to them "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." What is in our heart is the principle aspect of who we are and how we are. We have the choice of emulating Christ-likeness or pride-fullness. The choice is ours to make, and so are the consequences we are to receive. This is not because God is a killjoy, but rather because we deliberately choose to disobey His best plan and call and trade these for foolishness.*

John 5:44 *How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? (NAS)* Why would we want glory from others when we can get it from the King and Creator of the universe? People who are prideful are difficult to impossible to work with, and after awhile, nobody wants to be around them!

Romans 12:16 *Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. (NAS)* What distinguishes us is our humility. What repels others is our pride. We cannot have the attitude that we are the only ones God has called for a task or endeavor for the Kingdom. We cannot see ourselves as the only key ingredient or un-expendable. We are His tools, but remember He can raise up better people than you or me.

1 Corinthians 4:6 *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. (NAS)* When we puff ourselves up, we cause conflict and strife. This causes the church to be full of contention rather than the love of God. Be aware of the pride that allows you to give and give but not accept!

1 Corinthians 5:2 *And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. (NAS)* Pride was the root problem in the Corinthian church. They failed to see it or oppress it when they did see it. When we do not stop pride's influence in the church, we will not have a church, but rather a club of dissension.

1 Corinthians 13:4 *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant. (NAS)* What love is **not** is as important as what love **is**. Be aware that we will be held accountable and even judged on what we do **not** do or refuse to see because sin and pride are in the way (Matt. 23:27; Luke 19:42)!

2 Corinthians 5:12 *We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance, and not in heart. (NAS)* How the world evaluates us is the opposite of how God evaluates. We should evaluate the way God does. We are to see the cause and motivations and not the numbers and appearance. The teacher of the Word must be rooted in the Word and then teach it's truths. The opposite would be to focus on appearances, power and prestige. We cannot ever dictate to God what we are willing to do or not do, or give Him any conditions for our trust and obedience. That behavior is from the pit of pride and not from the obedience of true surrender.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18 *But HE WHO BOASTS, LET HIM BOAST IN THE LORD. For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord*

commends. (NAS) Never allow your position or achievements turn into spiritual pride! When we do boast, it is to glorify our Lord and it is never to lift up ourselves. We cannot allow pride to be the excuse to protect others from consequences, ridicule or harm. Such thinking as, "I will not be the one to cause others to suffer for the church; I will do it for them." may seem to honor them by our protection, but, in fact, we are keeping them from their growth and opportunities. (I'm speaking of spiritual protection, not physical.) Humiliation and suffering are the pillars that we can lean on and gain support from. They are not to distract us from Christ's work or be a barrier for others in the faith.

Galatians 6:4 *But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another." (NAS) We are to think and see things clearly, not adding something that is not there or revising it to fit our agenda. This goes from history, to running a church, to being a faithful Christian. Neither are we to gain false confidence from what we have accomplished. What is it compared to what God has done? Can the greatest manmade achievement compare to a sunrise or a snowcapped mountain?*

2 Timothy 3:2 *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy. (NAS) We must not allow possessions and their root, pride, to blind us from our true reason for and purpose in life. We have to get rid of the idea that we must be filled with self-esteem and know ourselves and find ourselves before we can be obedient and learn from our Lord! The only One who truly knows us and understands us is God.*

James 1:9-10 *But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. (NAS) What do you want out of life--temporary praise that will soon be forgotten, or a high status in the kingdom of God? The true treasure and our glory is in whom we are in Christ and what He has done for us.*

James 4:6: *But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (NAS) God is opposed to the proud! What more evidence do you need to realize how bad this is? God is supreme in the universe. God is God and we are not! Thus, God is the only One to be worshiped, and it is our prime directive to recognize God's lordship over our lives. Pride causes us to reject God's lordship in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Beware if you are prideful because He will deflate you, sometimes fast sometimes not, but He will! Your pride will come before your destruction. Your pride will be the main thing that sets you up for the fall!*

1 Peter 5:5 *You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. (NAS) We need to seek*

wisdom from those who have gone before us, those who are wiser and more experienced. Pride will block us from learning and growth! We are to see elders as people we learn from, not hindrances to our plans. When we forsake their wisdom and experience, we miss a lot and subject ourselves to a needless big learning curve in life.

Revelation 3:17 *You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.* Be aware that too much comfort and compliancy will interfere with your spiritual growth and the best that He has for you! The comfort we seek in the world will only lead to disillusionment and misery. Then we will gain nothing.

Pride sets us up as a god when there is only One God. God wants our obedience, love and trust. We cannot do that when we are too full of ourselves! I have struggled with this a lot over the years, and God keeps humbling me! In America we glance over this and do not consider it relevant, but we must see it as it is, heinous! We need to see how harmful and destructive pride and its various forms are in the life of the Christian and the church. We have to take the initiative to remove our Will and allow the Spirit to break us down. If we don't, we will break down and the church will break down. We cannot be afraid to see things from God's perspective, neither can we be afraid to allow Him to work in us and grow us for His purpose. We have to allow the Spirit and our obedience and diligence of study in the Word to develop our spiritual maturity in the nature of God. Yet, most Christians choose to develop their character on how others around them act and their own presumptions of the Christian life rather than in His nature and Word.

We cannot see the value nor get a grasp of the promises of God until we surrender our pride and Will to Him. Make the determination to be His and do not allow your self-will to be in His way! Allow Christ to take you beyond your hopes and dreams (John 3:5).

The Perils of the Judgmental Attitude

When I was in college--more than a few years ago--I had an acquaintance who went by the name of Dr. Anderson. He was a college student too, and he wrote in to an ad in the back of a comic book to get his doctorate from one of those so called "diploma mills." A few weeks and a few bucks later, he received his diploma, and entitlement to be called a "Doctor." We all thought this was very humorous. I then responded by writing to that fabulous intuition on behalf of my dog Shiloh--a beautiful tricolor Collie--so he could also receive his right and deserved diploma. And so, my dog became a "Doctor." Now we finally had a Doctor in the family! Dr. Anderson then decided to take this a bit further. He applied to a hospital in Southern California to be a staff Physician. They flew him

in, wine and dined him, and put him up in a very nice hotel. He had a good old time. After the hospital offered him a placement, they decided to check his credentials, which he gave them. They found out that his diploma was not a real one suited and trained to practice medicine in the State of California. Dr. Anderson responded, "I did not lie." And, he did not. They assumed, and he went along with their assumptions for some fun. The hospital was very embarrassed, and decided to keep this issue quiet. I very much doubt they ever interviewed another physician without first checking on his credentials!

Dr. Anderson, and my dog Shiloh (I will leave my self out of this--I plead youthful insanity) represent the mindsets and attitudes of a lot of Christians. Perhaps my dog was an innocent bystander, and Dr. Anderson was just having some fun. But when we, as His representatives, pretend with the faith of Christ, it causes disease and destruction to the Church and to those who need the Church! It shoos people away, and they will not come back. What we end up doing is destroying relationships, present and potential, all in the name of placing our Will and political agenda ahead of God's Will and precepts. These are the so-called Christians who say one thing and do another, and/or sit in judgment of others while they themselves have too many sin issues to count. These are the Christians who go to church, play the Christian game, but experience no real or life-changing event where Christ becomes Lord of their lives. They still are in control of their Will and regard their Will as upfront and supreme. These actions create judgmental attitudes and hypocrisy residue upon others. The sad part is that these are the Christians most secular people have in mind when someone says "Christian!" Their "diploma" stating they are a Christian might as well come from that same "diploma mill" where Shiloh received his degree. They may look like Christians, but their *fruits* are clearly from ways other than those of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Consider this. Would you rather have "Dr. Anderson" do open heart surgery on you, or trust it to a real, board certified physician? Who would you rather have running your church--fakes who are pious, frauds, and hypocrites, whose agendas supersede Biblical precepts, or those who are devoted to the things of God? What about you? What is conveyed from your personhood to others around you? Are you false, or are you real? Do you present good fruit, or phony, rotten fruit? Which will build effective relationships--the false or the real? Which will allow relations to grow and last--false or real? I believe the answer is clear! Phony lives create judgmental attitudes because people see in others what they do not have, so they feel a need to put others down. Or, they see what they feel others should be, as in "like themselves," and experience the urge to put them down. Either way, the judge is corrupt and the measuring rod is not of God.

Hypocrisy and judgmental attitudes cause some of the biggest problems in the Church, and spill over to others outside her walls whose concept of a Church is what they observe. These attitudes also cause severe danger to the growth and comfort of the Church. Comfort is in a place to call home, to feel safe, and be

willing to be taught and led, and to serve. This is one of the main reasons, if not **the** main reason, that keeps people away! Effective spiritual growth, maturity, and outreach cannot happen when the Church is pierced with bad attitudes, all stemming from a poor spiritual condition and the inability to build effective relationships.

Romans 1:18-32 gives us a laundry list of sins that will destroy any relationship or church. This chapter already tells us that God's ordinances are written in our hearts and in creation; thus, we have no excuse to reject Him, even if the Gospel is never told to us! The heathens already know, yet they choose to subdue themselves from God's most precious love and grace. This implies that God's dictates are written in our conscience, from how to know Him to how to conduct our lives. So, as a Christian, we really do have no excuse! At the same time, we have to be careful. If you are not a Christian, your conscience will not be reliable, as your Will forces and overpowers its way noisily over God's righteousness unless you listen carefully. In addition, your conscience, your sense of right and wrong, is like a computer. God installs its operating system. Yet, you can still send in corrupt programming and get corrupt thinking. Only the Spirit, prayer, and the Word will install good programming. Garbage in will equal garbage out! Thus, a struggle will assume to seek hypocrisy or righteousness.

When I speak on this subject, many people say to me, "This must just be the new Christians doing this." But my research and experience indicate, no, it is the ones who grew up in the Church who do the most destruction to the Church. Christians who grew up in good Christian value homes can easily forget who they are in Christ and act quite contradictory to His call and plan. If we grew up in a Christian home, attended church all of our lives, and even went to a Christian school, then we lived most of our lives in the Christian sub-culture. Now, there's nothing wrong with that. The problem is we can get in the habit of playing the role of the Christian so that we do not take deeper ownership of our faith, thus resulting in mixed messages that we portray to those around us. Therefore, how we should be does not equal our actions or words. Or, we fake it to fit in, and become pretentious and condescending.

Hypocrisy in Action

We can help prevent this from occurring by looking at hypocrisy and applying what Jesus taught about it in Matthew 23. The word for *hypocrisy* in verse 28, as it originally meant in Greek culture, was to act out a part in a play--to be an actor. And, that is just what we do when our actions are contrary to our call. Jesus warns us of the danger of pretending, of just going through the motions of being a Christian, without earnestly living our lives as a Christian is meant to do. We must realize the danger in living a double life. If we are all friendly and loving at church, genuinely seeking after others with encouragement and care, then on Monday we go to school or work with a contemptuous and condescending attitude toward our friends and coworkers, then what are we

doing? What are we expecting people to think when we live a double life or portray a *secret agent* Christian? Are you putting on a performance, or are you genuinely focused on the Lordship of Christ, so that His fullness flows to those around you?

Why is this so important? When you ask someone, "Would you like to be a Christian?" what you are in fact saying is, would you like to be like me? So, we must be careful in our daily actions, words, and deeds, because we are telling others about the Lord through all those. How we come across to others is important as well. Character and personality are critical! Remember, Jesus warns us about misleading people. What would you think if you went to buy a car and the salesman told you it had 300 horsepower, would withstand an impact at 50 mph, get 40 mpg, and be cheap to insure? You would probably say, "Wow!" and buy it, then have trouble making it up the hill by your house. Then, what if someone rear-ends you, you get whiplash, and \$5,000 in damage from a 5 mph impact, and you find out the insurance is over twice as much as your previous car? You would not be a very happy camper! You would realize you were manipulated and lied to! Perhaps you would be outraged! The salesman created a false impression of the car. How long would that salesman or car dealer say in business? Customers would stay away, and media watchdogs would attack. The same applies to us as representatives of Christ. How do you think the Lord feels when we are out in the world misrepresenting Him?

When we judge others, we are harboring two contradictory attitudes and thoughts, while we are in fact lying to and about our Lord. What does our Lord have to say about this? *Judge not, that you be not judged* (Matthew 7:1). In Romans, chapter two, we find that when we judge others, and disobey God, we are inexcusable, and will not escape the judgment of God. The measure of God's dealings with Jews and Gentiles will be the same, as there is no difference in ethnicity. It is what is in the heart, not the skin that matters to God, even in the O.T.! Remember, all will appear on the Day of Judgment. Being judgmental will not work; it will only backfire on you, and show that external works will not gain anything without a renewed heart through Grace. God looks at the trust in His work, not the comfort of our work. The Jews in the time of Paul and Jesus felt they were outside of God's wrath and judgment, just as some Christians feel today. These are the ones who take comfort in their church membership and not who they are in Christ.

The flipside is that the saying *Judge not, that you be not judged* (Matthew 7:1) is also a popular phrase in Western society. It is often spoken when someone is pointing out the faults of another, or if one feels someone else is judging him. The secular impression is that we should never make moral judgments on others. However, that is not what Jesus implied when He spoke on judging. We are to judge what is right and wrong in some things, such as sin versus virtue (James 4:11-12). There are times when we are called to judge as we exercise church discipline--correcting one who teaches in error (1 Timothy 1:3-11; 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:3-5; Titus 1:9; 2:1). If he/she does not heed the

correcting, he/she must step down. Church leaders are called to exercise discerning *judgment* as to the moral or spiritual condition of the people under their care. This is always done in the character of the *Fruits of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23).

There are different types of judgment. One involves being discerning, not allowing harm to come to you or others from those who cause harm. And, along with that, comes sensitivity to potential trouble, attempting to prevent the bad actions of others. This is a service, which, ideally, the church, as well as law enforcement and community involvement, is supposed to do. There is also the judgment/discernment of evaluating the spiritual and mental health of others. The other types are the cruel manipulations and putdowns that many of us do! What Jesus is referring to in Matthew, chapter seven, is condemning the faults in others to cover up our own faults--especially the ones we refuse to see in ourselves. He also is condemning the practice of verbally attacking others, which will only bring condemnation on us. The imagery that Jesus uses is the market place measuring scale. When we judge, our false, hypocritical, and self-righteous attitude is put on the scales, and counts against us, calling down God's judgment on us (Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:1-6).

The best way to cover your own sins and wrongdoings is to attack someone who is good and righteous, because it will throw the dogs off your tracks, taking the attention off you and placing it elsewhere. I cannot tell you how many times as a pastor I have seen this happen, as misguided arrogant people take down good people because they do not want to be convicted. Why does this work so well? Because righteous people will not defend themselves, as he/she is rooted in Christ, and not in the world. It is in the same way our Lord did not defend Himself. The other leading way to attack someone is to judge him/her! It is characteristic of our fallen, human, sinful nature to see the faults in others, but, more often than not, the very faults we point out in others are the ones we have! This is what Jesus refers to as the *speck and plank in the eye*! He is telling us that we may need eye surgery (Matthew 7:1-6). In the Greek, it is a word play, using hyperbole speech-exaggeration for emphasis that is both shocking and humorous. It means we must correct our own faults by removing the *beam* from our own eye; then we will be able to see, discern, and help others who are not dealing with their faults (Galatians 6:1-2).

God does not care about our pedigree, or who grew up in the church, or who is new. He is telling us that no one is immune! It is ONLY by what Christ has done that we can be saved. This transpires to how we treat others. Even when we are saved, we cannot say it is by what we have done. This transpires to how we judge, because we have no basis to do so. The Roman church was a mix of Jews and Gentiles, thus disagreements and prejudice arose and Paul had to address them (Psalm 18:25-26; 62:12; Matthew 7:1-2). So, if you judge, all you do is end up judging yourself!

When we have the knowledge and trust of God's goodness, and His right of judgment, we will refuse to be hypocritical. We will use His goodness as a guide to see the sorrow for our "miss-actions" and have compassion toward others for theirs (Psalm 136). As God is generous with His grace, so we should be generous toward each other and be thankful. And, finally, as we see His goodness in a much deeper way, we are truly transformed, renewed, and we turn away from sin (Romans 12:1-3). When we refuse to see His goodness, and keep judging, we model the ultimate contempt to our loving Lord!

Remember, we will also be judged by the ultimate Judge! He will judge us according to the opportunities He brings and knowledge we have. The more you know, the more responsibility you have to put it to use! That is why Moses was not allowed into the Promised Land; he disobeyed God in what we might see as a minor matter. God saw the matter as not important, because Moses knew better! Thus, the offence of striking the rock was bad enough for him to be excluded from entering the Promised Land because, of all the people who ever lived, Moses knew better. Moses had been face to face with God and knew his duty and call. His anger broke the trust he had with God, resulting in grave consequences. God did show Moses some grace and allowed him to see what was to come. Fortunately for us, we have grace to further protect us (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8-11)! But grace is no excuse to do as you please!

Hey, I do not Judge!

If you are thinking, "Hey, I am safe so far. I do not judge. I am not a hypocrite." But, what about what motivates you? God will not just judge our actions, but also our motivations! He knows the truth about each of us; there is nothing new to God. He alone has pure intentions, pure, uncorrupted love, mercy, and omniscience knowledge. He knows all things, and how everything and everyone is intertwined relationally in the past, present, and future. We have no such knowledge. We see a small piece of bark from a single tree, while He sees the entire forest. Thus, we cannot judge simply because of our blind imprudence.

What about how you value others? In Western culture it is customary to consider yourself as number one! But, Biblically, we are number two. God is number One, and others are to be put above us as well, to a point. So, do you value others in the same way you do yourself? Is the scale balanced? Do you cover up your frailties by attacking and criticizing others to throw the dogs off your scent (Matthew 7:1-5; 21-23; 25:31-33; John 5:22)? When we are focused on seeing the corruption and deceit in others, it is because we are filled with it ourselves, and we do not take the Word of God seriously. What if God judged us as we do others? The answer again is, **do not judge, and do not be hypocritical!** Yet, Christians can be the some of most critical and arrogant people on earth! We must come to the place where we let God remove our pride! Remember, God searches our hearts. What will He find in yours?

- Hypocritical conduct comes from our fallen nature, as demonstrated by our history, actions, interpersonal relationships, by divorce court, and testimonies of behavioral scientists. Christians do not seem to be immune from this infection!
- Hypocritical conduct causes us to behave in one way, while desiring or even believing we are acting in a total different way. It may be intentional or it may be just a *slip of the tongue*. However, it is all the same to the hearer of the words--damaging, destructive, awful, addictive, and most of all, devoid of Christian love!
- God is more concerned with our obedience than our knowledge!
- Are you grateful for what Christ has done or do you take it for granted (Luke 15:17-19)?
- To be self-centered is to find the wrath of God!
- Do you practice what you preach, that is, do you condemn others for what you do in secret?
- No one needs or likes a Hypocrite!
- It is as impossible to be a Christian hypocrite, as it is impossible to be half pregnant. Either you are, or you are not. Your fruit will show your true colors!
- Everyone should know better than to sin. So, why do we?!
- Being, and living, as an honest Christian should just be a natural endeavor. We have been filled with the Holy Spirit. We know the Scriptures. Therefore, there should be no problems with honest living, yet there is!
- Our behavior causes a contradictory witness. We may desire to earnestly live a life of Christian maturity, but, instead, we drive people away from the Lord! We end up doing the opposite of Christian living!
- The opposite of godlessness is godliness. This is the act of honoring God with our best. Godliness enables us to live out our faith in obedience, with love, and trust in Christ.
- Remember, it takes a diamond to cut another diamond, so allow other Christians to hone and challenge you, but never let anyone sway you from what is clearly revealed in Scripture! Count your afflictions as joy and service to Him, as long as you are true to Christ and His Word.

Being judgmental is extremely foolish, because you are, in fact, throwing a boomerang of condemnation that comes back to hit you harder than you threw it. God judges according to truth; we judge according to greed and misunderstanding.

Remove the *plank!*

When Jesus tells us, simply put, *DO NOT JUDGE*, He means we are not to be critical or use ourselves as a measuring stick to which we compare everyone else! A Christian who is critical and condescending is a terribly destructive force to the Kingdom of God, as he/she exhibits the direct opposite behavior of what a Christian should be. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to give a critique, and He will work with you way before using you to work with someone else! Every wrong thought you may observe in others already exists in you, and if you are unwilling to deal with it, while pointing it out in others, you are, as Proverbs so eloquently puts it, *A FOOL!* The chief characteristic of a Christian should be humility! Remember, if God judged you correctly and righteously, you would go straight to Hell, as you deserve neither Grace, nor His love. But, because of His Grace, you have heaven—and Him--for eternity!

So remove the *plank!* Eye surgery in Jesus time was not a really good idea, they would cut an incision onto the eye and drain the fluid to help, but all this did was make the situation much worse. And so it is when we judge wrongly! It is wrong for anyone to focus their attention on the *speck in his brother's eye*, while his/her own eye is occupied with the same, or another fault (Psalm 18:25-26; Romans 2:1)! Why does Jesus hate this so much? When we judge by attacking others, or by putting them down, we are refusing to forgive (Mathew 6:14-15)! If you are unwilling to see the faults in yourself and be in the process of resolving them, then you have no right to *help* others by critiquing them! If you think you have no faults, you are deluding yourself, and lying to God and others (Romans 2:17-24). We have to be humble and accept correction to be used by God (Proverbs 15:31).

We need to realize our sinful nature and how much Christ forgave us, less, *for with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you* (Matthew 7:1-2). The implication is that we will be judged by the same standards we use to judge others! There is just no need or reason to do this. It only harms others, makes the Church look bad, and identifies the person who judges as a *FOOL!* Why would a Christian desire to do this when they have received Christ's grace? It can boggle the mind!

So, we must be aware of the bad judgmental attitudes that have consumed the Church since it's founding. Let God be the judge! He is God and knows the true motivation and circumstances of people, which we do not have access to. Thus, He will judge with the right amount of vengeance. Our

vengeance is insignificant, unnecessary, and unlawful before God! Just consider how severe the penalty for false judgments were in the O.T. (Exodus 23:6-8; Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 18:19-21). Let God be God, not you!

Why we Judge

Why do Christians display contradictory actions? Psychologists call it *cognitive dissonance*. This is when a person harbors two completely different views. While acting on one behavior, they believe they are doing something quite different. This can be caused by a stressful situation, by being uncomfortable, or by being unable to modify one's beliefs to fit a situation. So, we develop rationalizations, believing we must be right in our actions because our beliefs are right, regardless of our actions.

Are all hypocrites people who are not real Christians and are just pretending like Dr. Anderson? Not necessarily. Most Christians who judge have a skewed sense of Biblical precepts. They have not yet discovered who they are in Christ. They elevate their desires, goals, and aspirations over those of anyone else, even the Lord. Perhaps they are saved, but the reality of the faith has not set in them. These immature Christians will not allow themselves to be convicted or grow in the faith. They depend on their works and ideas, not on their faith and the reality of Christ. Thus, they rationalize or theologize their way through life, making all kinds of excuses for demanding their own Will and way.

Another reason Christians judge is because there are so many various visions for our lives and Will, so they are volleying for power. The focus tends to be away from God's Will in most churches and Christian's lives. Thus, when you do take a stand, even though it is Biblical and true, Christians will persecute you more than heathens will! Look at church history for this evidence. Because a lot of Christians fear change and conviction more than anything else, they do not want to see their hypocrisy, or move beyond their comfort zone, so they attack to preserve what they perceive as theirs. Jesus said for us to remove the plank from our own eye first. They do not want to remove it, because that plank is their source of comfort and rationale for all they do.

Sometimes Christians just have not adjusted to their new life and are still carrying the values from their old life. The Roman Christians had a tough time adjusting to the new life in Christ, as they wrestled with Jewish law and tradition over the alien concepts of freedom and Grace. They were not willing to act by faith and trust in Christ, just as most Christians today are not! It takes time to be disciplined, and to adjust to our new life. Faith is given to us *overnight*, but we still have to receive, process, and act on it. We tend to create our own bureaucratic obstacles, and then blame God and others. Paul is calling us to be patient and to understand one another. When we do, life goes much more smoothly, and issues are not taken so personally.

The Pharisees were experts on seeing hypocrisy in others, but they failed to see it in themselves. They could look down the corridor of time and see all the errors and mistakes their ancestors made in the past, yet look at themselves as more accomplished, and incapable of doing the ungodly acts of those in years past. However, the Pharisees could not see the damage, hurt, and oppression that they were causing. They were causing the very same problems for which they were criticizing their ancestors. They were actually leading people away from God! They were performing the very opposite of their job description, the very opposite of their call from the Lord (Matthew 23:23-33). Do not be a Pharisee; they are not *fair, you see!*

Considerations with Judgments

Judgmental attitude cannot exist with a Christian mindset. The two cannot be in the same place at once; each one has to occupy the whole room. A Christian mindset will remove a Judgmental attitude, and *vice versa*. Pride is the ultimate destroyer of humbleness, of being a mature, faithful follower of Christ. Pride produces the rotten fruit of hypocrisy, and humbleness is the destroyer of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy cannot exist in an environment filled with humbleness. This is because in our humbleness, we are glued to our Lord and not to ourselves. Godliness cannot exist in an atmosphere of pride!

1. How do you think the Lord feels when we misrepresent Him in the world?
2. Is there a difference between pride and hypocrisy? How are they alike? How do they fuel each other?
3. Read Matthew 23:23-33; How would you define *hypocrisy*?
4. Living as an honest Christian should be a natural endeavor. So, why does this sometimes fail to happen?
5. Why would Christians elevate their desires, goals, and aspirations over those of anyone else, even the Lord?
6. Are we doing life and church as Christ would, or, are we mirroring our feelings and desires, regardless of our mandate from our Lord?
7. Do you believe that hypocrisy is a destroyer of the church? What about a destroyer of your personality?
8. Do you believe that as Christians, we have the responsibility to act as disciples of Christ wherever we are and whatever we do?
9. Are you putting on a performance, or are you genuinely focused on the Lordship of Christ so that He flows to those around you?

10. How can you let other Christians hone and challenge you without causing you to be discouraged?
11. Pride is the destroyer of humbleness. Pride is the fruit of hypocrisy (or should I say rotten vegetable?), and humbleness is the destroyer of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy cannot exist in an environment filled with humbleness because when we are humble we are glued to our Lord and not to ourselves. How can you destroy the attitude of hypocrisy?
12. Do you build your spiritual life from your faith, or from what you have done?
13. Remember the ultimate judgment is still to come! So, are you preparing yourself for that day when the Lord will judge you (John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10)?
14. Do we try to keep our image intact only to Christians around us, letting our true nature slip with people at work, or when we go shopping? The problem is that most people, especially non-Christians, will see right through our hypocrisy, even though we may not see or admit to it!
15. Most Christians just flat out do not want to change their behavior, regardless of what anyone thinks, or what Scripture teaches. What about you?
16. The hypocrisy that most people display happens in the workplace. For example, suppose someone acts unkindly towards a co-worker by spreading rumors or being abrupt to his/her fellow employees. When people later find out that that person is active in a church, the issue is compounded, and a negative focus is placed upon Christianity! How have you done this or seen it done?
17. We have to be willing to look at our flaws, the things we all need to improve on, and ourselves, and place our focus there. Our responsibility is to grow in character, not point out faults in others unless it is done through the relationship of a mentor, and with the disposition of the Fruits of the Spirit. For good relationships to be built, we have to be willing and able to treat others in the same manner we want to be treated. How can you create a mindset to do this?

Hypocrisies Reality

Don't ever believe that our performances are realities; people will see right through us. There are times when we have bad days, when we will make mistakes; after all, we are human, and we cannot be perfect all the time. I do not believe our culture wants us to be perfect, but genuine. So, when we make mistakes, we need to be up front about it, be willing to apologize, give in, and go

to the people who were intentionally or unintentionally hurt and make up with them. Practicing forgiveness and acceptance are paramount, even though it goes against the grain of our old nature. But remember, God calls us out of our old nature to be transformed by Him.

After we become a Christian, a time must come when the reality of who we are in Christ hits home in power and conviction. We must completely change the black, dirty oil of the mind with the new golden, anointing oil of His love. As a Christian, the Spirit transforms us completely from all we were and all that we did, including our Will, our plans, and our opportunities (Romans 12; 2 Corinthians 3:18). This cannot happen unless we give up and yield our selfish Will over to His (Galatians 2:20-21; Philippians 3:1-14)! The incentive for us to surrender to Christ is that His way is better than ours! The icing on the cake of that incentive is the improvement in our relationships, both the current ones and the ones to come. Paul's main concern was whether his teaching would be applied, or just studied, or ignored. So, carefully look over your spiritual life and pray about how it affects your personality, how you are to others, and be willing to take action.

When should a Christian Judge?

We are called to *judge with righteous judgment* (John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Galatians 6:1; 1 John 4:1). We are to be discerning, and not allow immorality and false teachings to emerge from our lives, the Church, or allow such things to attack the Church from the outside. It is just as the U.S. military is commissioned to protect citizens from enemies, both foreign and domestic! The Lord also condemns judging in the spirit of self-righteousness and condemnation, without mercy or love (Luke 6:36-37; James 2:13).

So, what should we do? The right way to help someone with "faults" is to go to them privately with *constructive* criticism in love, and offer gentle, humble analysis and help that would lift them up (Matthew 10: 12-15; Acts 13:42-46; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). If we remain silent when people do dumb things, they will keep doing them and hurt the Church. It is the same with the teaching of false doctrine or when someone behaves wrongly; we have to act, but act in the parameters of the Fruits of the Spirit. We are not to allow *reproach*, that is, *false impressions*, to come upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, causing Him to be misrepresented. Remember the need for prayer and the need for love!

When we fully recognize our dependence on Christ, and fully feel the love and acceptance we have from Him, our spiritual walk will increase. When our walk increases, the flow of love and care will proceed from us in a powerful and focused way, because then we will see that we already have all that we could ever want or need. All that we are, and all that we could ever be, is found in Christ. Just remember, this just does not accidentally happen; you have to work at it!

May God help keep us all from such judging, and enable us to be more useful in helping others with their problems.

Remember we do not deserve His love and grace, yet it is given to us anyway.

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