

A Parable of Pride

Exodus 9:13-10:29

INTRO:

The Monkey Trap: Here's the idea... Monkey hunters cut a small hole or slit in a coconut and fill it with rice. Then they tie the coconut to a tree or attach it to a stake in the ground. The hole in the coconut is big enough for the monkey to get his hand in, but not big enough to get his hand out if it is filled with rice. As the hunters approach, the monkey desperately tries to get his fist out of the coconut, but won't let go of the rice and so he's caught.

Today we're going to look at something that Pharaoh was holding onto, to the destruction of himself and everyone under his authority.

There are a lot of repeated themes in this section about the plagues- God's pursuit of His own fame that I preached about several weeks ago, God's uniqueness or "incomparability" that Pastor Jason talked about two weeks ago, God's sovereignty over the human heart, and how that interacts with Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart, God's grace in choosing to set Israel apart as His chosen possession, which Pastor Steve brought out in his sermon last week. Those themes are all repeated again in this section.

But, rather than emphasizing any of those again today, what I want to focus on is a different theme. It runs throughout this section, but it's summed up in 10:3, where God (through Moses) asks Pharaoh "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?" Pride. That's the theme that we're going to focus on today. Pride is what Pharaoh values so much that he's unwilling to let go of it until it destroys him and everything around him.

Now, pride has several meanings... It can mean "a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired." Or it can mean "consciousness of one's own dignity" These aren't sinful. But, what I'm talking about today is pride as a sin, which is something like this...

Pride: "the quality of having an *excessively* high opinion of oneself or one's importance."

This story about God teaching Pharaoh a hard lesson teaches us many things, but I think one way we can look at this is that it is a parable of pride. It's a true story that teaches a spiritual lesson about pride. And here's the main lesson about pride that I want to bring out of this parable today: **Stubborn pride is a trap that will bring ruin to you and those around you if you don't let go of it.**

In 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, the Apostle Paul says that one reason the history of God's people was written down was "for our instruction" He then adds this, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man." Pharaoh's pride may seem blatant and ridiculous to us, but one reason that this story has been written down is to instruct us- to give us a mirror into our own hearts. Stubborn pride can afflict all of us. So, I'm going to give you nine characteristics of pride to help you identify it in your life.

Before we get into those I want to give you a word of caution... Resist the temptation to see this as a description of someone else. Look for evidence of stubborn pride in your own life. You may not see it as clearly in your relationship with God, so also think about your relationships with other people as well, look for traces of stubborn pride there and ask yourself this question: **Is my pride so valuable that I'm willing to hold on to it, no matter the cost?**

Stubborn Pride vs. True Humility

We're going to focus on what stubborn pride looks like, so that we can identify and let go of it, but I want to also give you the contrasting traits of true humility. King Josiah... a parable of humility. I would love to read through it, but we don't have time. I'll just reference Josiah a couple of times as we go, and I invite you to read it for yourself this afternoon in **2 Kings Chapters 22-23.**

1. Pride is Rooted In a Warped Worldview, Humility is Rooted In Reality.

Pharaoh had a warped worldview. He believed he was god. We've seen this several times already, but it's here again in the second half of verse 14 in Exodus 9. **(9:14:b)**. God reminds Pharaoh once again that these plagues are happening so that Pharaoh will be left with no doubt in his mind that he is *not* God. There is no one like God in all the earth! This is reality, and Pharaoh is refusing to see it. This is really what pride comes down to- in those prideful moments, or in those areas where we tend towards pride, we think we're God.

This is the first, essential thing that we must accept- we do not define our own reality. Humility begins with accepting that there is an objective reality and that it is *outside* of us. It doesn't depend on us, and our feelings about it don't change it. The universe exists in a certain way, and certain ways of interacting with the world will produce certain outcomes.

Universal physical laws- gravity, thermodynamics, etc... Most people don't struggle with these. It's the universal moral laws and the spiritual realities that undergird those laws that people try to reject. But wisdom, from the Biblical perspective, is living in accord with reality- living in a way that lines up with the way things fundamentally *are*.

And the way things fundamentally *are* is laid out in Genesis 1- that everything was created by, is sustained by, and is under the rule of an Invisible, yet Everywhere-present God. That's why the Psalmist says in Ps. 111:10 "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" We cannot live wisely in this world apart from a deep reverence for the One who created and rules this world.

Theologian J.I. Packer says it this way:
"The healthy Christian (or healthy HUMAN, I would add) is the Christian who has a sense of God's presence stamped deep on his soul, who trembles at God's word, who lets it dwell in him richly by constant meditation upon it, and who tests and reforms his life daily in response to it." - J.I. Packer

That leads us perfectly into the next characteristic of pride...
2. Pride Rebels against the Word of God, Humility Receives the Word of God.
 This is so obvious in this story. Over and over Pharaoh refuses to submit to God's word as it comes to him through Moses and Aaron. (9:34-35)

As soon as God takes the pressure off, Pharaoh again rebels against God's command to let the people go. In his pride, he blows off the word of God. But humility does what we heard from J.I. Packer, it "*trembles at God's word, lets it dwell in him richly by constant meditation upon it, and tests and reforms his life daily in response to it.*" Do you tremble at the word of God? Do you believe His warnings? Do you allow your life to be shaped by it, rather than merely following your own desires and the whims of culture?

Most of you are here because, on some level, you want to receive the Word of God. But, as they say, the proof is in the pudding. What does your life show?

3. Pride Receives grace as another opportunity to rebel, Humility Responds to grace with repentance.

(9:15) God reminds Pharaoh that He could have wiped him off the face of the planet. He's shown him grace, but it doesn't lead Pharaoh to humility. Every time God pulls His hand of discipline back, Pharaoh takes advantage of it by rebelling once again.

Do you see this in your own life? Do you feel the painful consequences of your pride and promise to change, only to jump right back into rebellion once the pressure is off? That's pride! True humility sees the grace of God when He withholds the punishment that we deserve for sin, and it sees it as an opportunity for repentance- a real change of heart and life- motivated by an overwhelming sense of awe that God would even give us one more breath!

Rebellion in the face of grace can lead to the next prideful response that we see in Pharaoh.

4. Pride Ridiculously negotiates with God, Humility Radically submits to God.

(10:8-11; 10:24) This is still rooted in a warped worldview! Pharaoh is still imagining that he has some power that can stand up to God! He's deluded himself into thinking that he holds enough cards that he can make a deal with God. In light of His obvious inability to stop any of the plagues, this is completely ridiculous!

Humility, on the other hand, accepts what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 11:34-35, that no one has known the mind of the Lord, that no one has been his counselor, that no one has given a gift to God, that he might be repaid. But from God, through God and to God are ALL things! You have nothing to offer to God that He didn't first give to you, so how are you going to bargain with Him?

When I say that "humility radically obeys God" I mean that humility submits thoroughly and completely. No trying to bargain with God, holding back some part of our life from Him while offering Him something else that won't force us to give up our pride.

5. Pride Refuses to see itself as the problem, Humility Recognizes responsibility.

(9:17, 10:3a) God is telling Pharaoh that it's because of *his* stubborn pride that all of these terrible things are happening. Stubborn pride excels at blame-shifting, pointing fingers at other people, like when a husband blames

his wife for his anger. Stubborn pride will blame a messed-up childhood, it blames addiction, it blames society, or it may even try to blame God Himself. “I’m this way because You made me this way, or because You allowed this to happen in my past.” God doesn’t allow us any of these outs! He puts it on us and drives to the heart of the issue by asking “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?” Our sin, at its root, is a result of our pride. It’s a stubborn refusal to acknowledge God’s rule over us, a refusal to acknowledge that His commands are for our good.

Humility, on the other hand, recognizes responsibility. When King Josiah, whose story I mentioned earlier as being a parable of humility, realized that he and all of Israel had been disobeying God, he didn’t blame it on his father. His father, Amon, was an idol worshiper who was murdered in his own house when Josiah was only eight years old!

But Josiah didn’t protest that he was too young at age 26 when the word of God came to Him and he realized the sin of the nation. He didn’t argue that he needed to get in a stronger political position before he stirred things up. No, he fully accepted his responsibility to reform the nation, and he did what was right without hesitation. This is what humility does. It doesn’t make excuses for sin. It accepts responsibility.

6. Pride Rejects greater knowledge of God, Humility is Rewarded with greater knowledge of God.

I’m drawing this idea out of the story as a whole, not just one particular passage. By his prideful refusal to submit and obey God, Pharaoh rejects the possibility of knowing the power of God’s grace. He puts himself in a position where he can only know God as a punishing judge. Pharaoh limited his knowledge of God. Because of his pride, he could only know God as an enemy! He would see only the power of God to destroy, not the power of God to restore, protect and provide.

Humility is the only door to walk through if we want to know God more deeply. We can’t know God as gracious if we refuse to acknowledge His right to rule. We can only experience a certain level of God’s grace (temporary withholding of judgement) because humility is a prerequisite for knowing the riches of God’s grace. A *prerequisite* is “something that must come before.” As James 4:6 says, “God *opposes* the proud, but gives GRACE to the humble.”

God offers His grace to us *only* as we humble ourselves, accepting that we are desperate sinners in need of salvation from His punishing anger for our sin. There is no way to God, no way to eternal life, no way to real and lasting joy apart from letting go of our pride and giving up every hope but Jesus. He is *the* Way, *the* Truth, and *the* Life. No one can know God as the tender, loving, kind and gracious Father that He is except by putting our trust *only* in what He offers to us- and that is Jesus alone. We have to humbly count everything that we have- everything that we *are*-as loss apart from knowing Jesus.

That's the Gospel, and we only grow in our knowledge of God by continuing on in life by faith in the Gospel, clinging to Jesus, continually giving our lives over more and more completely to Him. Won't you let go of your stubborn pride and walk in the freedom that God offers you in Christ?

That giving of our lives to Him more and more is called repentance, and the next point shows us what repentance is...

7. Pride Regrets consequences, rather than wrongdoing, Humility Repents from the heart.

Simply confessing sin because we regret the consequences is *not* the same as repentance. Here's what Pharaoh did... (9:27-28) Sounds like he's finally let go of his pride, right? Until we read **verses 34&35...**

Is this what your "repentance" looks like? Do you confess your sin because you regret the painful consequences of your sin? Maybe your gossip destroyed a friendship, so you try to hold your tongue for a while. Or your conscience is pricking you, making you feel guilty, because you looked at pornography again. Maybe your covetousness has led you to rack up a huge credit card bill, so you vow never to binge shop again. Maybe, if you're a kid, your disrespect of your parents got you a spanking, or you had some privilege taken away so you promise never to let your mouth run away with you again.

Whatever the case may be, simply disliking the consequences, feeling bad, and even confessing and promising to do better, by themselves, those are *not* repentance. As Pastor Steve laid out so beautifully last week, repentance is only real when we are *delighted* to turn away from our sin because it means that we are turning *to* God with both our heart *and* our actions. You may have a thousand excuses for returning to your sin over and over again and not really committing yourself wholeheartedly to putting it to death. But, whatever your reasons, that's all they are- excuses. Deep down, it's stubborn pride. Humility

repents from the heart.

Even hearing me say that may make you angry, “How dare you! You don’t know my situation! You don’t know my struggles!” That may be the case, maybe I don’t know your situation. And while, as a fellow sinner, believe me I *do* have compassion for your struggles, as a preacher I have to impress on you the reality that God’s Word lays out for us- that God holds each of us personally responsible for our actions. And, if this does make you angry, then I pray that God will press this next point home in your heart.

8. Pride Resorts to angry threats when confronted with reality, Humility Rejoices in God’s reign.

(10:28) Pharaoh can’t let go of his stubborn pride, so he gets angry. He can’t admit that he has no power compared to God, so he gets mad and makes threats. Do you find yourself doing this when God confronts you with His lordship over you? Maybe you’d say, “No, of course I don’t threaten God. That would be stupid!” That would be stupid! But, just as God spoke to Pharaoh through Moses, God *often* speaks to us through other people. And, just as Moses was on the receiving end of Pharaoh’s angry threat, those who try to speak truth to a stubbornly prideful person often find themselves on the receiving end of angry outbursts.

How well do you receive correction? Do you get angry? Maybe it’s not an outburst, maybe it’s the silent, sulking kind of anger. Or, do those closest to you walk on eggshells around you, no longer seeking to lovingly call you to repentance because of how you’ve responded in the past?

See, when disciplined by God, even if that discipline or correction comes from a fellow sinner (as it normally does), if your heart is humble you will actually *rejoice* that God is reestablishing His reign in your life, because you trust that God’s ways are *better* than your ways. Psalm 119:67 expresses this beautifully: *67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. 68 You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.*

If you are at the point where you won’t let go of your pride, even when it’s leading you to get angry, then you’re already paying the cost for it in your life, whether you see it yet or not.

9. Pride Results in Wreckage & Ruin, Humility Results in Rescue & Restoration.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. – Proverbs 16:18 **This ruin is both personal and collateral.** Collateral means “situated side by side; parallel” In other words, pride will eventually destroy not only you, but also everyone around you. (**Exodus 10:7**)

Sinful pride is something that we all try to hold onto. But pride has a cost, right? Relationships- Marriage... you know what that pride is gonna cost you! It makes your home life feel like hell on earth, doesn't it!? Yet, some of you have held onto your pride for YEARS! Is it really that valuable? How are the dividends paying off? Is it really storing up a good future for you? Or is it storing up the disintegration of your marriage once the kids move out?

Is pride in your friendships storing up joy and deeper fellowship in those friendships, or are you accruing greater and greater alienation and deeper loneliness? Stubborn pride is a trap and it will result in wreckage and ruin for you and those around you if you refuse to let go of it.

The good news is, you're still alive, so today is an opportunity for you to humble yourself, and Humility results in Rescue & Restoration!

We have a picture of this in **Exodus 9:21-25**. Whoever feared the LORD... saved the lives of animals and people!

How does God respond to humility?

Josiah again... 2 Kings 22:19 - “...because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. 20 Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place.”

God is merciful and gracious! He is eager to respond to the humble heart! He is eager to rescue you from the trap of sin! He is eager to restore!

How important is humility? Our rescue from sin and the restoration of this broken world were not possible apart from the humility of Jesus!

Philippians 25 *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,¹ 6 pwho, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,² 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,³ being born in*

the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. humbling to exaltation! Jesus was rescued from death and restored to glory!

Jesus humbled himself to the point of death on the Cross, so God blessed that humility by raising Him up to glorious life. And when we put our faith in Jesus, we get the collateral blessing of his humility! We are rescued from sin by being buried with Christ in His death, and restored by being raised with Him in His resurrection! Collateral, in this case, does NOT mean “unintended”, as if this were accidental. This was God’s plan from eternity past, to glorify His grace by redeeming undeserving sinners who are united by faith to the humble obedience of Jesus in His life and death!

And now God calls us to walk in the humble footsteps of our Savior, looking towards the day when we will be lifted up in glory with him.

Don’t refuse life and joy for the sake of your pride. Don’t continue holding onto your pride today. It’s a deadly trap. I pray you will let it go and receive the rescue & restoration that God gladly gives to those who humble themselves before Him.

The band is going to lead us in a song. I’ll be down in front after I pray, if you want to talk, or pray with me. Or, if you want to meet with one of the pastors at another time, put that on a connection card, or email us at prcpastors@peineridgechurch.org.