

Pride & Humility – James 4:6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Ali

1. A new movie is out that has garnered a lot of attention – It's the story of Muhammed Ali
2. I remember listening to the radio as a child when Ali, whose name at that time was Cassius Clay, fought Sonny Liston for the heavyweight championship.
3. Even back then, at the beginning of his career, Clay was a braggart, but it got worse as the years and victories went on.
4. Before his 1971 fight with Joe Frazier, Muhammed Ali said,
 "There seems to be some confusion. We're gonna clear this confusion up on March 8th. We're gonna decide once and for all who is the king! There's not a man alive who can whup me. (He then jabbed the air with a half dozens blinding lefts.) I'm too smart. (He tapped his head) I'm too pretty (He lifted his head high in a revolving profile, like a bust on a pedestal) I AM the greatest. I AM the king! I should be a postage stamp – 'cause that's the only way I could get licked!"
5. Ali lost to Frazier!
6. In another incident when Ali was in his prime, as he was about to take off on an airplane flight, the flight attendant reminded him to fasten his seat belt.
 - a. he replied brashly, "Superman don't need no seat belt."
 - b. the attendant came back, "Superman don't need no airplane, either."
 - c. Ali fastened his belt.

B. Pride

1. Some people have a real problem with pride.
2. Thank God I'm not one of them.
 - a. you know, I used to be *conceited* but now I'm perfect!
 - b. you may want to check out my new book – *Humility And How I Attained It*
 - c. it's the sequel to my previous work - *Lance Ralston: God's Man of Faith & Power, An Autobiography*

3. Tom Brokaw tells a funny story about pride
 - a. he was wandering through Bloomingdale's in New York one day, shortly after he's been promoted to co-host on the Today show.
 - b. this was in the days when the *Today* show owned morning television
 - c. that show was a pinnacle of sorts for Brokaw after years of work, first in Omaha, then for NBC in Los Angeles and Washington,
 - d. he was feeling good about himself, feeling he had really arrived and was now a national celebrity.
 - e. he noticed a man watching him closely, and when he finally approached him, Brokaw was sure he was about to reap the first fruits of being a New York television celebrity.
 - f. the man pointed his finger and said, "Tom Brokaw, right?"
 - g. "Right," said Brokaw.
 - h. "You used to do the morning news on KMTV in Omaha, right?"
 - i. "That's right," said Brokaw, getting set for the praise to follow.
 - j. the man said, "I knew it the minute I spotted you. Whatever happened to you?"

C. Today

1. We're taking a look at Pride & Humility today.
2. And while we're going to be concentrating on just one verse in James 4, we need to take a look at the wider context.

II. TEXT

A. Setting The Context

1. Keep in mind James's theme throughout this letter.
 - a. he's encouraging Jewish believers in Jesus to live out their faith!
 - b. it's not enough to just *hear* the Word of God or think that mere *talk* is good enough –
 - c. they have to *follow through* and see their faith lived out in a new lifestyle.
2. One of the ways their faith needs to find expression is in the way they *treat one another* as brothers and sister in Christ.

3. So in the first 5 verses of chapter 4 he points out that strife among them is an evidence of worldliness, not godliness.
4. In vs. 6-10, James reveals the *root* of worldliness – it’s an issue of *pride*; while *godliness* comes through *humility*.
5. We’ll be examining this passage in more depth this Wednesday, but this morning, I want to focus on the central verse in this passage – v. 6.

B. V. 6 • More Grace

6But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

1. Look at the very first part of that verse • God gives *more* grace!
2. Let that sink in for just a moment.
 - a. God doesn’t just give grace -
 - b. He gives MORE grace.
 - c. first of all, He gives us grace,
 - d. then He adds more.
 - e. and once He’s added more, He adds some more, and some more, and some more!
3. How much grace does a man or woman need? Simple - MORE!
4. God gives grace because grace is what we need.
5. Grace is God’s love in action; it’s the *living expression* of God’s love for us.
6. I love my wife – but my love has to find expression if it’s to do *her* any good.
 - a. so I buy her flowers or take her out to dinner.
 - b. I call her in the middle of the day and tell her I’m thinking about her.
 - c. I do the dishes – I send her some silly e-mail.
 - d. I arrange a special weekend away in the mountains.
 - e. all of these are an *expression* of my love for her.
 - f. and each of them are based on and motivate by *my* love, not anything that she *deserves*.
7. God’s grace is the *active expression* of His love and it’s based on and motivated by who and what He is, not what we deserve.
8. You see, friends – God looks at us, and sees that what we *need* is His Love.

- a. we don't need more money or nicer things
 - b. we don't need fame or power
 - c. God made us for Himself – and our souls are restless until they find their rest in Him.
 - d. God designed us in such a way that the only thing that brings lasting satisfaction is His love, poured out within and through us in a continual, unending stream.
 - e. so that's why James writes that God gives us, not just grace, but MORE grace.
9. We're coming up on the last week before Christmas and most of us are in the shopping mode.
- a. either we've finished or have a few more items yet to get.
 - b. others haven't even started, but they're going over in their heads what to get people.
10. My son Tyrell is quite a kick – he's being really diligent about buying gifts this year.
- a. he has a job and is saving up to buy a car,
 - b. but he's having a blast buying nice presents for the family.
 - c. he's purchased Lynn's and mine and has said several times that he can't wait for us to open them
 - d. in fact, he plead with me the other day to go ahead and open my present then!
 - e. he is just so excited about the joy we will know when we receive his gifts he can't wait!
11. I think that's an apt picture of the way God yearns for us as it says in v. 5

5Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

12. God yearns for us to turn our hearts away from the petty baubles and glimmering distractions of this world to the true treasures He longs to pour into us.
13. Even now – God is looking across the Earth to find men and women whose hearts are simply laid before Him in openness to receive whatever He wants to give them.
14. The great secret to life is *letting God bless us!*
15. We've gotten it into our heads that what God wants is for us to do *for* Him.

16. Listen – what pleases God the most is not what we do, but letting *Him* do for us!
17. There once was a father who had an adoring daughter.
 - a. she was only 6 years old but when Christmas came she wanted to buy him a present to show her love
 - b. playing with her friends one day she passed a street vender who was selling little hand-blown glass statues
 - c. so that night she asked her daddy to give her six-pence
 - d. when he asked why, she told him it was a secret
 - e. he gladly measured out to her the coin and the next day she went back to the vendor and bought one of the glass statues.
 - f. she brought it home, wrapped it and placed it under the tree
 - g. on Christmas morning, she excitedly picked up the box and handed to her father
 - h. opening the gift he saw the tiny statue and was overjoyed at the expression of his little daughter’s love and thoughtfulness
18. Question – Where did she get the money to buy the gift?
 - a. from her father
 - b. though he had received a gift that blessed him beyond words – he was in fact, six-pence none the richer!
19. What an apt picture of God and us: For He is the Father and we are the adoring child.
 - a. what do we have that we have not received from Him?
 - b. any good we could do, and service we could perform, is made possible by Him.
20. He is the origin and cause of all we have & are!
21. Our giving makes God no richer!
22. What blesses God the most is when we open to Him and allow Him to love and bless us!
23. God wants to bless us! God is able to bless us!
24. The great secret of life is letting *Him* bless us. So how do we do that?

C. How Do We Receive This Grace?

1. Notice what James says next . . .

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

- a. by quoting Proverbs 3:34, James shows us *how* we receive the abundant, on-going grace of God.
- b. God's grace is for the *humble*, not the proud.
2. This makes perfect sense because grace is God's undeserved, unearned favor.
 - a. grace finds its motivation and reason in the *giver*, not the *receiver*
 - b. so grace can only be appropriated by the humble because they're not looking to themselves for *reasons* why they ought to be loved and blessed
 - c. the humble person recognizes that God owes them *nothing* and simply asks for favor on the basis of God's goodness and that *He* might be glorified.
3. The person who's proud thinks that God *owes* them something.
 - a. they seek favor because they *deserve* it.
 - b. they think blessing is their *due*.
 - c. and they see the bestowing of God's grace as a way to their *own* glory instead of God's.
4. This is why God resists the proud – because He will share *His* glory with no one!
5. And so we have the story, told again and again of some humble minister, some young preacher or Bible teacher, or new worship leader who's powerfully anointed by God's Spirit.
 - a. they have little training and their credentials, according to man's estimation, are insignificant.
 - b. but God pours out His grace on them and blesses them in a wonderful way.
 - c. many people are won to faith, brought into the deep things of God, and led into His presence in worship.
 - d. the preacher or teacher or worship leader is regularly praised and told how wonderful they are – and after awhile, they begin to *believe* it.
 - e. the early days of humility, when they knew it was all of God are replaced by a growing feeling of being special.
 - f. the ego starts to inflate – the head gets a little bigger, and pretty soon they've come to think that God will *continue* to anoint them because they have a *reputation* to maintain as His servant.
 - g. many men, women, and ministries have been ruined by this

kind of pride.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

6. The word *proud* refers to a person who has an inflated estimation of himself. [\[1\]](#)
 - a. that's the *dictionary definition* of the word "proud"
 - b. as we track through the Bible to see what the *scriptures* mean by pride we find that the essence of pride is to *evaluate things on the basis of how I am being honored*.
 - c. pride demands that the Bottom Line is ME and what I want.
7. *Humility*, on the other hand, evaluates things on the basis of how *God* is honored.
 - a. humility is concerned that *God's name* is glorified -
 - b. *His* glory is the Bottom Line.
8. Take careful note of God's posture toward the proud – He *resists* them!
 - a. I don't know about you, but being on the wrong side of God is not where I want to be!
 - b. if there's any battle you can't win, it's a battle with the Almighty!
9. God resists the proud because pride is the very antithesis of grace, and grace is both what we need and what God yearns to give – but pride blocks it!
10. Pride is a *spiritual vaccination* against grace.
11. Pride fills our head, hearts and hands so full of *self* there's no room for anything or anyone else.
12. Grace and pride are eternal enemies. [Guzik]
 - a. pride demands that God bless me in light of my merits, whether real or imagined.
 - b. but grace will *not* deal with me on the basis of anything *in me*, good or bad, but only on the basis of *who God is*.
13. The only thing that can properly fit us to receive grace is humility.
14. Don't think that humility means to think *lowly* of ourselves – that isn't it at all.
 - a. humility means to think *absolutely clearly* about ourselves
 - b. humility knows the only proper standard of measurement is the nature and character of God Himself.

- c. 8 year old Jimmy came running into the den shouting to his mother that his baby sister Maddie had grown 4 inches
 - 1) mother knew this was impossible because she had measured Maddie just a few days before
 - 2) so she went into the kitchen where the growth chart was on the wall to find that Jimmy had lowered it several inches!
 - d. that's the measurement of pride – where we gauge ourselves against others – and the others we use are always those we know we can come out better against.
 - e. humility gauges itself against only one standard – the Cross of Christ!
 - f. and that standard says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
15. Humility is a *prerequisite* to grace because it recognizes love and blessing are *unearned*.
- a. humility prepares the way for grace.
 - b. and once grace comes, humility ensures that God is given the glory and honor for His gift.
16. God can't bless the proud because they're looking within themselves for the reasons why God should bless them.
17. They see grace as a reward – and it is NEVER THAT!
18. Really – pride is *blindness*; a failure to see things as they really are.
- a. pride is a kind of *spiritual inebriation* in which a person's opinion of him or herself has caused their thinking to become distorted from reality
 - b. it is a form of *insanity*; a *spiritual psychosis*, a fantasy realm in which the person who's proud has come to think he's something other than what he is.
 - c. pride is the only disease known to man that makes everyone sick except the one who has it.
 - d. and a life that's wrapped up in itself makes a very small package.

D. A Test

1. Who here wants and needs more grace from God?
2. Okay – What do we need to receive more grace from God – Pride or Humility?

3. Humility – right! So how do we know if we’re proud or humble?
4. Let me ask you a question: Do you have a problem with pride?
 - a. if you answered “Yes”, then you need to humble yourself before the Lord (we’ll see how to do that in just a moment).
 - b. if you answered, “No,” then you need to humble yourself before the Lord.
 - c. honestly, if you sit here today and say you don’t struggle with pride, then it’s sure evidence you’re blinded by pride.
 - d. again – don’t think of pride just being *haughty* or *arrogant*;
 - 1) that’s just one face pride wears
 - 2) pride is *any* preoccupation with self that evaluates life from the perspective of what I am going to get out of it.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Solution*

1. In v. 10, James tells us how to put ourselves in the place of more grace . . .
- 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**
2. Notice that James says we are to humble *ourselves*.
 - a. humility is a choice we make – it’s not something that just happens to us
 - b. some of us weren’t born with a humility gene while others were born with a “I don’t need to be humble because I’m perfect” gene.
 - c. many people, specially the proud, think that humility is for the “little people” and because they *are* the “little people” they ought to be proud
 - d. but humility isn’t something we’re born with; far from it!
 - e. we’re all born with a predisposition to *pride*; to evaluating life from the perspective of self rather than God.
 - g. being humble is a conscious choice we make
 3. But notice that James doesn’t just say, “Humble yourself.” It’s “Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.”
 - a. you and I can’t just say, “Okay, I’ll be humble now.”
 - b. genuine humility comes as the result of what we’re *looking* at.

- c. if I'm looking at myself or other human beings, I can always finding something to be proud of.
 - d. but if my eyes are fixed on God, if my vision is filled with His majesty and glory, I realize what I really am!
 - e. there's simply no room for pride, no place for arrogance and boasting before God.
4. The man or woman who claims to spend time in the presence of God and to have an intimate relationship with Him yet is proud, is simply fooling no one but themselves.
 5. I occasionally watch TV preachers and the arrogance some of them exude while claiming to receive special mysteries and insights from the Lord is shocking.
 6. God *resists* the proud – His grace is not for those who parade back and forth drawing the adulation of the crowd to themselves.
 7. It is to the humble God gives His grace – Therefore, we must humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord – and He will lift us up!
 8. If you need and want grace, and more grace, and then more grace, then come to the Lord in sincere worship
 - a. come to the Lord in repentance and confession
 - b. come to the Him with a heart broken over your own failure and weakness
 - c. come to God in the totality of your need
 - d. claim no help but Him
 - e. claim no power but His
 - f. own no wealth but Him
 - g. trust nothing but what He supplies
 - h. renounce any and every claim except the claim He makes on you because of the blood He shed on Calvary's tree

B. The Army

1. Right now, many nations of the world have banded together to put an end to terrorism.
2. The main focus of their search is the terrorist network called Al Qaeda.
3. The men who make up Al Qaeda are united by a fierce loyalty to fundamentalist form of Islam that radically pursues jihad against non-muslims.
4. They are a relatively small group, and yet, their devotion to their

cause has stirred the entire world and captured the headlines for 3 months.

5. What would happen if the same number of Christians just applied James says in v. 6?
 - a. what could happen if they humbled themselves before the Lord and simply asked that God would make of them examples of what His grace can do in a life that is *totally* surrendered to Him.
 - b. it seems every where you go people are talking about Islam, and there's intense interest to find out what it teaches and believes – all because of the radical devotion of a handful of terrorists.
 - c. oh that everywhere we went, people were talking about *Jesus* and wanting to know about Him because of the grace they see in the lives of His people!
 - 1) that he was the subject of radio talk shows
 - 2) and that every church was packed every night of the week with people coming to learn about Him.
 - d. all because they met someone who humbly let God BE God in their life!
6. God – start with me!

[1] **proud** – *huperephanos* – showing one's self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent; with an overweening estimate of one's means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, haughty