

1 What is True Greatness?

- Or how to become an object of God's Wrath!

2 Introduction

- In Jim Collins's book, Good to Great, a surprising discovery was made about great company CEOs.
- They ...
 - Possessed incredible professional will and drive.
 - Willing to endure anything to succeed.
 - Surprisingly, they were self-effacing and modest.
 - Consistently pointed to the contribution of others.
 - Didn't like drawing attention to themselves.

3 Introduction

- When Jim Collins interviewed people who worked for these leaders, he says they continually used words like . . .
 - quiet, humble, modest, reserved,
 - shy, gracious, mild-mannered,
 - self-effacing, polite, understated, and
 - did not believe his/her own clippings, and so forth.

4 Introduction

- So then, in a culture that often rewards the proud,
 - we find out that humility is a key ingredient of the successful and
 - is getting the attention of some in the business and management community.

- However, there is something also very interesting about humility—which is very astonishing.
- Humility always gets the attention of God!

5 Who God Esteems

- “This is the one I esteem:
 - he who is ...
 - humble and contrite in spirit, and
 - trembles at my word.” (Is 66:2 NIV)
- According to the context, Israel had everything going for her.
- As the Apostle Paul explains (Rom 9:4),
 - theirs is the adoption as sons;
 - theirs is the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises.

6 Who God Esteems

- However, instead of considering their special place in God’s plan as a privilege and not a right,
 - they became arrogant and prideful and
 - no longer trembled at God’s word.
- Even though they were very religious,
 - their lack of humility caused them to be
 - targets of God’s wrath instead of His grace.

7 Who God Esteems

- For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chr 16:9 NIV)
- God is always searching the earth.
- But who is he searching for?
- God's attention and active involvement are decisively drawn to the humble like a magnet.
- In other words, a person who is humble is also one ...
 - who draws God's attention and also
 - attracts His grace and kindness.

8 The First Sin

- Where was the first sin committed?
- Was it on the earth or in heaven?
- According to Isaiah 14:13, it was when Lucifer—a powerful archangel who possessed beauty and glory far above his peers said,
 - I will ascend to heaven;
 - above the stars of God [and]
 - will set my throne on high.
- In other words, Lucifer sought recognition and status equal to or above God Himself somehow because of deep-seated contemptuous and pride.

9 The First Sin

- Led by the arrogance of this prideful archangel, now known as Satan,

- many other divine being of God changed their allegiance and
- rebelled against their creator.
- In response, God swiftly and severely pronounced judgment on them and will soon throw them and all who believe Satan's lies into a lake of fire
- When?
 - Satan's appeals against God's goodness are finally exhausted and
 - the full number of the Gentiles come in.

10 The First Sin

- Therefore, Pride appears to be the earliest sin and is at the core of all sin.
- As John Stott writes, "Pride is more than the first of the seven deadly sins; it is itself the essence of all sin."
- Indeed, from God's perspective, pride seems to be the most serious sin.
- God righteously hates all sin, of course, but biblical evidence abounds for the conclusion that there's no sin more offensive to Him than pride.

11 God Hates Pride

- When God's Word reveals those things "that the LORD hates" and "that is an abomination to him," it's the proud man's "haughty eyes" that head up the list (Proverbs 6:16–17).
- When the personified wisdom of God speaks out, these clear words are emphasized: "I hate pride and arrogance" (Proverbs 8:13)
- And consider the divine perspective on pride revealed in Proverbs 16:5: "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished."
- Stronger language for sin simply cannot be found in Scripture.

12 God Hates Pride

- Why does God hate pride so passionately?
- Because there is no basis for it! No one in all creation is perfect except God himself. [See Mark 10:18]
- So when a person possesses pride, they are, in reality, liars—and can easily move to the next step and declare themselves special with special rights, opinions, and privileges.
- Then, as so often is the case, when we don't get our way, we become rebellious,
 - justifying our actions and
 - making ourselves free from all accountability—even God's.

13 God Hates Pride

- While pride's ambition is to be free from accountability, its goal is for self-glorification.
- That's pride's motive and ultimate purpose—
 - to rob God of legitimate glory and
 - to pursue self-glorification—contending for supremacy with Him.
- The proud person seeks to glorify himself and not God, thereby attempting, in effect, to deprive God of something only He is worthy to receive.
- No wonder God opposes and hates pride as it robs Him of his rightful glory.

14 God Hates Pride

- You and I hate nothing to the degree that God hates pride.
- And because God cannot bear this arrogance, He reveals Himself in Scripture as actively opposed to pride.
- "God opposes the proud" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

- “Opposes” in this statement is an active, present-tense verb, showing us that God’s opposition to pride is an immediate and constant activity.
- In other words, the proud will not indefinitely escape His discipline.

15 Wokeism & Pride

- A recent article in the Washington Examiner pointed out that narcissism (self-love) appears to be at the root of all authoritarianism.
- In other words, those
 - with overinflated opinions of themselves (elitist)
 - lack empathy, hold grudges, and feel entitled,
- will, in the name of doing good,
- use it to fuel their dark egos by
 - putting others down and
 - making themselves appear vitreous.

16 Wokeism & Pride

- Along those same lines, Michael Karson who is no conservative, says the following in defining Wokeism.
- On the political left, wokeness sometimes drifts into wokeism—
 - a system of thought and behavior characterized by
 - intolerance,
 - policing the speech of others, and
 - proving one’s own superiority by denouncing others.

- According to Elon Musk, “Wokeness” gives people a shield to be mean and cruel, armored in false virtue.”
- In other words, pride is very deceptive.

17 Elitism & Pride

- An elite is a group or class considered superior to others because of their intelligence, education, social standing, or wealth.
- Elitism is the attitude that a select, elite group deserves more influence than others.
- Elitism can be dangerous to society when elites, out of pride, hubris, and greed, take power and control from duly elected representatives of the people.
- When they do this, they become a law unto themselves with no checks or balances.
- In a real sense, they become gods with no accountability.

18 Elitism & Pride

- When a select group of individuals believes they deserve more influence than others, it can lead to unequal distribution of power and resources.
- This can result in policies that benefit the elite at the expense of the majority, leading to social and economic inequality.
- In a democratic system, all citizens should have an equal say in decision-making processes regardless of their social status or wealth.
- Ultimately, elitism threatens the very foundations of democracy by creating an uneven playing field where some voices are heard louder than others.

19 Deceitful Pride

- To understand more of God’s perspective on pride, we would do well to note its peculiarly destructive power.

- Jonathan Edwards called pride "the worst viper that is in the heart" and "the greatest disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ;"
 - he ranked pride as the most difficult sin to root out, and
 - the most hidden, secret and deceitful of all lusts.
- However, Edwards once wrote, "What a foolish, silly, miserable, blind, deceived poor worm am I when pride works in me."

20 Deceitful Pride

- In his sermons and in his vast writings, Edwards
 - constantly warned against pride,
 - especially spiritual pride,
 - which he viewed as the greatest cause of the premature ending of the Great Awakening.
- Pride also undermines unity and can ultimately divide a church.
- Show me a church where there's division and quarreling, and I'll show you a church where there's pride.

21 Secret & Deceitful Pride

- Pride also brings down leaders, CEOs, Politicians, Athletes, and Movie Stars.
- "Pride ruins pastors and churches more than any other thing,"
- According to Mike Renihan, Ph.D.
 - "It is more insidious in the church than radon in the home."
- When you read about the next public figure to fall, remember Proverbs 16:18,
 - "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

- That person's situation might appear circumstantially complicated, but it's not complicated at the root: Pride goes before a fall.

22 Fail to Judge Ourselves Correctly

- Pride occurs when we fail to judge ourselves correctly in view of God's truth, where we develop too high of an opinion of ourselves, leading to arrogant behavior.
- When we do this, we are actually emulating Satan and thus following and worshipping him as we are believing his lie—
 - "I am more special than God and justified in being free from his controls."
- Pride (thinking more highly of ourselves than we should) leads to
 - arrogant attitudes, which leads to
 - arrogant behavior and
 - ultimately we become a law in and of ourselves.

23 Authentic vs. Hubristic Pride

- Nevertheless, not all pride is toxic; Psychologists distinguish between two kinds of pride, authentic and hubristic.
- Authentic pride arises when we feel good about ourselves, confident, and productive, and is related to socially-desirable personality traits such as being agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable.
- Hubristic pride tends to involve egotism and arrogance and is related to socially undesirable traits such as being disagreeable, aggressive, having low or brittle self-esteem—and being prone to shame.

24 Hubristic Pride is often the Reason . . .

- Why we easily get our feelings hurt.
- Why we hate being left out of special events.

- Why we feel rejection.
- Why we get into trouble.
- Why we won't admit to a mistake.
- Why we want to be seen with certain people.
- Why we are afraid we won't get credit for what we did.
- Why we are jealous and envy others, and yes.
- Why we stay angry and hold on to resentments.

25 God Hates Pride

- In our culture, the proud are usually honored and esteemed.
- However, it is humility that gets God's attention and blessing.
- Pride is not only the first sin but also the worst sin,
 - as it always leads to inaccurate opinions of ourselves,
 - which promotes arrogant behavior,
 - distorts reality,
 - justifies intolerance, oppression, and injustices, and
 - leads to wokeness, totalitarianism, and genocide.

26 God Hates Pride

- It is also a very prevalent sin, deceitful and hard to root out.
- Pride has been called the sin most people don't take seriously.

- In fact, pride justifies all other sins as it makes us a law unto ourselves.
- Through pride, we can justify stealing, adultery, lying, murder, and being a jerk.
- Yet God—through His mercies, helps us to unmask pride and introduces us to our great friend, which was also displayed in Jesus Christ.
- That friend is humility, the sign of true greatness, and makes us targets of his grace and mercy.

27 The Cure for Pride

- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others.
- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
 - Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing,
 - taking the very nature of a servant,
 - being made in human likeness.

28 The Cure for Pride

- And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!
- Therefore God, ...
 - exalted him to the highest place and
 - gave him the name that is above every name,
 - that at the name of Jesus
 - every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and

- every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

29 The Cure for Pride

- Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence but now much more in my absence — continue
 - to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,
 - for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.
- As the Apostle James says, Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (James 3:13)
- And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)