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© I. Chris Imoisili

Please, send Questions, Feedback and Comments to: E-mail: imoisilic@hotmail.com

PRIDE IS SATAN'S SURNAME!

Today's Text: Isaiah Chap. 14

Extracts:

How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High' [Is. 14: 12-14]

Recently, the Japanese people marked the 60th anniversary of the American bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War. They remembered the massive destruction of lives and property and the lingering memory of fear and doubts in the survivors and the national psyche. They wondered how human beings could have wrought such nuclear holocaust on fellow human beings.

From the American perspective, however, you get a different picture of the event. First, it was the Japanese who had launched an unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor in which America lost thousands of lives and massive military equipment. When the Americans responded and tried to push the Japanese back to their homeland, the Americans paid dearly for it in that they had to fight to take back every square inch of space throughout South East Asia. The Japanese did not believe in surrender and their Kamikaze pilots were ever ready to crash into American planes and naval ships rather than surrender. With the war coming into Japan itself, what would it cost the Americans to win against the Japanese? The only answer lay in forcing them into surrender. That was what the two nuclear bombs did to end the Second World War.

However, beneath the rhetoric lies the truth of the matter: a fierce sense of national pride. Both countries had a big sense of self-importance and were not ready to bow to any other human authority. The Japanese would rather commit suicide than surrender to the Americans. On the other hand, the Americans could not imagine any other nation that could successfully challenge their super-power status. When pride matched pride, destruction was the outcome! Do you know how much pride has cost most of us? Do you know how much pride you have in yourself? Perhaps the best way to understand the subject is to study Satan whose surname is pride! That is our subject for this week.

1. Anatomy of pride

We parents are very fond of telling others about our successful children. We carry pictures and, at the drop of a hat, we reel off! At the end of the story, we say something like, “I am so proud of them!” Let us look at the other side of this story. How many parents would tell ugly stories about their children? For example, you will hardly hear, “My first boy is in jail! My daughter is a prostitute! My baby is a drug addict!” There is hardly any parent who will say so! What does that suggest? Firstly, that when we make a public show of our children’s success, it is not for their benefit, but for ours! Secondly, the reason we do so, among others, is to raise our sense of self-importance. Therefore, it is a form of pride!

Pride can be defined as a *conceited* sense of self-importance. It is a show of our superiority over others even when the evidence on the ground does not support it. It is the direct opposite of humility or modesty. Among other ways, pride can be manifested as follows:

a) *Disrespect for constituted authority*

Some of us have a spirit of rebellion and cannot respect their elders or people in positions of authority over them. They neither respect the person or office. At every opportunity, they want to subject leaders or people in authority to ridicule. They let everybody around know that they could have done a better job if they had been given the privilege to lead. You find such people in the family, business, school or church.

For example, when Moses was leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land, Korah, Dathan and Abiram led 150 representatives of the people to question the leadership of Moses. They said to Moses and Aaron, “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, everyone of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?” [Num. 16: 1-3]. Of course, Moses and Aaron did not appoint themselves. God did. Moses tried to reason with them. He sent for them to talk it over but they refused to come [vv. 4-12]. Moses left them to God’s judgment. The ground opened under them and swallowed up the rebels [vv. 31-33]!

This disrespect for constituted authority extends to the rejection of the word of God and of His authority. After all, if the proud in heart can disrespect those that they can see, what of God that they cannot see? For example, after God had warned Nebuchadnezzar in a dream that He would depose him if he did not heed the word of God, he did not listen. Instead, he became swollen-headed and boasted, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling place by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?” That very moment, God took away the kingdom from him and for the next seven years, he lost his sanity and lived like a

beast [**Dan. 4: 1-25**]. In another example, after Jeremiah had warned the people of Israel about their sins and coming punishment by exile, “all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, ‘You speak falsely! The Lord our God has not sent you’” [**Jer. 43: 2**]. How many times have your church leaders rejected prophetic messages that do not promote their fleshy hearts’ desires?

b) *Closed-minded to superior knowledge*

Proud persons are all knowing! When they are confronted with superior ideas or plans, both the protagonists and their message must be thrown out. Anything that they have not originated or that does not support their positions or beliefs must not be entertained! That was why the Pharisees were vehemently opposed to Jesus whom they said was using the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, to perform His miracles [**Matt. 12: 22-24**]. Jesus was doing what they could never achieve!

c) *Never wrong, never apologise!*

In view of their position of self-importance and self-promotion, proud people can never be wrong, not to talk of apologizing to others that they have wronged. When the queen asked her husband, the king of Zamuda [in the movie, *Coming to America*], to apologise to the would-be father-in-law of the crown prince (that the king had insulted), he replied, “Why should I? He is beneath me!”

In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, listen to the proud man’s prayer, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men-extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” The humble tax collector, on the other hand, prayed, “God, be merciful to me a sinner” [**Lk 18: 9-14**]. The word of God is clear that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God [**Rom. 3: 23**]. If the proud cannot repent before God, how can they apologise to mere mortals?

d) *Pathological liars!*

One method by which proud people sustain their self-conceit is lying. They have no shame. When they fall down flat on a position, they find a new justification for still holding on to it. For example, it was the chief priests and the Pharisees who spearheaded the crucifixion of Jesus by the Roman authorities. After He had been buried, they were the same ones who went to Pilate to ask for His tomb to be secured so that His disciples would not come in the night to steal His body and claim that He had risen from the dead [**Matt. 27: 62-66**]. The guards that they had themselves hired witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, contrary to the position of the

chief priests and Pharisees. To prevent the guards from going forward with the truth, they “gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept, ‘and if it comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure” [Matt. 28: 11-15]. What a bunch of pathological liars!

From the forgoing, we see that the proud in heart has a hardened mind. The seven things that are an abomination to God are “a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among the brethren” [Prov. 6: 16-19]. If these do not describe the proud person, wait until you see Satan, the father of lies whose surname is pride!

2. Satan the father of pride!

The surname is the last or family name. All the children that are born to the same father bear his family name. For example, my surname is Imoisili, my father’s surname. My children also bear that surname even when they do not know the first man called Imoisili. In like manner, Adam was called the son of God [Lk 3: 38]. Since we are all descendants of Adam, we ought to bear God as our surname. Unfortunately, something happened along the way. Somebody tempted Adam and his wife, Eve, to disobey God and robbed us of the privilege to be called sons and daughters of God *by right*. That somebody was Satan, also called Lucifer, or the serpent or devil, among other names. What do you know about his background?

According to his résumé, Satan was created perfect, “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” He was in Eden, the garden of God, and covered with “every precious stone.” He was “the anointed cherub who covers” and God established him “on the holy mountain of God” and he “walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.” He was perfect in his ways from the day that God created him [Ezek. 28: 12-15]. Thus, Satan occupied a very privileged position, ever in the presence of God. However, he got carried away by his beauty, wisdom and splendour, and his “heart was lifted up” [v. 17]. Is that not what happens to most of us? We get carried away by the talents and blessings that God has given us and become puffed up.

Satan used God’s glory on him to organize a rebellion against Him. There was war in heaven. God’s forces, led by archangel Michael, defeated Satan and his wicked angels, and were thrown out [Rev. 12: 7-9]. The pre-incarnate Christ saw this war because Jesus told His disciples, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” [Lk 10: 18]. Isaiah takes up the story from here.

Satan should have known that God’s creations could not bluff Him. Instead of admitting defeat and, possibly, showing remorse for his sin of rebellion and disobedience, his pride took over. He boasted [Is. 14: 13-14]:

I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.

Examine Satan's words against what we had said earlier about proud people. His heart was still rebellious and showing disrespect to superior authority. His sense of self-importance and self-promotion gave him the false sense of security that he could be like God! He remained unrepentant and unapologetic. He continued to live a lie, not willing to accept that he had lost his privileged position from the presence of God.

Since "pride goes before destruction" and "a haughty spirit before a fall" [**Prov. 16: 18**], Satan's end was assured. His pride cost him the following:

- ❑ He was thrown down to Sheol (hell), "to the lowest part of the Pit" [**Is. 14: 15**];
- ❑ Since God does not withdraw from us our natural talents and endowments even when we fall, Satan can still appear in God's presence but now as an accuser of the brethren [**Zech. 3: 1**].
- ❑ Although Satan can still roam to and fro the earth monitoring the lives of the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus and how to hurt their interests [**Job 1: 6-7; Rev. 12: 13-17**], he no longer has the keys of hell and death. Jesus has taken them away from him [**Rev. 1: 18**].

3. Conclusions: sons of pride or sons of God?

From the Garden of Eden to Armageddon, Satan has continued to preach his gospel of rebellion and spiritual arrogance. When he tempts us, he uses three main weapons: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life [**1 Jn 2: 16**]. He has huge territory:

- ❑ *As the god of this world*, he blinds the minds of unbelievers so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ cannot shine in [**2 Cor. 4: 4**]. As the *prince of the world* [**Jn 14: 30**], he arrogates to himself the power to distribute material largesse as he wishes;
- ❑ As the *prince of the power of the air*, he is the spirit in the sons and daughters of disobedience who lust after their flesh, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath" [**Eph. 2: 2-3**]. See what has happened to the electronic media and music in the last decade!
- ❑ As the *ruler of darkness* [**Eph. 6: 12**] and the *prince of demons* [**Matt. 12: 24**], see how much spiritual wickedness is going on around the world today;
- ❑ As the *father of lies* [**Jn 8: 44**], truth has become an endangered species.

In the words of Jesus, if you operate within Satan's territory, "you are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" [**Jn 8: 44**]. Since pride is Satan's surname, and you have made him your father, *automatically*, your surname becomes Pride! Do you want to be called the sons and daughters of pride?

Thank God for Jesus who came as the promise of His Father to arrest Satan's rebellion [**Gen. 3: 15**]. He demonstrated our ability to deal with Satan when He successfully resisted his temptation. He had tempted Jesus with the lust of the flesh (by stimulating His hunger for food after fasting for 40 days), the lust of the eyes (by arousing human greed through showing Jesus a vision of worldly kingdoms under Satan's control), and the pride of life (by arousing Jesus' pride to demonstrate His divinity through jumping down a cliff since His angels would not allow Him to be hurt) [**Lk 4: 1-13**]. Jesus refused to fall by remaining on the path of humility and obedience to His Father's will. By His death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed Satan's hold over us and grabbed the keys of death and hell from him.

Now, we have the life-giving choice to go with Jesus. When we accept Him as our personal Lord and Saviour, He makes us sons and daughters of God. Then, we acquire the mind that was in Christ Jesus, the mind of humility. As God exalted Jesus for His humility and obedience, so He will exalt us [**Phil. 2: 5-11**].

Is that not better?