

Finding and Fighting Sin's Weapon of Mass Destruction (1 Peter 5:5-8)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on September 9, 2007

www.goldcountrybaptist.org

Tuesday of this week is September 11, a day when six years ago our unaware and unsuspecting country was attacked by those who had been living among us, and we were awakened to an enemy within. This week as the media rehashes the events that transpired, I want you to think beyond the physical enemy and terror and threat to a comparable *spiritual* enemy and threat with great potential for harm in your life and in the life of a church. The sin we're going to look at may indeed be sin's favorite weapon of mass destruction. This WMD can cause more spiritual damage than any terrorist can cause physical damage. This weapon of our enemy has heat-seeking, armor-piercing, soul-destroying power. Like a sniper taking out unsuspecting civilians, the ammunition used by our adversary has been taking out unwary Christians. Like spiritual anthrax, it poisons and chokes and spreads and kills. Like a terrorist bomb in a crowded church or building, the explosive nature of this sin can cause equal or greater spiritual damage and carnage in our lives and has been known to rip through churches, sometimes causing near irreparable destruction. To use a biblical analogy, it tears apart like a lion tears apart its prey.

In 1 Peter 5, Peter uses a real and vivid threat known to his readers in a time when Roman emperors would allow roaring hungry lions in coliseums to literally tear Christians apart in front of thousands of spectators, for entertainment. He goes beyond this fear that 1st century Christians had to a spiritual danger and enemy who would love to do the same with them spiritually. I want to do the same with the 21st century fear and vivid threat known to American Christians since 9/11, and use this to point to a spiritual reality and danger and enemy we dare not ignore.

The problem is this war cannot be won by more security and intelligence. Increasing border patrol or laws will never stop it. It's invisible and almost impossible to kill in this life, and it's not from another country, it doesn't have to be smuggled in – in fact this threat is in this room at this very moment. You can't see it, usually until it's too late.

This is something on the inside of all of us. Our greatest threat is not from Al Qaeda, and it's not even from Satan – our greatest threat and problem is our self. Our adversary doesn't have to plant any weapon there, he only has to try and detonate what's already there, and he has had plenty of training and target practice and has used this tactic stealthily and successfully and victoriously on the battlefield of human hearts all over the world. This morning we're going to look at what God's Word has to say about pride.

1 Peter 5:5-8 (NKJV)

5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The week before last I had an opportunity to do a devotional for the Christian school staff and leadership and I shared these things with them and I really felt the Lord's work in that and was encouraged to share this with all of you as well.

This passage has been on my heart ever since I came here – this was one of the first passages we studied in our elder's meetings when I came here.

This is urgent for us to hear, first of all, because it is the Word of our Living God. There is no particular person in mind as I prepared this study (my own heart and sin are plenty motivation enough), nor have I noticed this to be a major epidemic here, any more than another church struggles to pursue humility.

But this study is urgent because I know how pervasive and poisonous and powerful it is when pride takes hold, and I know the selfishness and pride in the recesses of my own heart. Verse 8 warns us to be alert, to be vigilant, to be watchful, and in the context of this passage, it seems that one of the primary ways our enemy wants to devour us like a roaring lion is through pride. It's ironic that a group of lions are actually called a pride of lions, because this passage speaks of pride in those who become prey to a roaring lion, a prowling enemy. The devil would love to have us for lunch, and would love to add our church to his hunting trophies

John Stott has written: "At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend."¹

America has in recent years declared a war on terror, but we've learned it's another matter to actually root it out. It's one thing to recognize the severity of pride, or even to declare war on pride, it's another matter to root it out, and we have to be able to find it before we can fight it.

OUTLINE:

1. **God's Hatred of Pride**
2. **God's Help for Pride**

First, I want you to see God's hatred of pride

Verse 5 says "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD" – another translation has "God is against the proud" – NASB "God opposes the proud"

God is actively opposing the proud, present tense verb, continual constant active resistance and opposition

The verb is in the Greek middle voice, emphasizing God *Himself* is against pride in all its forms. Notice it's not just pride in general, God opposes *proud people*.

If you are not continually resisting pride in your own life, God will be resisting you, and the rest of the verse makes clear there is grace and blessing that He only gives to the humble. A lack of fighting pride in your life results in a lack of grace in your life. If you do not see personal pride as your enemy, you may soon have God as your enemy.

This is a war fought inside – our sins of pride and selfishness may be manifested outwardly, but that is only after we lose the battle on the inside. Being a friend with the world, thinking the way the world does, in its selfishness and pride, is a serious sin to God, and we can never blame circumstances or others for our sin.

James 4:1-16 (NKJV)

1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war ...

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity [NASB “hostility toward”] with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

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

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

Verse 6 is verbatim with 1 Peter 5:5 and both are a quotation from the Greek text of Proverbs. Let’s look at some of the other things Solomon wrote in the context of Proverbs to see if I am being too strong when I speak of God’s hatred of pride

Proverbs 6:16-17 (NKJV)

16 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

17 A proud look [other versions have “haughty eyes” or “arrogant eyes”]

Not just the actions, but the attitude behind it, is the #1 thing that the Lord hates, that He abhors, that He abominates

Proverbs 8:13 (NKJV)

13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

Proverbs 16:5 (NKJV) 5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord ... none will go unpunished.

God’s strongest language is used of this sin of even heart pride

Proverbs 16:18 (NKJV)

18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Before destruction comes by our adversary, the devil, before any man or woman of God falls, there is haughtiness and pride

- Pride was in some way involved in the original fall of mankind, when Satan tempted Eve in the garden with “you will be like God”
- Pride in fact appears to be involved in the fall of the devil himself, the very first sin in the universe (Isa. 14)
- Pride appears first in the list of sins God hates, and it was listed first in the list of “seven deadly sins” according to medieval theologians of centuries past
- John Stott has written that pride “is more than the first of the seven deadly sins; it is itself the essence of all sin.”²

Andrew Murray called pride ‘the root of every sin and evil’³

Rotten apples come in all different types, but pride is at the core of our manifold varieties of rotten deeds; pride is at the root of every bad tree that bears bad fruit.

“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.’ ... In his sermons and in his vast writings he constantly warned against pride, especially spiritual pride, which he viewed as the greatest cause of the premature ending of the Great Awakening ...

[C.J. Mahaney writes that] Pride also undermines unity and can ultimately divide a church. Show me a church where there’s division, where there’s quarreling, and I’ll show you a church where there’s pride. Pride also brings down leaders. ‘Pride ruins pastors and churches more than any other thing,’ Mike Renihan has written. ‘It is more insidious in the church than radon in the home.’”⁴

Peter was serious when he tells us to be alert for this enemy. Our church here has seen God’s kind providence and blessing in many ways. There’s been a lot of changes in the past year, with a new young pastor coming in, we have a new building that required new debt from last year, we have a lot of new families and new people that have come, we have a new addition of a wonderful Christian school on our campus everyday, a lot of new things around campus that have been graciously provided by the school, and some of the things I’ve preached have been new to some. The fact that with all these new things and changes, God has blessed and grown and preserved unity and been so clearly at work here is only due to God’s sheer mercy which we should praise Him for.

But we must also be watchful and vigilant and be alert and guarding our hearts against pride toward those in the church and against those outside these walls, because it is precisely because of these blessings that we are a prime target for our prowling enemy who hates seeing what’s going on here and would love to either devour us, or use pride to cause us to devour each other.

Like a lion stalking his prey, which he wants to separate from the rest of the pack for better attacks, if we become separated from the unity and fellowship of the body, we are prone to pride’s attack. The devil would love to interfere with God’s work here, to devour us by separation, strife, selfish thoughts, sinful attitudes, second-guessing the leadership, complaining about some of the changes or the school or the new building or a decision that was made without asking your input, looking down on others in the body for whatever reason, any sort of dissension or disunity.

He would love to destroy us with conflicts, gossip, or tensions between groups in the church, homeschoolers vs. non-homeschoolers, young people vs. older people, new families vs. longstanding members, PCS vs. GCBC – an “us vs. them” mentality; i.e., “I can’t believe *they* did this, or moved *my* stuff” or on Sunday, I can’t believe so-and-so is sitting in my seat, etc. There could be controversies over music styles, preferences, things that you think should be done differently at the church, or if changes come thinking “how dare they change this – it’s always been done that way, don’t they know who I am?” And the list goes on and on. We would never say it out loud, but our actions say that “from *me* and to me and for me are all things”

If you are someone who finds yourself murmuring and grumbling proudly in your heart, remember that God refers to pride even in the heart as an abomination, and it was because of this type of sin that on more than one occasion he wiped out a bunch of Israelites in the wilderness.

DEFINITION OF PRIDE: ‘The mindset of self ... a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self.’⁵ Biblical synonyms: vainglory, conceit, boasting, arrogance, loftiness, presumption, haughtiness, being puffed up, high-mindedness, scoffing, and self-seeking.

MANIFESTATIONS OF PRIDE (*From Pride to Humility*, by Stuart Scott, 6-10)

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1. Complaining against or passing judgment on God (Num. 14:1-4, 9, 11; Rom. 9:20)
2. A lack of gratitude in general (2 Chron. 32:25)
3. Anger [frequent] (Matt. 20:1-16)
4. Seeing yourself better than others (Lk 7:36-50)
5. Having an inflated view of your importance, gift of abilities (1 Cor. 4:7)
6. Being focused on the lack of your gifts or abilities (1 Cor. 12:14-25)
7. Perfectionism (Matt. 23:24-28)
8. Talking too much (Prov. 10:19)
9. Talking too much about yourself (Prov. 27:2; Gal. 6:3)
10. Seeking independence or control (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 5:21)
11. Being consumed with what others think (Gal. 1:10)
12. Being devastated or angered by criticism (Prov. 13:1)
13. Being unteachable (Prov. 19:20; Jn 9:13-34)
14. Being sarcastic, hurtful, or degrading (Prov. 12:18, 23)
15. A lack of service (Gal. 5:13, Eph. 2:10)
16. A lack of compassion (Matt. 5:7, 18:23-35)
17. Being defensive or blame-shifting (Gen. 3:12-13, Prov. 12:1)
18. A lack of admitting when you are wrong (Prov. 10:17)
19. A lack of asking forgiveness (Matt. 5:23-34)
20. A lack of biblical prayer (Lk. 18:10-14)
21. Resisting authority or being disrespectful (1 Pet. 2:13-17)
22. Voicing preferences or opinions when not asked (Phil. 2:1-4)
23. Minimizing your own sin and shortcomings (Matt. 7:3-5)
24. Maximizing others’ sin and shortcomings (Matt. 7:3-5; Lk. 18:9-14)
25. Being impatient or irritable with others (Eph. 4:31-32)
26. Being jealous or envious (1 Cor. 13:4)
27. Using others (Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:3-4)
28. Being deceitful by covering up sins, faults, and mistakes (Prov. 11:3; 28:13)
29. Using attention-getting tactics (1 Pet. 3:3-4)
30. Not having close relationships (Prov. 18:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25)

If we are to be fighting pride, we must first be *finding* it in our lives, repenting of specific examples, not making excuses, asking forgiveness of those we have wronged this way by our speech or actions, and taking concrete steps to turn away sin. In order to put off pride, we must put on humility ...

II. God's Help for Pride

"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble"

The very first message I ever gave here at GCBC was on Isaiah 66 where God says "to this one I will look, him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at my Word"

When I gave you a list of [Pastor's Prayer Requests](#), #1 on the list was [and still is] – Pray for my:
 'Humility ... that I would be constantly fighting personal pride and cultivating humility,
 and striving to spread a high view of God and a low view of self'

This is the first thing Jesus emphasized in His first sermon recorded in N.T. – "Blessed are the poor in spirit / they who mourn / they who are meek or humble"

Jesus in fact taught that unless you humble yourself like a little child, you will never get to heaven. This is of first importance.

The prophet Micah asked "What does the Lord require of thee. But to do justly, and to love mercy, and to *walk humbly with thy God*"

1 Peter 5:6 says "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God"

Having a high and right view of how mighty God is, how majestic He is, how massive, and magnificent He is – should cause us to recognize we are none of those things.

How can you be proud and think how big you are when you stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon or try and fathom the depths of the universe as you look at a starry sky? How can you sit through sermon after sermon about God and remain proud? How can I preach sermon after sermon about the greatness and glory of God and then be so focused on myself during the week? We need to remember the hand of our Almighty God and what He has the power to do, because if we don't humble ourselves, He may have to humble us – and that is not a fun experience, as Peter knew personally all too well.

God doesn't help those who help themselves, He helps those who humble themselves.

One of the ways humility is practiced is in v. 7 where Peter tells us to "cast all our cares upon him" – the psalms call us to roll our burdens on the Lord, give everything over to Him, I surrender all. When I don't cast all my cares on God in prayer, I am essentially in arrogance saying "I can handle this myself, I don't need your help God, I've got this one"

If you think you are standing firm, take heed lest you fall. If you find yourself thinking of someone else as I give this message, rather than examining your own heart, you are probably already fallen deep into this sin of pride. It begins in 1 Peter 5:5, if we are not submissive to others, respecting and submitting to the elders of the church, or also not submitting our desires and preferences and putting others before ourselves.

Why does he single out the “young” in verse 5? He goes on to say submission is for all, but here he may be emphasizing the tendency and propensity for those who are young – in age or in the Lord, in spiritual maturity – to be proud and think they are really something.

Peter I think speaks autobiographically here – we don’t know what age he was when the Lord called him to be his disciple and apostle, but his lack of spiritual maturity sure showed. He was often speaking brashly and quickly and arrogantly, embarrassing himself. He’s been called “the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth” – and on more than one occasion he had to be humbled by Jesus.

Verse 5 commands us to “clothe ourselves with humility” – this is not automatic for any of us. Like a painter changing into painting clothes before he begins, you must be daily putting off pride and putting on humility before you begin anything, otherwise you will find yourself covered with the blotches and stains of the world that are very hard to get out.

Like putting an apron on before you go into the kitchen, we are to be consciously putting humility on before we go into any conversation or situation. This is putting on the garment of lowliness, and assuming the posture of a slave or servant. Peter witnessed this truth in a very vivid way:

Read John 13:4-17

Peter also speaks from experience when he says God is opposed to the proud and that Satan seeks to devour us, as he learned that very same day.

Read Luke 22:14-23

Note in v. 24, right on the heels of this lesson, how they are arguing about who the greatest is, and there’s little doubt Peter was in the mix because Jesus addresses him in v. 31 “Simon, Simon”

As you read verses 25-27, notice also in verse 31, what Jesus says about Satan. Peter probably hoped the Lord told Satan no, but Jesus responds in v. 32 that He actually will allow the devil this mission with Peter. But after he turns and learns, he will be able to strengthen the brothers. I believe we see the fulfillment of this in 1 Peter 5 where he strengthens the brothers.

Verse 33 again shows Peter’s proud self-confidence – and Christ in the next verse tells Peter he’ll deny him 3x before the next day.

So in 1 Peter 5, when Peter says “humble yourselves” – he doesn’t want us to have to go through what he did when he wouldn’t humble himself and God had to humble him.

Read Matthew 16:16-23.

In verses 21-22 we see another occasion when Peter experienced Satan’s attack as his pride flared up – thinking Peter could do things better than the way God ordained things.

In verse 23, Jesus calls Peter “Satan”!

That’s how Satan talks, and Peter was never more like Satan than at this moment (I don’t believe Jesus ever referred to anyone else this way, that’s how serious Jesus saw this).

The definition of pride here, and really the epitome of Satan’s work is defined at the end of verse 23 as when we “are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

When we think of Satan or something Satanic, we might think of witchcraft and occult practices, but anytime we are not setting our mind on God’s interests, but are putting ourselves above God’s Word and God’s plan in our pride, we are acting like Satan.

It’s interesting that both N.T. passages that quote “God is opposed to the proud” go on to talk about the devil

James 4:6

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

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Notice the connection between the proud and the devil and how we not only must humbly submit to God but must actively resist our prowling enemy. How we resist is by repentance, as the following verses explain.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren.

If we have humbled ourselves, we will not be marked by speaking evil of others and judging our brethren, but will be more concerned about our own sin.

13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”;

14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”

16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

Self-sufficiency and lack of dependence upon God for everything in our life reveals arrogance and boasting. Retraining our speech and thinking is a part of pursuing humility.

How to Weaken Pride and Cultivate Humility: A List of Suggestions

(from [*Humility*, by C. J. Mahaney](#), p. 171-72)

ALWAYS:

1. Reflect on the wonder of the cross of Christ

AS EACH DAY BEGINS:

2. Begin your day by acknowledging your dependence upon God and your need for God
3. Begin your day expressing gratefulness to God
4. Practice the spiritual disciplines – prayer, study of God’s Word, worship. Do this consistently each day and at the day’s outset, if possible
5. Seize your commute time to meditate on Scripture
6. Cast your cares upon Him, for He cares for you

AS EACH DAY ENDS:

7. At the end of the day, transfer the glory to God
8. Before going to sleep, receive this gift of sleep from God and acknowledge His purpose for sleep

FOR SPECIAL FOCUS:

9. Study the attributes of God⁶
10. Study the doctrines of grace
11. Study the doctrine of sin
12. Play golf as much as possible [or something you’re terrible at or that often embarrasses you]
13. Laugh often, and laugh often at yourself

THROUGHOUT YOUR DAYS AND WEEKS:

14. Identify evidences of grace in others
15. Encourage and serve others each and every day
16. Invite and pursue correction
17. Respond humbly to trials

¹Cited by C.J. Mahaney, *Humility*, 29.

²As cited by Mahaney, 30.

³Andrew Murray, *Humility*, Springdale, PA, Whitaker House, 1982, p. 10

⁴ Mahaney, 34-35.

⁵ Stuart Scott, *From Pride to Humility*, p. 6.

⁶ The Puritan Thomas Boston writes: ‘Be much in the thoughts of God’s infinite greatness: consider his holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation, Is. 6:3-5. Job met with many humbling providences in his case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord [caused] a new discovery of himself unto him, in his infinite majesty and greatness.’ (*Works of Thomas Boston*, 3:562-63)