

Pride is a very dangerous thing, Christians. It could very well be called the mother of all other sins. And the Bible clearly warns us against pride in lots of different places. Proverbs 16, for example, says: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." And James, chapter 4, tells us that "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." And Luke, chapter 1, says: "He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly." So yes, time and time again, God warns us against pride.

But pride is also dangerous, because it leads to boasting. Boasting in ourselves, focusing on ourselves, and thinking how great we actually are. We might say: "Look at what I've done! Isn't that something? Isn't that impressive? Surely, that must count for something, right?" But the Bible condemns boasting too, as Paul tells us in verse 29 "that no human being might boast in the presence of God." Because there is no room for pride, Christians, in a Christian heart.

"But why?" we might ask. "Why is that the case?" Because nothing that we have done will ever measure up to the standards that God requires. And I mean that. Absolutely nothing is good enough. All of our righteousness, all the things that we have done, anything that we might boast in--all of it is as filthy rags before the Lord. But let's be honest with ourselves, Christians. Sometimes that probably seems kind of foolish to us. Because deep down inside, we want to think that what we are doing must count for something, however small that may be. Because our old sinful nature, in weakness, wants to think that it all counts. That the number of times we've gone to church counts for something, however small. That the amount of time we spend in prayer counts for something, however small. That the amount of time we spend reading the Bible counts for something, however small that may be. It must count for something before God, right? But it doesn't. Even if we had perfect attendance, even if we spent hours every day reading the Bible and in prayer, none of it would come up to what God requires. None of it would count. In fact, it would be worth as much as garbage to the Lord. I'm not saying that we shouldn't do these things by any means. They are important. We should do them. But they don't make God love us any more. They don't make God love us more than what he did before. Because we have no reason to boast before the Lord.

The world, of course, doesn't understand that. It can't possibly understand that, because the world focuses on what I do or on what other people are doing. And in the process, it wants to compare the two, to pit one against the other. This person over here has done all of these impressive things! But this person hasn't done anything. So let's pay attention to the first one, because obviously what they're doing must mean something, right? Or I have done so much more than you have, we think, and therefore I deserve more. Because I've put in the work. I've done what it takes.

But Christians, this is all a very natural thing for the world to do, because the world likes impressive things. The world likes to be impressed. And it pays no attention to anything it considers common or unimpressive or foolish. And so the world will boast in the impressive. It will boast in the things that it thinks are important. But it will completely reject everything else, because it simply not worth our time. And this also applies to salvation, Christians, because the world will look at someone and say: "They're obviously a good person. See how much time they spent helping others! See how much time they spent in charity! See all of these good things that

they have done! Well, that must mean that they deserve heaven. They are going to be in heaven, and we know it, because they've done everything that you need to do to get there." But none of this, Christians, matters to the Lord. None of this brings us any closer to God.

Because God doesn't care what the world boasts in. God doesn't care what the world considers to be impressive. In fact, God chooses deliberately the things that the world considers foolish, the things that the world considers to be unimpressive. And in fact, you can see that in the Corinthians themselves. Because Paul says in verse 26: "Consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." In other words, what he's saying is that not many of them were born as free people. Most of them had been born as slaves. And in the ancient world, the word "slave" was always associated with "bad," something evil. Somewhat like how we look at politicians today, right? We consider it to be kind of a dirty word. But in the ancient world, it was always a bad word. Because a slave was somebody wicked. A slave was somebody who was not self-controlled. A slave was somebody who is violent. You wouldn't expect a slave to be a good person. Free people, on the other hand, a free man was good. He was virtuous. He was self-controlled, the kind of people you'd want to associate with. And no free man would ever willingly associate with a slave. They wanted nothing to do with them. And in fact, many slaves lived up to that reputation. That's why they got the reputation in the first place. So a slave was the last person you would expect to be saved. A slave was wicked and evil, the last person you would think that God would care about. Surely a free man, a good man! That's who would be important in the eyes of God.

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are." God didn't choose just free men, the kind of men that the world considers good. God chose slave and free alike, without any distinction between them, without any discrimination, so that the wise man could not boast in his wisdom. So that the strong man could not boast in his strength. So that the elite man could not boast in his status. Because it all meant nothing before the Lord. As Paul says: "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." Because what matters, Christians, is not what I think and not what the world thinks. What matters is what God thinks. That's the most important thing of all.

Because Christians, consider your own calling. God did not choose you because of your accomplishments, because of all the things that you have done in your life. Because God has also chosen those who have done very little with their lives, have done nothing at all. And yet both are equally saved, because no one can boast before God. God did not choose you because of your status, because of your social standing. Because God chooses both high and low alike, so that no one can boast before the Lord. And God did not choose you because of how good you are, because of the things that you have done and all of the wonderful deeds that you have done. Because God knows everything that you have done, even those things that you don't want anyone else to know about. God knows all of them. And God also chose people who have done far worse than you, so that no one can boast in the presence of God. God did not choose you because of who you are, so there is no room for pride.

But Christians, God chose you because of his Son. As Paul says in verse 30: "And because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption." It is because of God that you are in Jesus. It is because God has chosen you that you are saved. Not your works, not your goodness, not your accomplishments. That all counts for nothing before the Lord. And that's a very humbling thing for us: to realize that we are not here today because of who we are. We are not sitting here today because of who we are as people. We are here because of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus is your wisdom, Christians. Jesus takes away all of our foolishness and raises us up. Jesus is your righteousness. He has made us pure and holy in the sight of God. Jesus is your sanctification. You are who you are today as Christians because of the power that comes from Jesus alone. And Jesus is your redemption, Christians, because he has purchased you with his own blood on the cross, so that you would belong to him forever. All that Christ has done is sufficient for your salvation. You don't have to add a little bit more. You don't even have to do one percent. Jesus has done it all, and for that reason we can rejoice.

And Paul tells us, Christians, that there is actually room for boasting! Just not in yourself. Because he says in verse 31: "So that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" Don't boast in what you've done, Christians. It won't be good enough. Boast in what Jesus has done, because he's done more than enough to save you. Don't boast in who you are as a person, because that doesn't count for anything before God. Boast in who Jesus is, because he is both God and man come down to save us. Don't boast in how good you are, because it'll never measure up. Boast in the goodness of Jesus, who has suffered for you on the cross. Boast in the mighty deeds of the Lord, Christians. Boast in the everlasting faithfulness of God. Boast in Jesus Christ to all the world. Let all the world hear about what he has done! Because he is worthy of all of our praise. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord, because Jesus has done everything needed to save us.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our salvation. We pray that you would help us always to boast in what he has done and not in ourselves, because he is our redemption. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.