

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, December 2, 2017

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul exhorts what love is and what love is not. The fourth verse ends in telling us *“it is not proud.”* Pride is an interesting topic we can all discern to some extent, since this human race is certainly filled with it. As a young man and even into my corporate years, I often demonstrated a proud image as I climbed the proverbial ladder of success. I carefully use the words *proud image* since that’s really what I truthfully projected. It was no more than a pitiful picture of self-confidence. Deep down inside, I had my share of doubts on my ability to succeed. Upon coming to Christ at the ripe age of forty, I soon came to realize my confidence needed to be in Him, not in my flawed self-worth. I’ll always remember a workshop experience years ago in which I was anonymously accused of being narcissistic! From that day forward, I strived to project a more humble image even though I continued striving to climb that corporate ladder.

The Bible is chucked full of anecdotes on the subject. A third of the angels were driven out of Heaven on account of Satan’s pride. In Isaiah 14:12-15, the prophet describes this great fall with these poetic words – *“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven, above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.”* Then in Revelation 12, John presents his vision of the heavenly battle that took place between the Archangel Michael and God’s faithful army of angels against the Dragon and his angels. That account describes this unfaithful third of the angelic host losing their place in heaven.

Pride is not only found in the marketplace. It also rears its ugly head in all aspects of life. We’ve all run across church goers who have demonstrated a prideful heart. It’s obvious their immediate concern is to be recognized as a major contributor in perhaps their time, talent or treasure. I know God is not pleased by such behavior, yet often church leadership appears blind to such improper behavior. In my many years of service club involvement, I’ve seen prideful behavior on more than a few occasions. Those culprits are usually only involved for a short time and quickly move on to other organizations where they feel they might receive greater recognition. Certainly we can find pride in the lives of families as well. Being proud of a child’s accomplishments is one thing, but to consider yourself above others in the family can be deeply divisive.

Let’s get back to God’s Word to learn more about this elusive topic. The Book of Proverbs speaks volumes on pride and the negative impact it can have on a person or an organization. In Proverbs 8:13 we’re advised *“To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.”* In Proverbs 13:10 we’re counseled *“Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”* In Proverbs 16:5 we were told *“The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”* Then in Proverbs 27:1-2 we’re advised *“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.”* There’s much more, but I believe this will suffice for most reading this.

Let’s end by turning to James 4:13-17 where we’re cautioned *“‘Now listen you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”*

That pretty well sums up the whole issue of pride folks. Who do we think we are when we compare our meager accomplishments with those of God Almighty? Let’s keep all this in perspective as we go through our remaining time here on earth.

Passages to Ponder: Proverbs 16:18; Proverbs 29:23; Isaiah 25:10-11; 1 Corinthians 13:4,13; Revelation 12:7-12

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Proverbs 16:18 New International Version (NIV)

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

Proverbs 29:23 New International Version (NIV)

²³Pride brings a person low,
but the lowly in spirit gain honor.

Isaiah 25:10-11 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain;
but Moab will be trampled in their land
as straw is trampled down in the manure.

¹¹They will stretch out their hands in it,
as swimmers stretch out their hands to swim.

God will bring down their pride
despite the cleverness of their hands.

1 Corinthians 13:4 & 13 New International Version (NIV)

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Revelation 12:7-12 New International Version (NIV)

⁷Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

¹¹They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;

they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.

¹²Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!

But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!

He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”