

The Monster Sin

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a certain sin that is the monster of monsters. Many of us have no idea how close we may be to entering into the progression of this sin. It can come in so quietly. It can come through a progression of time.

This sin can come in when you are very sincere. It can come when you are very busy and serving God. It is one of the most dangerous sins we can face. Unless we learn about it, understand it, and really spend time studying it, I guarantee that we will fall into it.

As this booklet will show, this great monster is the sin of pride. It is what prompts Christians to lift themselves above God's Word and His plan on this earth. But God, who is rich in mercy and full of grace, has a plan to deliver us through humility and to make us more than conquerors against the monster sin of pride.

Chapter One
LUCIFER'S DOWNFALL

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

"Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

"They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms" (Isaiah 14:12-16).

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezekiel 28:14-15).

Since the moment Lucifer fell, he became an enemy who wants to destroy anything that could bring glory to God. The English phrasing in these verses may make it seem as if the rebellion of Lucifer (who was cast down as Satan) took place over a period of time, but the Hebrew tenses make it clear that it did not. If his fall were progressive, he would have been living in sin while in heaven, which is impossible.

Adam and Eve fell into sin when they made a series of wrong decisions, influenced by the deceiver himself: Satan. Since then, all men are born with an old sin nature and bound for trouble, as sure as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). And when a Christian, who has been redeemed and delivered from the old sin nature, falls into sin, a progression of wrong choices can be traced to the sinful act.

The angels, however, were created as perfect beings in a perfect environment, with no volitional constraints. God did not create evil, and He tempts no man (James 1:13). Therefore, though it might seem otherwise, Satan’s fall could not have been progressive.

The Pride of Perfection

Just what happened to Satan? In the light of Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, one possible context is the following. Perhaps Satan saw things he did not like, yet he still respected God. He must have begun to question the preeminence of God. Then, one day, the questioning turned into iniquity. That iniquity led to an inward, mental rebellion against the nature and authority of God.

Satan rebelled against the character of God because it seemed as though God was a respecter of persons. As the highest of all the angels, he had been present at the counsel of the Trinity and heard the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit discuss the eternal program for Redemption (Acts 2:23; Ezekiel 28:14):

“We will let any rebellious angels go to hell, but there will be another creation. We will create the human race a little lower than the angels. They will sin, but they will be able to go to heaven by choosing to be redeemed through the eternal plan of salvation.”

Lucifer must have thought, “Save mankind? Impossible. Save people who belong in hell because they are sick from the soles of their feet to the tops of their heads? The angels make one

wrong choice—just one choice—and that’s it, they are in hell forever. That is not fair!”

God’s plan for His creation was perfect. Consider this: The angels were in an eternal state, and they could not have been in a more perfect state. They were perfect creations, no matter what their deliberations were. So I believe that when Satan and the angels who agreed with him rebelled against God, they made perfect and final decisions. They revealed perfect hatred just as God reveals perfect love.

From Deliberation to Devastation

As one-third of the angelic host, created perfect to glorify God and to serve Him, made the decision to rebel against God, it was an eternal decision. People on earth do not make such eternal decisions, except for when they accept Christ as Savior, even on their deathbed, or when they reject Him forever.

The angels cannot have a deathbed repentance. They made eternal decisions based upon the opinion that God’s love is not fair. This is the point where they forever turned against the character of God. They don’t think God’s grace makes sense. In setting themselves against the character of God, they stand against the author-

ity of God, revealing their pride against God and His plan.

Every one of us is in danger of falling into the sin of pride more than any other sin in the world. This sin is different from other sins, such as the sin of adultery. The normal person who falls into adultery feels guilty, and he grows fearful and scared.

On the other hand, this monster sin of pride reinforces a person in his boldness and arrogance. Adultery, lying, and cheating do not tend to do this. But pride will reinforce you in self-exaltation against God and His Word with reason, logic, and intellectual arguments, substantiating that what you are doing is the right thing.

The great danger is to fall into this sin and then let it slowly, mentally, gradually affect you. Eventually, it will draw you away because you refuse to submit to some aspect of God's character, to some part of His Word, or to some part of His authority over your life.

Following the Leader

Pride is based on iniquity, which differs from sin. Iniquity involves a distortion or perversion, according to the Hebrew text. A pattern of pride, through iniquity, develops because of choices.

Evil is iniquity finalized because there is so much infection that not a single thing will correct it. Yet, though iniquity can be corrected in mankind, it could never be corrected in the angels.

What is worse is that this monster sin in a person derives strength through identification with others who share the same opinion. Pride causes people to identify and blindly follow an ungodly leader, one who draws them with flattery and deceit. In the case of one-third of the angels in heaven, the followers would face eternal damnation for him. According to Ezekiel 28:14-15, one day in eternity, Satan came to the end of himself with God. Whatever deliberations he had in his heart crossed over the line and turned into iniquity.

The heart is the center of our mind, emotions, volition, conscience, and self-conscience. It is the essence of everything we are. Ultimately, it involves our motivation with a frame of reference and a definition of what we are going to do. Decisions that are made in the heart, whether godly or evil, produce certain behaviors and consequences.

For example, believers whose hearts are after God can't wait to get to church. They purpose to gather with the assembly, expecting that some-

thing is going to be imparted to them that will change their lives. Their hearts are guided by conviction from the Holy Spirit. Some believers, however, do not purpose to come to church on some days. They end up being distracted and not getting to church. Something is off in their hearts. It may be something very small, but it can grow into a monster that controls them.

Iniquity was found in Satan's heart and God said, "That's it." Satan fell like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). God allowed him to dwell in the lower part of the second heaven and permitted him and his armies access to the entire earth. In this day, I consider it most important that we understand the role of these satanic armies. I try not to become preoccupied with the attacks, but I know that if I were commanding military forces I would want to know my enemies and develop a strategy to defeat them. Spiritually, we have to be ready to stand as part of God's army against the onslaught of the enemy. We have to know what it means to be part of God's army.

Chapter Two

PROTECTION THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

“Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Proverbs 16:18-19).

Here we see the result of rebellion against the authority and character of God. Pride is subtler in the believer than it was with Satan. Lucifer had perfect knowledge. No one had ever made the decision that he would make. He was the leader of the angels, and he had a supernatural mind and will.

“Haughty” is a key word. It speaks of going in a different direction from what you have been taught because you misinterpret the truth. This is the mindset of a person who changes his viewpoint on fundamental doctrines of the Bible. That is haughtiness.

Self-Exaltation

Pride involves exalting ourselves above the plan of God, exalting ourselves above the whole counsel of the Word of God, exalting ourselves above the Cross, and—here’s the big one—exalting ourselves above the Body of Christ and its leadership.

Leaders are more subject to pride because of the positions of authority they hold. Pride can come in when they do not have a provision for correction through accountability. Every leader should make himself accountable, lest he exalt his own authority. Some will scoff at this idea because of their natural make-up. They just want to do things their own way, revealing independence and arrogance.

As the overseeing pastor of a worldwide ministry, I am accountable to a schedule that has me showing up for work seven days a week. I am accountable to the people in my church to study and prepare messages that never deviate from the old pathways. I submit to a schedule of visitation because of accountability. My accountability involves being available for prayer meetings and counseling sessions. Furthermore, along with the entire body of believers, I submit

to a church growth program that keeps us growing together in a vision.

Accountability does not mean having people that manipulate and control every move, but we must have an accountability that is practical, biblical, loving, patient, and honest.

Protected by Doctrine

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

"(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

This passage instructs Christian leaders to be very careful to stay within the unity of doctrine and the truth of the Word of God, which has passed the test of time in the trials of life. We must be very sure that we stay in the unity of the call of God for the entire assembly—understanding that there are diverse callings within that call, as every joint supplies (Ephesians 4:16).

We must be willing to surrender self-preservation and self-exaltation, submitting to one another in love to glorify God. Through the Holy Spirit and prayer, we must leave the novice stage and honor the Body of Christ. We operate as members in particular, hid with Christ in God. This way, we honor the eternal purpose of Christ.

Chapter Three

PROTECTED WITHIN THE WALLS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

The monster sin is pride. How does pride come in? Slowly, subtly, and invisibly. Understand this: Lucifer did not intend to become Satan. He was heaven's number one song leader, leading the angelic host in worship before the throne of God. Because of his position, he most likely had insight into many doctrines, instructing and having influence over the other angels. Lucifer was one of God's beloved. He was the one that was the best, the one that had the most going, the one who reflected only teachability and humility and surrender every moment of his existence. Then pride entered the picture.

When people refuse to come to church on a Sunday morning and they are absent for no good reason, missing out on God's appointed message for the hour, they are disobedient to the Word of God (Hebrews 10:25). They are proud

and bored, and they are flirting with the enemy.

The Kingdom of Humility

We must examine our hearts to see whether or not we are operating in God's kingdom—the kingdom of humility, the kingdom of meekness, the kingdom of submission, the kingdom of unity. We must function in the kingdom of God with an attitude that reveals that we care about what is happening among godly churches worldwide, and specifically with what is happening in the ministry God has called us to. We respect what individuals are doing in the plan and where the church is going.

Pride says, "This is what I think—and I am right."

Humility says, "This is what God thinks—and He is right."

Pride says, "This is what I am going to do, despite what God says."

Humility says, "I am praying to see what God wants me to do, and I am seeking the Body's mind about it. I will do what God wants me to do."

The Table of Organization

"Now there were in the church that was at

Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Act 13:1-3).

Paul and Barnabas did not get up and say, “Goodbye! God is leading us. See you later.” They didn’t just come up and say, “Pray over us and we are off.” They asked their peers in leadership to pray. That prayer was an example of submission to authority in oneness and unity. They heard from God that they should go out, but they proceeded decently and in order, without usurping authority.

Nothing Paul and Barnabas did took away from their rights and priesthood before God. They understood this matter of protection that comes with the Body’s blessing. They figured out what God wanted them to do and acted accordingly.

Recognize that obedience to God is an open door to accountability in the process of growing

in meekness as one new man. Submission to God's authority offers protection when I enter into agreement with God and take my place in the Body of Christ as a very particular member. Godly leaders never usurp God's authority or invade a believer's privacy. Instead, they cover those under them with proper delegated authority. This is for our protection and we should not be afraid of it.

Paul and Barnabas certainly earned the right to go ahead and do what God told them to do without seeking the approval of others in the church. Many in the Body of Christ have earned that same right because of maturity, faithfulness, and doctrine. Integrity and humility, however, leads them to bring their plans before the church elders. Their decision to do so promotes unity and production and blessing, as it leaves no place for pride.

CONCLUSION

The monster sin of pride is so subtle. Arrogance is the mother of pride. Her sisters are envy and jealousy. This is why pride is such a monster. It brings all these destructive characteristics into action.

It all starts with just a bit of self-exaltation. This is why it is so important to define this monster when it rears its head in your life. If left unchecked, pride will always lead to self-exaltation against the plan of God in your life.

The important thing is that we learn how to follow God under the covering of the Body He has provided for us. The life that overcomes grows in maturity, faithfulness, and doctrine as it edifies and builds the Body of Christ. What develops is a record of integrity as we say, "Yes" to His provision and protection.