

CAPITOL STUDIES

MARCH 17, 2021 • WEEK 10



SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

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Verse of the Week

Romans 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Pride and Self-Esteem (Part I)



POLITICAL POWER IS A GOOD THING. By God's design, politics and governmental leadership are necessarily about power. However, power can corrupt fallen human beings through the sin of improperly placed pride. A political leader can start humbly and end up pompous—poisoned by improper pride. Such was the case as observed by Alice Roosevelt Longworth (pictured in the center of the photograph above), daughter of Theodore Roosevelt, the twenty-sixth American president. She said, "Father wanted to be the corpse at every funeral, the bride at every wedding, and the baby at every christening."¹ It was obvious to the child, Alice Roosevelt, that her father wanted too much attention. The problem with sinful pride is like the problem of the woman who wears too much perfume—everyone knows it but her.

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V. D. M.

(This study is adapted from an earlier series by Rev. Gauthier, 1960–2020.)



INTRODUCTION

Seeing pride in ourselves is difficult. While all sins cause temporary moral insanity and blind our eyes, there is something particularly blinding about sinful pride. Asking a vain man to tell you about all the ways in which he is arrogant is like asking a blindfolded sloth to hunt for a black dog at midnight. To quote the forty-first U.S. President George H. W. Bush, “Nope...not gonna happen.” Pride blinds the eyes. Pride poisons the heart with pomposity. However, like all sins, pride comes from a positive place—God’s good creation. Let us go back to Genesis to see the origins of pride in human creation; we will see that the origins of pride are “very good.”

1. GOD’S CONVERSION: FROM DUST TO DIGNITY

Before God’s seventh-day rest, He created man.

Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.²

On history’s sixth day, God made man from clumps of dirt and a small pile of dust. The chemical worth of the human body (18% carbon, 3% nitrogen, .15% chlorine, etc.) is about five dollars. The high value of man is found not in the worth of the minerals or chemical components from which he was made. God made man in His own image (in *Imago Dei*). Herein is the supreme worth of man.

Genesis 1:26-27, 31

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule....”²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them....³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

A. The Very Crown of Creation: Man

Adam and Eve were the crown of God’s creation. I like to call our first noble ancestors “Lord and Lady Earth.” What gave them this “very good” status? They went from five bucks of dust to the pinnacle of dignity in God’s creation. Why? Because they were fearfully, wonderfully, and marvelously made in His amazing image. Man’s value is immense, and God said so. Properly understanding our high value as humans made by God is a vital life skill. Is the following mere British braggadocio or a much more profound statement than intended?

**“I’M AN INSTANT STAR. JUST ADD WATER AND STIR.”
- DAVID BOWIE, ENGLISH ROCK STAR³**

God made man from chemical dust; He then stirred in His divine image. The instant result was this bright and shining creature! Man had been created and was very good, full of worth, and very highly esteemed.



B. Lost Man: Worthy of Christ's Death

The creation story is beautiful, but it did not take long for things to turn ugly. Tempted by Satan and using their free will, Adam and Eve chose rebellion against God's words and ways, turning the Garden's paradise into a little bit of hell on earth. Even so, God was prepared to send a Savior who would crush Satan's head and save them from their sins. In 16 days, we will celebrate Good Friday, when our Savior defeated the Devil and, using His free will, died for our sins.

Romans 5:6, 8, 10

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... ¹⁰[W]hile we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son...

Before the Son of God died, He devoted the entirety of Luke 15 to tell the self-righteous, religious people of the world His valuation of lost men. Even though we were "helpless... ungodly... enemies," Christ also saw us as lost coins of high value, well worth the work of finding. He saw us as lost sheep of significant worth and concern. He saw us as lost (prodigal) sons of eminent importance and worthy of love. Human beings truly are "instant stars" because God stirred His image into their very chemistry. Our fallen state did not eliminate our inherent worth of high esteem.

C. Man Version 2.0: A New Creature

As humans, we were *very good* as created. Though fallen, we still have a high estimated value, having been made in God's image. The fallen sons of Adam must look to the Savior's cross. The lost daughters of Eve must trust Jesus for salvation (by faith alone). Through Christ's gracious death, our value is renewed, restored, and recreated through salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

...[H]aving concluded this, that One died for all... ¹⁵and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him... ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

D. No Sense in a "No Self-Esteem" View

I have heard Christians advised to avoid pride by believing "the best self-esteem is *no self-esteem*." At the risk of seeming arrogant, I humbly disagree.

**I MAY NOT BE THE SHARPEST KNIFE IN THE DRAWER,
BUT THE "NO SELF-ESTEEM" VIEW MAKES NO
SCRIPTURAL SENSE TO ME.**

The Scriptures seem to testify otherwise. Created as the perfect, personal pinnacles of our known universe, we were still highly valued, though plunged into sin. Christ's all-seeing eyes saw us as worthy of His lovingly atoning, volitional sacrifice. We who have received the gift of salvation





and can say we “were (past tense⁴) saved” are now new creatures in Christ. See how our theme verse calls for balance:

Romans 12:3

I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought but to think so as to have sound judgment.

We value ourselves as God does, not higher or lower. Highly valuing humans is not pride, at least not sinful pride. Paul was (1) proud of people, (2) praised them, and was even appropriately (3) proud about his ministry:

2 Corinthians 1:13-14

⁽¹⁾And I hope you will understand until the end; ¹⁴just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 11:1-2

⁽²⁾Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. ²Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

Romans 11:1

⁽³⁾But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.

Praising and *highly valuing personal worth* (even self-worth) is **good pride**, the kind of pride God has.

2. PRIDE’S PURPLE PERVERSION OF PEOPLE

Pride, like anger, *is* a good thing. Highly valuing human worth is not pride, at least not sinful pride. God does that. Sinful pride is the perversion of something God created that is *very good*.

A. Too Much of a Good Thing: Self-Esteem

Sinful pride is a desire for “too much” self-esteem. Sometimes pride appears as a posh, purple prince pompously strutting like a peacock in his narcissistic world, lost in the superiority complex of me-ism.

THE MATH OF PRIDE: “I > U”

At other times, pride puts on false airs. At such times, pride is self-praising and seeks the applause of others by putting on false humility. In *both* cases, pride is seeking for a higher esteem than is sensible.

B. Sinful Pride Thinks Too Highly of Self

We are to think of ourselves with sound judgment and sober calm—not *too highly*. Our key verse, Romans 12:3, declares a danger in an inflated valuation of ourselves. A swollen head produces a selfishly improper focus on ourselves. That is sin, and as the saying goes, the “middle letter of sin is I.” Sinful pride is spelled just the same way:

PRIDE'S MIDDLE LETTER IS "I"

We should not promote the disappearance of self, holding a “no self-esteem” point of view. That is no more realistic (or helpful in a life of godliness) than the disappearance of wealth, sex, or rest. Instead, we are wise to heed the warning of the deadliness of pride. Most theologians see pride as chief among sins. If sloth is a gateway sin, pride is a crack dealer. When the drug of pride calls your name, do not listen to its siren song, or a crash on sin’s rocks is imminent.

English literary scholar C. S. Lewis expounds:

According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison. It was through Pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind.⁵

Sloth tempts us to nap in the light-blue hammock of spiritual laziness so that we *do not pursue God*. Pride puts on a purple prince’s hat, raises the high hand of treason, and then *shoves God aside*. Pride is too much focus on self and too little focus on God. If loving God totally is the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:30), then pride is the greatest of sins because it is the complete anti-God state of mind. If the chief end of man is to “know God and enjoy Him forever,”⁶ then self-applauding, self-inflating, self-pleasuring pride is surely the chief of the seven deadly sins.

C. False Humility: Sinfully Sneaky Pride

Pride snubs God and idolizes self, trying to generate too much self-esteem. Receiving compliments and praise properly is a sign of sensible maturity. Pride cultivates attention. Sometimes that is by shouting arrogantly and strutting like a peacock. Other times it is through false humility. Sinfully sneaky pride tries to garner self-attention and gain self-esteem by looking weak, poor, and sickly. Some prideful souls are so starved for attention that they even refuse healing because their perpetual sickness brings unceasing care and “too much” attention, all for the wrong reasons. Jesus rebuked the hypocritical Pharisees for courting attention by putting on false faces of misery.

Matthew 6:16

Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. ...[T]hey have their reward in full.

D. Peter’s Pre-Easter Pride: Up & Down

Like all leaders, Peter struggled with pride. Observe how Peter had arrogant, false humility and then prideful self-flattery both during the same ceremonial supper. Maundy means “foot washing.” Before the Last Supper, on Maundy Thursday night, Christ washed the disciples’ feet (who were all probably self-absorbed in debating who was the greatest among them). When Christ came to Peter (the leader of the twelve), Peter put on false airs. He was still proudly focused on self. Had his focus been





on God, he would have readily agreed to whatever Christ asked. Note his prideful, false humility and how Christ rebukes him for it.

John 13:5-8

[Jesus] began to wash the disciples' feet.... ⁶So He came to Simon Peter [who] said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?... ⁸Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

After the Last Supper, Peter bigheadedly denied that he could deny the Lord. Proud Peter was puffed up.

PRIDE IS *TOO MUCH* SELF-ESTEEM.

With chest out and voice up, Peter was pompous and proudly proclaiming (with *too much self-esteem*) that he would *never fall* away from Christ in that way. However, wise King Solomon warns all leaders and all people: "Pride goes before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Mark 14:29-31

Peter said to Jesus, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."

³⁰Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." ³¹But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"

THE NEXT DAY, THE ROOSTER
COCK-A-DOODLE-DOOED TWO THINGS:
PRIDE-BEFORE-A-FALL!
PRIDE-BEFORE-A-FALL!

BLESSING & PRAYER

Dear Senator: May the Lord bless you, keep you, and make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace. May you humbly seek Him this Lenten season. May you gain full, robust self-esteem as you realize that He created you to know and enjoy Him forever.

Praising you for your faith and faithfulness,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier

FOOTNOTES

1. Doug Wead, *All the Presidents' Children: Triumph and Tragedy in the Lives of America's First Families*, Atria Books, 2003, page 107.

2. All Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible 1995 Update* unless otherwise noted.

3. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/music/bowie-in-quotes-i-m-an-instant-star-just-add-water-and-stir-1.2492432>.

4. Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you **have been*** saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a **result*** of **works**, so that no one may boast.” Whatever *past tense salvation is, it is not a *result of any works. The work of faith is not a “work” in Pauline theology. Works are constantly contrasted with faith and grace.

5. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Harper Collins, 2001, Book 3, Chapter 8, page 123.

6. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* of 1647, Question #1.

Personal Study Notes

*Verse of
the Week*

Romans 12:3

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meets during the 107th Legislature's First Session

SENATORS

6:45–8:00 A.M. Wednesdays
Room 1022, *Facilitated by Sen. Clements & Sen. Arch*

STAFF

12:00 P.M. Wednesdays
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