

Dear fellow pilgrims,

Last week, April 21, was the anniversary of the death of Chuck Colson, the brilliant lawyer and politician brought down by the Watergate scandal in the Nixon administration. Colson went through a dramatic conversion to Christianity sparked by a friend reading to him parts of the chapter from *Mere Christianity* that we studied last week on the sin of Pride (see link below). It is a great reminder of the Scripture-based wisdom in this book and how God has used it in countless people's lives. I would encourage you to pray about with whom you might share parts of this book, or this class or podcast, either in person or via social media. God sometimes brings those we think most unlikely into His Kingdom!

As we talked about Pride, Lewis makes clear that the real antidote is Gospel humility--loving and serving God and others so that our focus is not on ourselves. As the old priorities acronym says, **Jesus--Others--Yourself** leads to JOY!

Please do listen to the music link and reflect on the words (which I have attached)--great Truth from Scripture expressed with great beauty!

Here are the materials from last week's class:

8. The Great Sin

Today I come to that part of Christian morals where they differ most sharply from all other morals. There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad-tempered, or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. And at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others. There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility. When I was talking about sexual morality, I warned you that the centre of Christian morals did not lie there.

The center of Christian morality According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites 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...Now what you want to get clear is that Pride is essentially competitive by its very nature—while the other vices are competitive only by accident Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone. That is why I say that Pride is essentially competitive in a way the other vices are not.

Enmity Pride always means enmity—it is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God. In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that—and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison—you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you. That raises a terrible question. How is it that people who are quite obviously eaten up with Pride can say they believe in God and appear to themselves very religious? I am afraid it means they are worshipping an imaginary God.

"I never knew you" I suppose it was of those people Christ was thinking when He said that some would preach about Him and cast out devils in His name, only to be told at the end of the world that He had never known them. And any of us may at any moment be in this death-trap. Luckily, we have a test. Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good—above all, that we are better than someone else—I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil. The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether. It is a terrible thing that the worst of all the vices can smuggle itself into the very centre of our religious life. But you can see why. The other, and less bad, vices come from the devil working on us through our animal nature. But this does not come through our animal nature at all. It comes direct from Hell. It is purely spiritual: consequently it is far more subtle and deadly. For Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.

Misunderstandings to avoid: Before leaving this subject I must guard against some possible misunderstandings:

--**Pleasure in being praised is not Pride** The child who is patted on the back for doing a lesson well, the woman whose beauty is praised by her lover, the saved soul to whom Christ says "Well done," are pleased and ought to be. For here the pleasure lies not in what you are but in the fact that you have pleased someone you wanted (and rightly wanted) to please. The trouble begins when you pass from thinking, "I have pleased him; all is well," to thinking, "What a fine person I must be to have done it."

--**"Proud of"** We say in English that a man is "proud" of his son, or his father, or his school, or regiment, and it may be asked whether

"pride" in this sense is a sin. I think it depends on what, exactly, we mean by "proud of." Very often, in such sentences, the phrase "is proud of" means "has a warm-hearted admiration for." Such an admiration is, of course, very far from being a sin. But it might, perhaps, mean that the person in question gives himself airs on the ground of his distinguished father, or because he belongs to a famous regiment. This would, clearly, be a fault; but even then, it would be better than being proud simply of himself.

--**God's character** We must not think Pride is something God forbids because He is offended at it, or that Humility is something He demands as due to His own dignity—as if God Himself was proud. He is not in the least worried about His dignity. The point is, He wants you to know Him; wants to give you Himself. And He and you are two things of such a kind that if you really get into any kind of touch with Him you will, in fact, be humble—delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you restless and unhappy all your life. He is trying to make you humble in order to make this moment possible: trying to take off a lot of silly, ugly, fancy-dress in which we have all got ourselves up and are strutting about like the little idiots we are, ...[versus] the relief, the comfort, of taking the fancy-dress off—getting rid of the false self, with all its "Look at me" and "Aren't I a good boy?" and all its posing and posturing. To get even near it, even for a moment, is like a drink of cold water to a man in a desert.

--**Wrong image of Humility** Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call "humble" nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all. If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realise that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Understand what Pride is, as our narcissistic culture blinds us Definition of Pride (Hubris): dangerously corrupt selfishness, the putting of one's own desires, urges, wants, and whims before the welfare of other people; irrationally believing that one is essentially and necessarily better, superior, or more important than others, failing to acknowledge the accomplishments of others. Dante's definition of pride was "love of self perverted to hatred and contempt for one's neighbour."

2. Beware of Pride--the example of the Pharisees Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (Luke 18) God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6)

3. Cultivate Gospel self-forgetfulness, a servant heart, and empathy *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* (Philippians 2)

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10)

One of the best antidotes to pride is to love others *fervently*.

Fervently having or displaying a passionate intensity. Ardent, intense, zealous, hot, burning, wholehearted.

As the music selection from this week says (quoting Scripture), "love one another with a pure heart fervently--see that ye love one another"

In tomorrow's class, we will move across a great divide from Sin to Virtue!

Here is the link for class tomorrow, Wednesday, April 28, at 7:15 p.m. EDT:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99307536525>

Please feel free to share the class link with friends--the more, the merrier!

I look forward to "seeing" you tomorrow night in class on Zoom!

Further up and further in,

Brian+

Music link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMDVKMWCaQ>

(especially section from 3:00 to 4:55--turn up the volume!)

Love one another with a pure heart fervently.

See that ye love one another.

Love one another with a pure heart fervently.

(See full text attached below)

Video link to last week's class:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_MfxITJncs

Podcast link:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/mere-christianity-episode-22-book-3-chapter-8-the-great-sin/id1537579476?i=1000518223655>

Church website link:

<https://www.stphilipschurchsc.org/mere-christianity/episode/2021-04-21/-mere-christianity-episode-22-book-3-chapter-8-the-great-sin>

Link to story of Chuck Colson's conversion:

<https://www.lightsource.com/devotionals/breakpoint/remembering-new-life-for-chuck-colson-on-the-anniversary-of-his-passing-11843499.html>