

Spiritual Pride vs. True Humility

Jonathan Edwards
(1703-1758)

From his account of the revival in New England, *fourth part*.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE disposes one to speak much of the faults of others, and do it with bitterness, or with levity, and an air of contempt. Pure Christian HUMILITY rather disposes a person to be silent about them, or to speak of them with grief and pity. Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others; a humble saint is most jealous of himself. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with others who are low in grace, and to be much in observing how cold and dead they are, and crying out about them and sharply reproving them for it. The humble Christian has so much to do at home with his own heart, that he is not apt to be very busy with the hearts of others, and is apt to esteem others better than himself, and to take most notice of what is good in them, while he takes most notice of what is wrong in himself in his clearest discoveries of God's glory, and in his most rapturous frames, he is most overwhelmed with a sense of his own vileness, and feels the deepest self-abasement.

It is a mark of SPIRITUAL PRIDE, when any are disposed to speak of what they see amiss in others, in the most harsh, severe, and terrible language; saying of their opinions, or conduct, or advice, of their coldness, their silence, their caution, their moderation, and their prudence, that they are from the *devil*, or from *hell*; that such a thing is devilish, or hellish, or cursed, and the like; so that the words *devil* and *hell* are almost continually in their mouths. And especially, when such language is used towards ministers of the gospel, and others whose age or station entitles them to particular respect. HUMILITY leads the Christian to treat others who are in fault, with meekness and gentleness, as Christ did his disciples, and particularly Peter, when he had shamefully denied him.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE disposes to affect singularity in manner and appearance, for the purpose of attracting observation. Humility disposes the Christian to avoid everything which is likely to draw upon himself the observation of others, and to be singular only where he cannot be otherwise without the neglect of a plain and positive duty.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE commonly occasions a certain *stiffness* and inflexibility in persons, in their own judgment and their own ways. HUMILITY inclines to a yielding, pliable disposition. The humble Christian is disposed to yield to others, and conform to them, and please them, in everything but sin.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE disposes persons to stand at a distance from others, as better than they are. The HUMBLE Christian is ready to look upon himself as more unworthy than others — yet he does not love the appearance of an open separation from visible Christians; and so he will carefully shun everything that looks like distinguishing himself as humbler, or in any respect better than others.

The *eminently* HUMBLE Christian is clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behavior, and with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and deportment. Humility has no such thing as roughness, or contempt, or fierceness, or bitterness, in its nature, which are marks of spiritual pride — as are invectives and censorious talk concerning particular persons, for their opposition, hypocrisy, delusion, pharisaism, and the like.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE takes great notice of opposition and injuries that are received, and often speaks of them. HUMILITY disposes a person to be rather like his blessed Lord when reviled — silent, not opening his mouth. The more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still he will be.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE leads those who are reproached, to be bolder and more confident, and to go to greater lengths in that for which they are blamed. HUMILITY leads us to make use of the reproaches of enemies, as an occasion for serious self-examination.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE leads to a certain unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and man. HUMILITY leads to the opposite.

Assuming is a mark of SPIRITUAL PRIDE: putting on the airs of a master, to whom it belongs to dictate. HUMILITY leads the Christian to take the place of a learner, to be 'swift to hear, slow to speak.' The *eminently* humble Christian wants help from everybody; whereas the one who is spiritually proud, thinks everybody wants his help. Christian humility, under a sense of others' misery, entreats and beseeches; spiritual pride affects to command and warn with authority.

If young ministers had great humility, it would especially dispose them to treat aged ministers with respect and reverence, as their fathers, notwithstanding that a sovereign God may have given them greater success than their fathers have had.

It is a mark of SPIRITUAL PRIDE to refuse to enter into discourse or reasoning with those who are considered carnal men, when they make objections and inquiries. HUMILITY would lead ministers to condescend to carnal men, as Christ has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity, and still follow us with instructions, line upon line, precept upon precept, saying, 'Come, let us *reason* together;' it would lead to a compliance with the precept, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with *meekness* and fear.'