

PRIDE AND CONTENTION

“Only by pride cometh contention . . .” (Prov. 13:10 KJV).

Pride, as you know, was involved when Lucifer was cast down from heaven (Is. 14:12 - 15; Ez. 28:14 - 17). No wonder the fear of the Lord is to hate pride (Prov. 8:13). In this brief study, however, we will narrow our focus to only one way that pride is at the root of sin. In this study we will try to show that pride is consistently involved with contention. Invariably, pride and contention go hand in hand. If you didn't have pride you wouldn't be contentious.

Dialogue is different from contention. The book of Acts reveals that this was an integral part of Paul's approach to both believers and unbelievers. At Thessalonica, for example, he "reasoned" with them in the synagogue for three weeks (Acts 17:3). He talked, but he also listened. The Greek word translated as "reasoned" is "dialogismos" from which we get our English word "dialogue". Paul was a good listener! Paul also dialogued at Athens (17:17); Corinth (18:4); and Ephesus (18:19). He also had a dialogue with the church in Troas (Acts 20:7)/ While the KJV says he "preached" it is still the word "dialogismos". How beautiful! Paul not only taught believers, he listened to them. He reasoned with them. He had a dialogue with them!. As long as there was no pride, there was no contention. Dialogue is not a work of the flesh but contentions are (Gal. 5:19 - 21). A civil discussion can quickly become contentious once pride enters the picture. No man should think more highly of himself than he ought (Rom. 12:3). Remember! Only by pride cometh contention!

Perhaps the biggest contention ever faced by the church involved tearing down the wall of partition separating Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11- 22). Jesus specifically commanded His apostles to preach to all nations, but some ten years after the church was established they were still preaching only to Jews (Acts 11:19). The Jews had been chosen by God out of all the people on the face of the earth to be His treasured possession (Deut. 7:6). Recognizing their heritage caused them to be proud. They boasted about their relationship with God (Rom. 2:17). They boasted about the Law (Rom. 2:23). When the Gentiles became Christians they still boasted about their superiority (Rom. 11:18),

The first disagreement in the early church occurred when the Grecian Jews felt that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1). The fact that these Grecian Jews were scattered among the Gentiles made them feel inferior. The problem was solved when it was turned over to seven Spirit filled men with Grecian names (Acts 6:5).

The fact that Peter was proud that nothing unclean had ever entered into his mouth made it difficult for him accept Gentiles (Acts 10). God had to give him the same vision three times before he would preach to a Gentile. Later, however, pride reared its ugly head and he withdrew from the Gentiles when "certain men came from James" (Gal. 2:11 - 13). His actions were so wrong that Paul publicly rebuked him to his face. Remember! Only by pride cometh contention!

The parable of the Prodigal Son is perhaps the most famous story ever told by Jesus (Lk. 15:11 - 32). It involved two sons, but only one of them was contentious. The younger son had wasted his substance in riotous living and finally was forced to eat pig's food. His pride was gone! He came home to his father with no demands. No matter what his father decided he would not be contentious. The older brother, however, contended with his father. He bragged that he had never disobeyed his father while he was disobeying his father (Lk. 15:28 - 32).

It is the proud who are involved in controversies and quarrels (1 Tim. 6:3 - 5). It is the proud who love themselves and are boastful, treacherous and conceited (2 Tim. 3:2). At last Peter saw the danger of pride and told young men to be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5). Remember! No pride - no contention!