Pastor David M. Choi

**Pride Leads to Death**

Calvary Youth Group, Ash Friday Service

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At the tender age of 19, Jonathan Edwards wrote in his private journal a list of resolutions, committing himself to a “God-centered life lived in harmony with others.” There were seventy resolutions in total, yet the one I want to focus our attention on is the twelfth resolution, which goes like this: “Resolved, if I take delight in [anything] as a gratification of pride, or vanity, or on any such account, immediately to throw it by.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Why was Edwards so concerned with his pride – so much so that it came near the top of his list of resolutions? Why did he feel the need to throw out anything and everything that not only had been but *may have been* tainted by it? Simply put, it’s because Edwards took his pride seriously, because he took Proverbs 16:18 seriously, where it says, “Pride goes before [death and] destruction.” Pride, for Edwards, is the main “handle by which [Satan gets a] hold of [Christians] and it is the chief source of all the mischief that [Satan] introduces to clog and hinder a work of God.” Therefore, pride is the deadliest of all sins, since it leads to and supports all other sins.

So, why am I speaking about pride at the start of Lent on Ash Friday? Lent is the Christian season of penitence, during which Christians intentionally make room in their lives to acknowledge their sins, admit their faults, and repent before God. Of course, we’re supposed to do these things in every season, not just during Lent. However, with life’s hustle and bustle, it’s easy for us to put our relationship with Christ on the backburner, and to skimp on prayer and time spent with God.

We do this because we’re forgetful, lazy, apathetic, and complacent. Yet when we lose sight of the fact that we are sinners, that is, sinners in desperate need of God’s grace, what we’re really doing is we’re allowing our pride to go before us. You see God cannot rule your heart unless you acknowledge your sin, because anything else is a denial of the fact that your life is utterly dependent upon Him. Thus, if God is not leading you, and if you are not depending on Him for everything, then that can only mean you are depending on yourself. Your pride goes before you. And if that’s you, and it is, scripture says don’t be surprised when your life begins to fall apart and things are brought down to ruins. For this sort of life, it promises destruction, at the end and along the way.

We are here tonight for no other reason than to repent before God. That is, as we pause from all of life’s mundane activities, and put some distance in between, we see how we’ve been relying on ourselves more than we’ve been relying on God – even if we thought we relying on Him at the time. How often we take matters into our own hands than turn to God for help. How often we make rash life-decisions instead of waiting for God to speak. How often we seek to accomplish certain tasks by our own strength and energy than out of the Fount of Living Water. We see how we’ve fallen short, in failing to love God and in failing to love our neighbors. We see how we’ve fallen short in all the ways we haven’t turned to Him.

If you wish to enter Lent, you must begin here, and place your pride and ego at the foot of the cross. In doing so, what you’re really doing is you’re making room for God in your life once again, or perhaps for the first time. By doing this, you’re asking the Spirit to dwell within you; you’re asking Him to convict you of your sin and to show you just how deep your sin really goes. Only in knowing that one is a sinner does one realize that one is in need of a Savior. Greater awareness of one’s sin will obviously bring greater pain with it. Yet despite the pain of such an awareness, it is necessary because therein lies the fundamental joy of knowing just how deeply one is loved, forgiven, and covered by grace.

Only a prideful person would think he or she doesn’t struggle with pride. If that’s you, then Ash Friday and the Lenten season won’t mean much. If that’s you, Christ has nothing to offer you: “For those who are well have no need of physicians, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32).

1. Jonathan Edwards, “Resolutions,” in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)