

***"Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed,  
which do err from thy commandments."***

Psalm 119:21

Let the histories of Cain (Gen. iv. 5, 13-16), Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 15-31), Haman (Esth. vii. 7-10), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 29-33), and Herod (Acts, xii. 21-23), exhibit *the proud under the rebuke and curse of God*. He abhors their persons (Prov. vi. 16, 17), and their offerings (Luke xviii. 11, 12, 14); he "knows them afar off" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6); "he resisteth them" (1 Pet. v. 5; with Prov. iii. 34); "he scattereth them in the imaginations of their hearts." (Luke, i. 51.) Especially hateful are they in his sight, when cloaking themselves under a spiritual garb; "They say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou: *these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*" (Isa. lxxv. 5; with Luke, xviii. 11.) Most of all, is this sin an abomination in his own beloved people. David (2 Sam. xxiv. 1-15) and Hezekiah (2 Kings, xx. 12-18. 2 Chron. xxxii. 31) are instructive beacons in the church, that they, least of all, must expect to escape his rebuke--"Thou wast a God that forgavest them; *though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.*" (Ps. xcix. 8.) "Now they call *the proud* happy." (Mal. iii. 15.) But will they be counted so, when they shall be manifestly under the *curse of God*; when "the day of the Lord shall be upon them to bring them low," yea, to "burn them in the oven" of "his wrath?" (Isa. ii. 12-17. Mal. iv. 1.)

Pride probably influences all, that "*do err from the Lord's commandments;*" yet doubtless "the Righteous Judge" will make an infinite difference between *errors* of infirmity and obstinate wilfulness. (Ps. xix. 12; with xcv. 10.) The confession of the man of God, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep" (Verse 176)--is widely different in character from the subjects of this awful *rebuke and curse*. "*Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes; for their deceit is falsehood.*" (Verse 118.)

We wonder not at this expression of the mind of God concerning pride. There is no sin more abhorrent to his character. It is as if we were taking the crown from his head, and placing it upon our own. It is man making a god of himself--acting from himself, and for himself. Nor is this principle less destructive to our own happiness. And yet it is not only rooted, but it often rears its head and blossoms, and bears fruit, even in hearts which "hate and abhor" its influence. It is most like its father, the Devil, in serpentine deceitfulness. It is always active--always ready imperceptibly to mix itself up with everything. When it is mortified in one shape, it rises in another. When we have thought that it was gone, in some unexpected moment we find it here still. It can convert everything into nourishment, even God's choicest gifts--yea, the graces of his Spirit. Let no saint, therefore, however near he may be living to God, however favoured with the shinings of his countenance--consider himself beyond the reach of this temptation. Paul was most in danger, when he seemed to be most out of it; and nothing but an instant miracle of grace and power saved him from the "snare of the Devil." (See 2 Cor. xii. 7.) Indeed, the whole plan of salvation is intended to humble the pride of man, by exhibiting his restoration to the Divine favour, as a free gift through the atoning blood of the cross. How hateful, therefore, is *proud* man's resistance to this humbling doctrine of the cross,

and the humbling requisitions of the life of faith flowing from it! This makes the sure "foundation" of the believer's hope, "a stone of stumbling" to the unbeliever's ruin. (Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 7,8.) As regards also the means of salvation--how can pride lift up his head in the view of the Son of God, "taking upon him the form of a servant," that he might bear the curse of man? (Philip. ii. 5-8.) "Behold, the soul that is lifted up is not upright in him." (Hab. ii. 4.)

But can a sinner--can a saint--be *proud*?--one that owes everything to free and sovereign grace--one that has wasted so much time--abused so much mercy--so grieved the Spirit of God--that has a heart so full of atheism--unbelief--selfishness? Nay, the very pride itself should be the matter of the deepest daily humiliation. Thus the remembrance of it may, under Divine grace, prove an effectual means of subduing it in our hearts. We shall overcome corruption by its own working, and meet our adversary with his own weapons. And if this cursed principle be not wholly destroyed, yet the very sight of its corruption, deepening our contrition, will be overruled for our spiritual advancement.

O blessed end intended by the Lord's dealings with us! to "humble and to prove us"--"to know," and to make us know "what was in our heart, that he might do us good at the latter end!" (Deut. viii. 2, 16.) Let us not frustrate his gracious intentions, or build again the things which he would have destroyed. May we love to lie low--lower than ever--infinitely low before him! Lord! teach us to remember, that "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in thy sight." (Luke xvi. 15.) Teach us to bless thee, for even thy sharp and painful discipline which tends to subjugate this hateful pride of our hearts before our Saviour's cross!