

What Comes Before a Fall?

Scripture Reading — Proverbs 16:18; Luke 18:9-12

The Pharisee . . . prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people. . . . I fast twice a week.” — Luke 18:11-12

Pride takes many forms—often, sadly, among people who try to serve God, and even if they begin humbly. The road of fasting, for example, is paved with good intentions and littered with broken vows. With a sigh, some promise themselves to try to do better next time. Others, if they have kept their vows, can easily be tempted to feel proud of their success.

Fasting and prayer are resources that help us focus on our need for God’s love and mercy; they are not instruments for self-enhancement. Pride in self-denial is self-defeating. In false humility we can become puffed up with pride and even boastful. The Pharisee in Jesus’ parable boasted that he was not like “robbers, evil-doers, adulterers—or even like [the] tax collector” nearby. He judged himself as much better than all of these others, and he was sure that God would reward him.

If we want to boast about anything, says Paul, we should boast in “Jesus Christ, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Paul knew about spiritual pride. For a long time he was convinced that he was better than Christ’s followers, and he sought to exterminate them (Acts 8:3; 9:1). Spiritual pride so shrinks the soul that it has no room for God’s love—or for neighbors.

Prayer

Dear Lord, free us from our selfish pride, knowing we are lost in sin and powerless to do any good without you. May we boast only in you and in your love and grace for us. Amen.

Devotion topics: [Christianity](#), [Sin](#), [Life](#), [Emotions](#), [Pride](#)

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Printed on October 25, 2020

