

they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASB

Romans 1:28-32 - 28 And just as they **did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer**, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and, **although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.** NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of the true believer** who has been forgiven and stands in Christ. It is apparent that those of us who know and believe the truth hold an even greater culpability for sin. We are fully aware of God's righteous judgment, and yet allow our lust to deceive us into sin, and proudly dismiss His Lordship over the members of our bodies. If it were not for the grace of God in accomplishing our Justification once for all time through the death of Christ (the Gospel), we would again be condemned with the unbelieving and subject to eternal death. But thanks be to God, He has accomplished this, and we stand in Christ, and have been given the Holy Spirit and faith in regeneration. Nevertheless, we are in a struggle for sanctification and holiness, but aided by the Holy Spirit so that we have the ability to submit to God's desire and mortify our sins, something the unbeliever does not have. Yet even with us, the struggle with sin is one that has at its heart a temptation to cross over God's boundaries, defy His authority, and follow our will according to our lust.

James 1:14-15 - 14 But **each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin**; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. NASB

This is why in **humbling ourselves** James has told us that we must submit therefore to God and resist temptation. You see it is a question of **who rules the heart**, who is in authority there. We will submit to the Creator as a dependent creature, our will we proudly defy His authority to chase our lust and deny His will to seek our own?

James 4:6-7, 10 - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." **7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. NASB

This battle is very real even for people who love God and seek to do His will. This of course is what we spoke of earlier about the **tension of holiness** in the Christian life. The inner man delights in the law of God and seeks to do His will, but we are buffeted by these bodies that are still subject to sin and temptation. Even King David, the man after God own heart could be led away by His own lust and fall into sin.

2 Samuel 11:2-4 - 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof **he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.** 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 And **David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her**; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. NASB

So even for the true believer the pride that is in our hearts is an essential part of the struggle against every sin, because it always calls God's authority into question and seeks to dethrone or un-god God. As we have clearly seen in the scriptures above, **pride is part of the very nature of sin**. Pride is what **motivated the very first sin** in creation, the fall of Satan himself (Isa 14:12-14). It was the heart motivation that caused our first parents to commit the first human sin as they sought to **"be like God"** and transgress His Law and defy His authority as God the Creator (Gen 3:1-7). **Pride is what motivates the heart of the unbeliever** as the no longer even acknowledge

God or His authority as Creator and constantly defy Him by dethroning Him in their hearts (Rom 1:18-32). We have clearly seen that even the **true believer struggles in sin because of a prideful disposition** that will even defy God in the light of His grace to us in Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Thank God that He is making us practically holy through the process of sanctification and He will ultimately glorify us with bodies that are no longer even subject to sin and death. The Bible clearly shows that the struggle against sin is a struggle against the authority and rule of God over His creatures, and that is why **pride is an element in every sin**, because ultimately it defies God's rule and seeks to dethrone Him. As we have said, the **great beast of pride must be slain in our hearts if Christ will rule there!**

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Now much of this evidence from scripture, and indeed much study of the Bible on this topic has led many students of the Bible, indeed some of the greatest theologians in history to conclude that there is a sense in which **we are all infected with pride**, and pride is the root, and/or the motivating source, or **part of the very nature of sin itself**. Here are a few quotes.

Spurgeon – *“That demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warped and woof of our nature, that too we are wrapped in our Wynding sheets we shall never hear the last of it.”*

CS Lewis - In his book Mere Christianity, Lewis evidences his conviction about the seriousness of pride in this way, he asserts *“that pride is the essential vice, the utmost evil,”* and that it is the *“one vice of which no man in the world is free, and of which hardly any people ever imagine they are guilty themselves.”*

Chrysostom - Chrysostom said that *“pride is the mother of all evils.”*

Thomas Watson – *“Oh, let us search if there is none of this leaven of pride in us. Man is naturally a proud piece of flesh; this sin runs in the blood. Our first parents fell by their pride. They aspired to deity. There are the seeds of this in the best, but the godly do not allow themselves in it. They strive to kill this weed by mortification..... Justice comprehends all virtue in itself; so pride comprehends all vice. It is a spiritual drunkenness; it flies up like wine into the brain and intoxicates it. It is idolatry; a proud man is a self-worshipper.”*

Andrew Murray - Murray asserts, *“humility, the place of entire dependence upon God, is from the very nature of things the first duty and the highest virtue of his creatures. And so pride, the loss of humility, is the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now fallen Angels began to look upon themselves, with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Likewise, it was when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride, the desire to be as God, into the hearts of our first parents, that they too fell from there high estate into the wretchedness to which all humankind has sunk. In heaven and on earth, pride or self-exaltation is the very gateway to hell. And so it follows that nothing can save us but the restoration of our lost humility, the original and only true relationship of the creature to its God.”*

The modern biblical counselors Stuart Scott and also Wayne Mack both assert that **pride is in our very nature** and at the **very root and essence of sin**. **Stuart Scott** says *“Pride is the epidemic vice. It is everywhere and manifests itself in many ways. As much as we may hate to admit it, we all have pride, each and every one of us. The question is not, do I have it? But, where is it? And how much of it do I have? We all have the tendency to think too much about ourselves and too much of ourselves.”* **Wayne Mack** says *“What is pride? Pride consists in attributing to ourselves and demanding for ourselves the honor, privileges, prerogatives, rights, and power that are due to God alone. Thus, it is at the very root and essence of sin because*

pride, at its core, is idolatry of self. A proud person has put himself or herself in God's place.” I have maintained that **pride is part of the nature** of sin, it is one element of several. Let me briefly show a few other parts of the nature of sin, to see more clearly a fuller scope of the nature and essence of sin.

Unbelief – Every sin ultimately must dismiss at some level God’s right and power and certainty to judge our actions, therefore we reason (falsely) that our lust is greater than the reality of His Judgment (deception). It calls the existence of God and His righteous judgment into question, which is **unbelief** (we fail to believe His judgment is greater than the temporary pleasure of sin).

Through lust the tempter deceives us into thinking **sin is something less** than it is (Eph 4:22). For if one believed that God existed and will judge our actions according to righteousness, there would be a willing submission. Unbelief is a **proud dismissal of reality** since God has clearly made Himself known, and conscience is a witness against sin and a warning of God’s righteous judgment. John Piper has written a helpful book on this topic called “Battling Unbelief.”

Romans 1:18-22 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** 21 For even though **they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks;** but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASB

Romans 14:23 - 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin.** NASB

Ephesians 4:22 - 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, **which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,** NASB

Insubordination – Because sin is a transgression of God’s Law, it is always insubordination, which is a **proud dismissal of God’s Sovereign authority**, expressed in His Law. Words appropriate to describe this are; Arrogance, Haughtiness, Loftiness, Defiance, Rebellion, Audacity, Treason, Contempt, Mutiny, to name a few.

1 Corinthians 15:56 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law;** NASB

Romans 4:15 - 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but **where there is no law, neither is there violation.** NASB

1 John 3:4 - 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and **sin is lawlessness.** NASB

Lust and Law - Although the **conscience may warn against sin** because of our accountability to God, yet **our heart proudly decides** that our will is better than God’s because ultimately what we want (**our lust**) is greater and more important than what God wants (**His Law**). See the nature of temptation is always to violate a law, otherwise it would NOT be a **temptation to sin (transgress law)**. The **disposition of the heart** that sins is **proudly lifted up against God**, and voluntarily overthrowing His rule in the heart.

Romans 6:12- 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body that you should **obey its lusts,** NASB

Romans 7:9-11 - 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came,** sin became alive, and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 **for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me,** and through it killed me. NASB

Judgment – **Sin always brings about judgment** because God is good and always requires an appropriate penalty for transgression of law. This is the **Justice of God**, which is perfect and complete and never flexible. Every sin in the history of creation will be judged by God and brought to justice. This is one of the elements of God’s Goodness, He is the perfect Judge and carries out perfect, complete and final justice. Even in the case of the forgiven sin of believers, our sins ultimately bring forth the death of our sacrificial substitute, Jesus the lamb of God.

Either Christ will die for your sins, or you will die for you sins, but someone will die because sin is a heinous and infinite crime against our Holy Creator and our Righteous Judge.

Romans 6:23 - 23 For **the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB

James 1:15 - 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death**. NASB

Hebrews 9:22 - 22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, **and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**. NASB

So indeed we have seen there are **several elements in sin**. This is very helpful in the struggle for sanctification in the Christian life and in bearing the image in greater degree over time. Through this knowledge God equips us with greater discernment, which comes through the Word and by the Spirit. This knowledge is then quickened in us by the power and presence of the God by the Spirit to fashion us into the image of Christ. Through our **very real and intense struggle with sin**, and because of the **triumphing power of the Gospel**, with all its promises, God makes us like Jesus (Rom 8:1-17).

Lastly, let me point out **why** this **understanding of pride being the heart motivation and root of every sin** and all vice is so **important in sanctification** in the Christian life. It is because of the way that we make war against and mortify sin.

Pride is part of the nature of every sin, therefore killing pride is killing sin at its root

Now put the thought clearly in your mind that at the heart and core of your struggle against sin is a **proud disposition** that seeks to **dethrone God** and the **desire to do your own will** instead of His, brings you to the precipice of sin and transgression. As you stand at the door of temptation consider; will I now dethrone God from my heart and lift myself against His heavenly Majesty and commit this transgression against Him? Or will I humble myself and submit to God, resist this temptation from the devil and remain at peace with my Creator? Ahah! The veiled has been removed from this struggle and pride stands naked before the truth of God's Word, and now you must, with God dependent effort (faith), strike down this beast of pride with the sword of the Spirit! Is the promise of pleasure that this sin holds out greater than God's promises of lasting peace and joy in fellowship with Him? You must take this proud thought of transgression **"captive"** and **"render it obedient to Christ."** You must **"destroy this speculation"** (thought to sin) and cast down this **"lofty (proud) thing"** that has **"raised itself up against the knowledge of God"** (His authority as Creator and King), and make that **"thought obedient to Christ,"** through the Word and by the Spirit's power!

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 - 3 For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war** according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are **destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**. NASB

You see when you have this truth before your eyes that you are in **submission to God**, and in contrition with that tax collector who realizes his great need for divine grace to stand before God, **you humbly realize your dependence on God** and look to Him for strength and power to live out the holiness He has called you to. When you are aware of your pride, and often seek to discern where it is lurking in your heart and mind, you maintain a humble disposition before God as your Sovereign King, and desire to live under His rule and authority. This is the place of submission, rest and blessing. Therefore, **if you make war against your pride**, you cut off sin at the roots, and deprive it of its nutrients and life. And if you humble yourself before God and others, you allow every other virtue to flow freely from your heart and life. The last thing the