Title: Don’t be wise in your own eyes

Text: Proverbs 3:7-8

Date Preached: 12/8/2019 (MBC PM)

Good Evening. Please turn with me in your bibles to Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3. The text to which I would like to turn our attention tonight is verses 7 and 8 of Proverbs chapter 3.

I once heard a wise pastor friend say that It’s God’s grace that he was called to proclaim the gospel message each week that he needs to hear the most. I find that true every week, but perhaps feel it no more acutely than I have felt it this week while preparing a sermon on pride.

I can run through the story of my life and can recount with great embarrassment a whole number of occasions where I was wise in my own eyes. Indeed, even yesterday I found myself in the unusual position of becoming my own sermon illustration.

My brother in law and I met at my property to cut down a couple of pretty large trees. As he pulled out his chainsaw, which was old and beat up, I remarked that I had a bigger one out in the shop. He asked me, “how big is the bar on yours?” And I glowingly answered, 25”. And I went to pull mine out, which was a 300 series, which is significant only because his was a 200 series. That means mine has more power. And I had a fresh chain on mine, which meant I could really rip through the wood.

So I walked over there and proceeded to rip through a 50’ red oak, which came down in a mighty crash. I was feeling like pretty hot stuff at that point. And then we began to cut it up. And he went to the top of the tree, where the branches were smaller. I went to the trunk. I was going to do the real work. So I roared into that tree and was going great, until the tree trunk rotated on me, and pinched my bar. I was stuck. I had thousands of pounds of weight pinching my bar in place.

So what did I have to do? I had to walk over and ask my brother in law to take his smaller, older, worn out chainsaw and rescue my big hot rod of a chainsaw. I needed him to cut me out, and it didn’t matter how much power or how much longer my bar was, I was stuck, and I was humbled. It was at that moment I knew I had become my own sermon illustration.

I trust that we’ve all felt that way, that we’ve all had moments of feeling wise in our own eyes, and that’s what I want us to see tonight. What does pride do to us, and what is promised for us if we instead choose humility, which is the path of wisdom.

Let’s read Proverbs chapter 3, and I will read the first 8 verses.

My son, do not forget my teaching,  
    but let your heart keep my commandments,  
**2**for length of days and years of life  
    and peace they will add to you.

**3**Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;  
    bind them around your neck;  
    write them on the tablet of your heart.  
**4**So you will find favor and good success[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=proverbs+3&version=ESV&interface=print#fen-ESV-16460a)]  
    in the sight of God and man.

**5**Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
    and do not lean on your own understanding.  
**6**In all your ways acknowledge him,  
    and he will make straight your paths.  
**7**Be not wise in your own eyes;  
    fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.  
**8**It will be healing to your flesh[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=proverbs+3&version=ESV&interface=print#fen-ESV-16464b)]  
    and refreshment[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=proverbs+3&version=ESV&interface=print#fen-ESV-16464c)] to your bones.

PRAYER

As we begin, let’s focus on verse 7, and notice with me **the description of a prideful person. The description of a prideful person**. Pride can manifest itself in all sorts of ugly ways, but probably the most common description of an arrogant person is here: They are wise in their own eyes. They have a high estimation of themselves and, particularly, their own reasoning, their own intellect, their own wisdom.

They’re not the kind of person that needs input from others. Why would they? They already know everything they need to know. Wherever they go, they are the smartest person in the room. They know how to solve everybody’s problems, they know how to fix the economy, fix the legislature, fix the culture, fix Hollywood, fix the church. They know it all.

But let’s not stop there. Let’s look at a 3 of the many other ways that Proverbs talks about a prideful man: First, the author of Proverbs promises us that **the prideful man will have dishonor. He will have dishonor**. Proverbs 11:2 begins this way: “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.” When pride comes, then comes disgrace, loss of reputation or respect because of some dishonorable action. We have examples of this throughout the bible. The first example was Satan himself. Jesus tells us that He “saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” And that was because the devil's **pride** caused him to attempt to overthrow God and steal His glory.

On Sunday mornings we’ve recently heard the story of the first King of Israel, Saul, and how his pride led him to make a sacrifice which he was not authorized to do, and this was to his disgrace, and eventually led to the very kingdom being taken from his hands.

Similarly, I recently re-read the book of Esther, and in it you see a wicked man named Haman. Haman was driven by self-glory and selfish ambition. He was never satisfied with *some* praise. He wanted the praise of every single man. And when he didn’t get it, he was ultimately disgraced, forced to parade around town in the king’s robes the man that he hated most. He was disgraced because of his pride.

I read a story this week that I think humorously illustrates this proverb: Don Shula has more wins than any other coach in NFL history. The only active coach to even be in the ballpark is New England’s Bill Belichick, and he’d still need another 6 seasons or so, winning at a 70% clip, to catch Shula. So, Don Shula is kind of a big deal. Shula likes to tell the story of a post-season trip with his wife. They were in a little seaside town in Maine thinking it was one place they could relax anonymously. It was raining when they arrived, so they decided to take in a movie. As they entered the small theater, the movie had not yet started, and the lights were still up. And when the small group of people in the theater saw them, they began to applaud spontaneously. After they sat down, Don leaned over to his wife and said, *"I guess there's no place I'm not known."* His wife smiled and added, *"And loved, dear."* A man seated nearby reached over and shook Don's hand. Shula said, *"I have to admit I'm kind of surprised that you know me here."* The man replied, *"Oh, should I know you? We're just happy to see you folks because the manager said he wasn't going to start the movie until at least two more people showed up."[[1]](#footnote-1)*

With pride comes disgrace, so don’t be wise in your own eyes, or you’ll end up with dishonor and shame.

Second, Proverbs not only says the prideful man will have disgrace, but he’ll a**lso be punished. A prideful man will also be punished**.

Proverbs 16:5 tells us that, Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished. Pride is not merely annoying to God or just a little bit off of the mark. Pride is an abomination to God, that means he hates it, it disgusts him, it is an offense to his holiness, and therefore it will not go unpunished. God will act.

Similarly, just a few verses later God tells us that Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. The prideful man walks right into his own destruction, and he will stumble and fall.

Like we mentioned before in the case of Saul, his arrogance provoked God, and lead not only to the kingdom being taken from his hands, but the holy spirit also being removed from him, his special anointing to reign over the kingdom removed, and also his own life and the life of his sons were taken. His pride came before a terrible fall.

Likewise, in the book of Esther, Haman was not only forced into disgrace by having to parade Mordecai around in the King’s garments, but Haman ended up being hanged on the very set of gallows that he had built for Mordecai. His pride came before a terrible fall.

Sometimes this pride-driven fall comes quickly, and brings to onlookers a sense of justice and satisfaction, like the man that gets annoyed with traffic, pulls onto the shoulder and zooms ahead, only to pass a policeman who then pulls him over. We like that kind of immediate justice, as long as it happens to others.

But other times, indeed most of the time, this pride-driven fall comes slowly. Like the man that gains a little power over time, starts to think and act like he is invincible, and only after decades does he come tumbling down. Israel’s king Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26 is an example of this. He reigned for 52 years and was a great king, at the start. But over time he began to rely on his own strength and wisdom. The text says that “He acted cor­ruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.” He disobeyed God, relied on his own wisdom, was prideful in his estimation of himself, and was in turn stricken with leprosy, and therefore banished from the temple, and had to live by himself for the rest of his life. Just because you start well, doesn’t mean you will end well. Pride is a danger to both the young and the old, and we must remember that God will punish pride, and that the prideful will fall, either in this life or the next.

Third, not only is the prideful man promised disgrace and punishment, **the prideful man is described as a person that stirs up strife.** That’s what it says in Proverbs 28:25, that a prideful man stirs up strife, he provokes trouble or discord, he’s good at ruffling feathers and making waves.

A prideful person has himself at the center of the universe, and everyone around him can usually tell. Pride is like bad breath, everyone around you can smell it but the person who has it is oblivious.

And when you’re blind to your own pride, you’ll do things that stir up trouble. You’ll speak unkindly to people, you’ll lack compassion, you’ll demand from others what you wouldn’t do yourself.

You’ll be like the Pharisees, whom Jesus condemned for tying up burdens on people that they themselves would never lift a finger to carry.

Likewise, prideful people want special treatment. They say things like: “I know the rules that that I can’t do that, but I was hoping that you’d let me do that this time. I know everyone is supposed to do this, but I’d really like to do that.” What they are saying that they think they are exceptional, and deserve to be treated better than everyone else. That’s pride. They want preferential treatment, extraordinary favor, for no reason other than they just consider themselves special.

Or here is another pride marker that always stirs up strife: prideful people are wise in their own eyes, and so that means they are never wrong. They have all the right answers for everyone’s problems, and the whole world, the government, the President, the mayor, and the pastor would have all their problems go away if they would just listen to me. Have you met someone like this? I know I have. And when they are confronted with their own inadequacy, they won’t own up to it. The problems are never their fault. They will excuse it. Or they will blame someone else. “Well it’s not my fault, they didn’t tell me all the information. If I had had all the data, then I would have given the right answer. I was misled, that’s all.” Or “They didn’t do it exactly like I said. If they had just listened more closely, then my plan would have worked. It’s completely their fault, not mine.”

Pride makes a person a Mr. or Mrs. Know-it-all, and therefor unable to say “I was wrong”.

I ran across a poem recently by a Greek professor named Amos Russel Wells who lived about a century ago. Speaking about “Mr. Know it all” he wrote:

He can memorize long orations,  
And regards the work as play;  
His masterful dissertations  
The clearest of thought convey.

His speeches are never the weaker  
For lack of a suitable word;  
In fine, he's the readiest speaker  
You probably ever have heard.

He never was known to stutter,  
His voice is vibrant and strong;  
Yet three words he never can utter,  
Those three little words, *"I was wrong."[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Have you met someone like that, someone that can’t admit when they are wrong? Someone that can’t say, “I’m sorry, please forgive me?” I know I have. In fact, I often find myself playing that part. I know I should ask forgiveness from someone, but I delay because I’m just so mad about what they said to me. That’s pride. I’m more concerned about me and my mistreatment, than I am about what I did to them. I’m more upset about the sin committed against me, than the sin that I committed against God himself.

And you know what that means? That means that I deserve death. Remember what we read above, that pride is an abomination to God, and that God will punish?

I’m like Adam in the Garden, I’ve plucked the fruit and in my pride I think I can hide behind fig leaves and bushes and blame it all on that woman over there, blame it all on someone else. But God sees all. God knows the pride in my heart. How upset I get when I don’t get my way. How frustrated I am when people mess up MY schedule. How grumpy I am when people don’t take MY advice and listen to MY opinion. That’s MY ugly pride.

But the good news is that we have a savior that was not prideful. He didn’t consider himself better than us. In fact, he willingly came down, stooped down, to the form of a servant, and washed the feet of his disciples. And he promises to wash us, if we would but believe in him and turn away from our pride. We need just look to him in faith, believe in his promises, believe in his atoning work on the cross, and we can have our abominable pride wiped clean. That is the good news of God, that we’re not bound to a fate of pride-driven destruction, but that we can have life in his name. I hope you will make that choice.

Now that we’ve looked at the description of pride from a few different angles, let’s take a look at **the call for humility. The call for humility**.

The second part of verse 7 tells us what we need to do in order to avoid being wise in our own eyes. Listen again: “**7**Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”

The fear of the Lord is a recurring theme in this book, and I’ve covered it a little bit already, but because the fear of God is like a diamond with many beautiful facets, tonight we will rotate the diamond ever so slightly and look at the fear of the Lord as it relates to pride, as it relates to us being wise in our own eyes.

Rather than being wise in our own eyes, rather than thinking that we know it all, we’re instead called to fear the Lord, and by fearing the Lord, by having a proper estimation of ourselves as it relates to our creator and our fellow creatures, then we will begin to have a proper views of ourselves, and will begin to grow in humility.

Sidenote: I didn’t say a low view of ourselves. Rather, the fear of the Lord will give us a proper view of ourselves. It is not necessarily sinful for you to know that you’re the smartest person in the room. I hope, for example, that my son’s kindergarten teacher is the smartest person in the room. But, if we begin to think we’re better than everyone else, that’s where pride comes in. A humble person doesn’t think he is worthless or dumb or useless; rather, a humble person merely keeps his given talents and abilities in the proper perspective, the perspective of the fear of the Lord.

So what does it look like for someone to not be wise in their own eyes, and to fear the lord? Proverbs describes the humble person in several ways.

First, **a humble person is a peacemaker.** **A humble person is a peacemaker.** Rather than the prideful person we discussed above, the person who brings strife and trouble, rather than ruffling feathers, a humble person will seek to bring Godly peace wherever they go.

They will speak with kindness, rather than hatred, even when they themselves are sinned against. And they can do this because they know that they have first been shown kindness by the Lord.

Unlike the prideful man, a humble person can be a peacemaker because he will not seek to self-promote. They will follow proverbs 27:2, which says, “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” Prideful posturing, desiring to be heard and seen, a prideful desire to be retweeted and liked for the sake of vanity, all those will begin to fade when we embrace the fear of the Lord. We don’t need the praise of others when we have heard from God in Christ, well done, my beloved.

A humble man or woman of God is able to bring unity and peace wherever they go because they have dethroned themselves from the center of their universe. It’s only when we place God back in the center of our lives that we can begin to rightly order the rest of our relationships, and begin to place the well-being and benefit of others ahead of ourselves. Humble people are peacemakers.

Second, not only are the humble peacemakers, but Proverbs says **a humble person will have honor**, unlike the prideful person who will have disgrace. **A humble person will have honor**.

Listen to the words of Proverbs 15:33 “The [[u](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=proverbs+15&version=NASB#fen-NASB-16841u)]fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor *comes* humility.” Likewise Proverbs 18:12 says, “Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.”

A person that is truly humble, will begin have real friendships with others, real relationships. Not merely business acquaintances or networking connections. But real companions. That’s because people want to be around a humble person. People enjoy the company of humble people. In a world dominated and run by the boastful, it is so refreshing to spend time with someone that is not absorbed with themselves.

And it is easy to see from there how honor will come to a humble person. When many people like you, they’ll begin to praise you, to promote you, to see your best interests promoted, to see your name protected and your reputation defended. Slowly, but surely, a humble person becomes seen as an honorable and good person. Honor will come to those that humble themselves, unlike the disgrace that was promised to the arrogant.

Unlike Saul that was brought low because of his arrogance, the lowly shepherd boy David was shown the grace and honor of God when we was elevated to king over God’s people.

Unlike Haman who was hanged on his own gallows because of his pride, Mordecai daily waited at the gate in order to try and assist Esther, and even when Esther had the ear of the king, Mordecai didn’t seek to promote his own safety or well-being, but promoted the well-being of the nation ahead of himself. And because of his humility, at the end of the book he was greatly honored. Listen to the closing verses from the book of Esther:

“**10**King Ahasuerus imposed tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea.**2**And all the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? **3**For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.”

Mordecai was a peacemaker, and he was honored, because he was a humble man who feared the Lord more than he feared man.

Third, Proverbs not only says a humble person will be a peacemaker and will have honor, but God **says that a humble person will have life. A humble person will have life**, rather than the promised demise of an arrogant man.

Proverbs 22:4 says that “The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor, and life.” Life itself is a reward for humility.

This makes sense, right? An arrogant man will think he is invincible and do things that risk his life. But a humble person will recognize their own mortality, and will avoid things that unnecessarily risk death.

An arrogant fool will continue down the path of foolishness, the path that leads to death, but a humble person will see the danger, fear the lord, and turn from the path of death.

This is true in the realm of the practical, but it is also true in the realm of the spiritual. If you’re boastful of your own strength and understanding, you think you’re doing just fine in this world, that you don’t need God’s help, that you’re a pretty good person, then you are coasting down the wide highway that leads to hell.

However, if you’re aware of your own weakness, aware that you need help, then you will see your need for salvation and forgiveness. You’ll see that Christ is the only way for you to be saved, because you could never save yourself. That’s was humble God-fearing Christians do, they come to God for help, and in doing so, they receive the promised life that comes to the humble.

But in his kindness, God doesn’t just grant quality of life in this world. He grants us eternal life in the next. Humility to repent and believe now will reap the reward of eternal life and blessedness later.

Won’t you believe in the Son, turn from your pride and being wise in your own eyes, and receive the promised life that is given to all those that are humble enough to receive it? I hope you will.

The humble person receives life, receives honor, and is a peacemaker.

Now, lastly, let’s turn to verse 8 and see some of **the blessings of humility. The blessings of humility**. Again, listen to the proverb: “Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.**8**It will be healing to your flesh[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=proverbs+3&version=ESV&interface=print#fen-ESV-16464b)] and refreshment[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=proverbs+3&version=ESV&interface=print#fen-ESV-16464c)] to your bones.”

Notice here the underlying assumption for verse 8, that the spiritual and the physical are connected. Our physical, material bodies are connected to the spiritual, immaterial aspects of our being. If we are spiritually proud, we will have disfunction in our bodies, but if we are humble, then we will have healing in our flesh and refreshment in our bones.

That is a crucial connection. But let’s press into that a little bit. How can a humble person have these tangible, physical benefits?

Well, for one, that’s because **with humility comes contentment. With humility comes contentment**. A humble person is aware that they are no better than anyone else, they aren’t entitled to something better or nicer. They are content with the things and the circumstances that they’ve been given. And because they have a supreme sense of contentedness with what God has provided for them, they aren’t always staying up late fretting about what’s going to happen next. They’re not keeping their blood pressure up too high worrying about things that are outside of their control.

Contentment is a fruit of a humble soul, and will heal your aching bones and your parched soul, because that’s what happens when we covet the possessions and circumstances of others. Our bones ache with jealousy and our soul becomes dry with bitterness. Nothing will satisfy us while we’re coveting. We’ve set up an idol that promises satisfaction and healing, but in reality it drives us further from God and further from genuine refreshment.

Contentment is a real, tangible benefit that comes with God-fearing humility, and it will bring benefits not only to your soul, but your body as well.

Second, not only does humility bring contentment, but it **also casts out the fear of man. Humility cast out the fear of man**, and thereby brings healing to our bodies and refreshment to our souls.

We’re all tempted to fear man in some way. We’re afraid to appear to be a sinner, so we don’t let people get close to us at church, afraid they will realize how messed up we really are. We’re afraid of being seen as unintelligent, so we use our language to put up a smart sounding façade so we can trick people into thinking we’re smart. “I’ll just us a strategic big word here, or a fancy argument there, and voila, people think I’m really smart.”

Or maybe you are desperately seeking the affirmation of somebody, craving that someone would show you some attention, and you let your desire to feel liked drive you to do something that you ordinarily wouldn’t do.

Or maybe You hate the thought that someone might not like you, or might be mad at you, so you let your man-fearing drive you into crippling anxiety.

We’ve all done it. And when we’re driven by man-fearing we will never have healing in our bones or refreshment in our souls. And that’s because man fearing inevitably ties our stomach up in knots, makes our minds race, makes our palms sweat, and keeps us awake at night.

God tells us in Psalm 127:2, “It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil.” Anxiety and worry is in in vain, it is useless. But how does that verse end? It says, But God, “gives to his beloved sleep.” It is God that provides the rest that we so desperately crave.

God promises that the humble, that those who come to him in humility, will have rest. And he can do that because his son was meek and lowly, he was humble, and he has earned the rest and healing that we so desperately desire. His son has died the death for pride and arrogance that we had all earned, and he lived the perfect life of humility that we would never live.

So, as I close tonight, I encourage you to come and see Christ, ask of him to make you a humble person, not merely so that your body would feel better, though it will, but so that you can see your king, and by seeing him, find true rest for your body and refreshment for your soul.

I’ll close with this, another sermon from Amos Wells:

I went to the palace  
A wonderful thing  
I went to the palace  
Called by the King

A herald would lead me  
But fool in my pride  
I sneered at his offer  
And waved him aside

How large was the palace  
How loftily grand  
What vistas of chambers  
On every hand!

I wandered and wandered,  
All proud and alone;  
I wandered and wandered  
But found not the Throne

And still as I wander  
Ah wearisome thing  
I am in the King's palace  
But far from the King[[3]](#footnote-3)

Don’t let your pride blind you from the King’s presence. Humble yourselves that you may see God.

THE LORD’S SUPPER

And for those of us that have come to faith in Jesus Christ, we have yet another opportunity to see God tonight at the table of the Lord. His humiliation, his willingness to become nothing, is illustrated for us in this meal. He willingly let his body become broken for you, and let his blood be shed for you. Such is his humility.

All those that have come to faith are invited to join. If you’re like the humble saints in Acts chapter 2 that were devoted to the apostolic teaching found in God’s word, the fellowship of the saints, the breaking of bread and prayer, then we invite you to come.

But if you haven’t yet come to Christ, first submit yourself to him by repenting and believing, then you may come and join us at the table.

I’ll pray and then our table servants will come. PRAYER

Closing hymn- 239 When I survey the Wonderous Cross

Benediction- May the fear of the Lord cast out all of your boastfulness and pride, and may you find healing in your bones and refreshment for your souls as you savor the humility of Christ our king. Amen.

1. Adapted from a sermon preached September 29, 2013 at First Baptist Church, Hot Springs, AR, by John Scott McCallum II : <http://storage.cloversites.com/firstbaptistchurchhotspringsarkansas/documents/Pride%20Goes%20Before%20a%20Fall.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Three Hard Words** by Amos Russel Wells, found here: <https://discoverpoetry.com/poems/poems-about-pride/> (accessed 12/6/2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Independence** by Amos Russel Wells [↑](#footnote-ref-3)