

A Deadly Sin

(Acts 12:18-24)

Introduction

1. Theme: Jesus accelerates us by the Holy Spirit to grow deeper through His family, wider in our impact for the gospel.
2. Issue: Of the sins we indulge, we often view pride as “less bad” than others, & hide it much more easily.
3. Background: This is a tale of 2 kings in opposition: Herod Agrippa and Jesus.

Pride exalts “me” as most important

1. King Herod Agrippa I
 - a. Grandson of Herod “the Great” (cf. Matt 2:1).
 - i. Herod [Greek]: “Heroic.”
 - ii. After Herod the Great’s death, kingdom divided into a “tetrarchy.”
 1. North (Itueria, Trachonitis), Middle (Galilee, Perea), South (Samaria, Judea, Idumea)
 2. Each portion is ruled by one of his 3 sons.
 - iii. High expectations from others & himself to be named after “heroic the great” one.
 - b. After his dad’s death, Herod Agrippa is raised/educated in Rome.
 - i. He befriends Gaius & Claudius (future Roman emperors).
 - ii. Emperor Gaius makes him regional “king” of North, then later Galilee/Perea.
 - iii. Emperor Claudius later gives him rule over Judea/Samaria/Idumea.
 - c. His rule equals & surpasses Herod the Great’s.
 - i. His kingdom is greater than his grand-father’s.
 - ii. He is more popular with the Jews: Devoted to man-made (not biblical) religious rules, compassionate, eased tension between Rome & Judea, and stands against Christianity.
2. Pride
 - a. He is a ruler with a great deal of arrogance/entitlement as people bend to his wants/desires, & pride in his own authority, power, accomplishments & what others’ say about him.
 - i. After killing James, he’s motivated to kill Peter because he craves the approval of men (cf. 12:3).
 - ii. People crave approval to satisfy pride: “I feel good when others say good things about me.”
 - b. Pride is about “Me.”
 - i. **Pride exalts “me” on to the throne of most important.**
 - ii. My wants/needs, my goals/dreams, my merit/dignity.
 - iii. I feel good when people give me what I want, including attention, approval, acclaim, acceptance.
 - c. Selfishness vs. Pride
 - i. Selfish: Choosing between you & me, I’m getting that last piece of pie.
 - ii. Proud: Choosing between you & me, *I deserve* that last piece of pie
 1. Reason: Because I think I’m better, more important.

Pride destroys others [Acts 12:18-20]

1. [18-20] Herod’s pattern of relating to people
 - a. [18] After Jesus frees Peter from prison, the guards flip out in fear.
 - b. [19] Herod searches for Peter to no avail (cf. 12:17); he questions & executes the guards (cf. 16:27).
 - i. He blames them & takes out his frustration on them.
 - ii. As king, he can do whatever he wants to satisfy his wounded ego.
 - c. [20] Herod gets frustrated with Tyre & Sidon.

- i. 2 port cities to the North in Phoenicia, dependent on his region/whim for trade & food supply.
 - ii. Somehow, they wound his pride too; he lashes out by threatening to cut them off.
 - iii. They send delegations that flatter, bribe & beg Blastus (his personal assistant & chief of staff) to convince Herod for an audience.
- 2. Symptom: **Pride blames others & lashes out at them in destructive ways.**
 - a. Pride sees people as something to use, instead of someone loved/valued by God, someone to bless.
 - i. We objectify others as objects of our wrath because I'm more important (my wants/needs).
 - b. We blame/point the finger:
 - i. We become frustrated with people when they don't do/give what I want.
 - ii. We refuse to acknowledge our own fault(s).
 - iii. You hurt me or failed me first.
 - c. We rationalize:
 - i. Your wrong is worse than mine; your speck is worse than my log (cf. Matt 7:1-5).
 - ii. Entitlement: You're supposed to give me what I want, when I want, no matter how unreasonable, because I deserve it.
 - iii. You are less important & deserve whatever vindictive wrath I take out on you.
 - iv. We set ourselves up as judge/jury/executioner (which is Jesus' right alone; cf. John 5:25-27).
 - d. **Pride always ends up destroying people & relationships around us.**
- 3. Application: Do you have a tendency to blame and/or lash out at others?
 - a. At sports/hobbies, work, spouse, family, anytime we don't get what I want?
 - b. Church: Do you blame/rationalize there are people at church you don't like?
 - i. Then take it on them by avoiding, ignoring, or stop joining church/small group?
 - ii. Truth: It's not because you think they're different, but because you think you're better.
 - iii. Pride: If they were less like themselves & more like me, they'd be less annoying.
 - c. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal pride that's wrecking home, friendships, office relations, church community.

Pride destroys ourselves [Acts 12:21-23]

- 1. [21-23] Herod's pride leads to a fall
 - a. [21] Herod has the delegations grovel before his authority & might as king.
 - i. At his royal courtyard, before his throne, dressed in royal robes. Speech: how great/generous he is.
 - ii. Historical confirmation: Josephus (non-Christian historian); Ant. 18.6.7 §200
 - b. [22] Knowing his ego, people flatter Herod: "Voice of a god, not a man!"
 - i. Significant: Herod does not stop/correct them, or say anything.
 - ii. When Cornelius tried to worship Peter, his response: I'm just a man (like you; not God) (cf. 10:25-26).
 - 1. Appropriate response if you're not God & anyone tries to worship you as such.
 - iii. Herod basks in the people's praise of him.
 - c. [23] He is immediately & supernaturally struck down by God's judgment
 - i. Severe disease & painful death that consumes his body from within by worms.
 - ii. Why? Key: "Because he did not give God the glory"
 - 1. He stole praise/worship/credit that belongs to Jesus for himself.
 - d. Root: **Pride puts me in God's place**
 - i. Self-worship: We set ourselves on the throne of our heart that belongs to God
 - ii. Self-lordship: Herod thought he was lord/god over his own life & others.
 - iii. Jesus teaches: All who exalt themselves will be humbled, & vice versa (cf. Luke 14:11; 18:14).
- 2. Lesson: **Pride is always self-destructive.**
 - a. We wrestle with God about who will be Lord/God of my life: Me or Jesus.
 - i. If you fight against God, you will lose.
 - ii. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (cf. Prov 3:34; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5).
 - iii. We can't blame God for His judgment because we're the ones who are wrong/wicked when we choose self-worship & self-lordship.
 - b. Herod thought he was winning the contest
 - i. He killed the apostle James, got applause of men, was going to kill Peter, had people praising him.
 - ii. He discovered when you set yourself against God, try to take Jesus' place in or own & others' lives, you will always lose.
 - c. Pride chooses a self-destructive path in opposing Jesus.
 - i. Worship: Pride steals worship from Jesus, and replaced it with worship of self.
 - ii. Lordship: Pride challenges Jesus' rightful place as Lord/God over our lives.

3. Application: Do you acknowledge Jesus' role in your life as God?
 - a. Or do you take credit for your situation, accomplishment, life for yourself?
 - i. Without giving credit & thanks to Jesus (cf. Gal 6:14)?
 - b. Do you overcompensate for insecurities through constant need for others to affirm/define you?
 - i. When God has already affirmed/defined you, saying you are worth trading His Son (cf. Rom 5:8)?
 - c. How do you set yourself up as lord over your own life?
 - i. Instead of asking Jesus for wisdom, to lead/guide your plans?
 - d. Is the goal of your life to be in control?
 - i. To manage your image/people's perceptions, your time, money, energy?

Conclusion [Acts 12:24]

1. [24] Final result: The true King, Jesus wins, Herod loses
 - a. Despite the threats/harm to apostles & people, the good news about Jesus continues to increase & multiply throughout the region.
 - b. God made Jesus' reputation spread, not Herod's.
 - c. Herod's rule comes to an end, but Jesus' Kingdom reign keeps growing.
2. Herod vs. Jesus
 - a. Differing ways of relating to us
 - i. Herod's way: Since I'm king, I'm more important than you. If I don't get what I want, I'll make you pay.
 - ii. Jesus' way: Though I'm rightful King, obedience to My Father & rescuing you is more than important than me, so I'll pay... through death on a cross (cf. Phil 2:5-8; John 15:13-17).
 - b. Differing plans
 - i. Herod's plan: Put self on the throne of his own heart/life
 - ii. Jesus' plan: Come down from His throne, to live a sinless life, die in our place for our sin, rise to be our Savior, to give us His best plans for life (here & eternal).
 - iii. Jesus is by far a better God than we (or anyone else) could be for us because He's a good, kind & holy God.
 - c. Solution to pride: Like Jesus, humility (cf. Phil 2:5).
 - i. Recognize lie: "Pride has brought me so far."
 - ii. Truth: Pride brings you & me pain, isolation, ruined relationships, destruction.
 - d. Jesus alone is worthy of worship, to be on the throne of your heart, as Lord over your life.
 - i. Surrender worship & lordship to Jesus; He can perform the spiritual heart surgery we need today.
 - ii. What's at stake: Your heart (which directs your life).
 - iii. We make it all about me, when it's all about Jesus.