

A Present Danger to Experienced Christians
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Introduction: God has blessed us with wisdom to stay close to Him.

- A. As we are humble and teachable then God will abundantly provide a secure path for each of us. **(2 Pt 1:10-11)**
 - 1. Jesus as our Shepherd leads us beside the still waters and protects us. **(Ps 23)**
 - 2. Satan is aware of this protection and seeks to separate the sheep from the Shepherd.
- B. Satan's game plan is known and laid open to us by the scriptures. **(1 Jn 2:15-16)**
 - 1. How does this work? We first allow our attention and affects to be turned to the world. We start listening and thinking about the wrong things.
 - 2. The seeds planted here then turn our hearts along paths of darkness. We can stop thinking and began reacting.
 - 3. Let us focus on "the pride of life" and its fruits.

I. Why can "experienced" Christians become vulnerable?

- A. We can let successful steps of faith lead us to pride.
 - 1. Pride involves a closing of the eyes and an exultation of self. **(Gal 6:3-4)**
 - 2. Pride is at its essence competitive. You look at others to develop your sense of worth. This is vanity! **(2 Cor 10:12, 18)**
 - 3. The greater the spiritual accomplishments, the greater the temptation from Satan to turn us away from thankfulness to self-praise. **(2 Cor 12:7)**
 - 4. The immature commonly can view themselves as "experienced." Time "in the church" does not mean you have really matured. This also is a product of pride!
- B. Every Christian must recognize the grave danger of pride entering their lives. **(Prov 16:18)**
 - 1. Peter had many successes but had let down his guard. **(Lk 22:31-32)**
 - 2. When Jesus plainly and powerfully revealed this danger, he brushed it off and even denied it!
 - 3. Pride will cause blindness (hardness of heart) both in the Christian and the non-Christian. **(Acts 7:51; Mk 6:51-52)**
 - 4. Pride, once planted, can in time destroy the heart. Jesus prayed for Peter that "your faith should not fail." This is a very serious danger!

II. How does God helps us see our pride?

- A. Taking God's warnings seriously can keep pride from taking root.
 - 1. Pride can grow unnoticed – It then makes you blind to your spiritual direction.
 - 2. Making humility a priority will keep your heart from becoming fertile ground for pride. **(1 Pt 5:5)**
 - 3. The pursuit of thanksgiving helps place our eyes on God and His work and can provide a guard for our hearts. **(Phil 4:6-7)**
- B. When pride has grown in us, God graciously allows for suffering to be experienced.

1. Satan's taking Peter to "sift him as wheat" was controlled and limited by God. (See book of Job, **Job 1:12; 2:6**)
2. God used suffering as a preventive measure against future pride for Paul. This too was God's grace at work! (**2 Cor 12:7-9**)
3. How can I see when I am blind? Pain can be a means of humbling us and then allowing us to reconsider what we are thinking and doing.
4. The sifting can come in different forms: It can be quickly or gradually – "drip, drip, drip." How do we respond to the long-term pressure cooker?
4. Some hearts are too hardened for suffering to open. (**1 Tim 4:2**)

III. How may I recognize the symptoms of pride in my life?

- A. We each have unique weakness that Satan will likely exploit!
 1. What is my current position in life? Do I view it as God does? (**1 Cor 7:20-23**)
 2. The things that cause men to fight the gospel can pull Christians back into the bondage of the world! (**1 Cor 1:26-29**)
 3. We must become increasing "disconnected" from mass media.
 4. Peter and the apostles were likely hearing voices that blinded them from the real nature of Jesus' ministry! (**Mk 10:42-45**)
- B. How am I thinking towards and treating others? (**Mt 7:12**)
 1. Proud men blindly make unrighteous judgments on others. (**Mt 7:1-5**)
 2. Do I major in my criticism and talk about others?
 3. Am I often impatient towards others and dismiss them as "weak."
 4. Do I allow my advancements to cause a separation between myself and others? Consider my education level and my economic level. (**1 Cor 8:1-2**)
 5. Am I feeding on sources that drive wedges between myself and others? (Political causes are filled with this very approach!) (**Mk 8:15**)
 6. Am I drifting into a more isolated world from my brethren? (**Rom 12:9-10**)
- C. Have I drifted into taking the fruitless burdens of the world?
 1. In pride we can easily take on burdens that leave us on a "treadmill to oblivion."
 2. Why do we get so burdened and upset at things that are not at all under our control? God tells us that He handles these sorts of things?
 3. In pride I can cause many self-inflicted wounds that can pull me further from God! (**1 Tim 6:10-11**)
- D. I need to honestly test my own heart. Consider these questions:
 1. Am I often dominated by critical thoughts towards my brethren?
 2. Are there people I avoid or withhold a "thank you" or encouragement?
 3. Do I often think of a "me versus them" situation among brethren? (**1 Sam 22:8**)
 4. Am I spending more time with people of the world than with Christians?
 5. Am I quick to be hurt by questionable actions of others or am I quick to make allowances for others? (**1 Cor 13:7; Lk 23:34**)

Conclusion: May our eyes always be open and thankful to God and His ways!