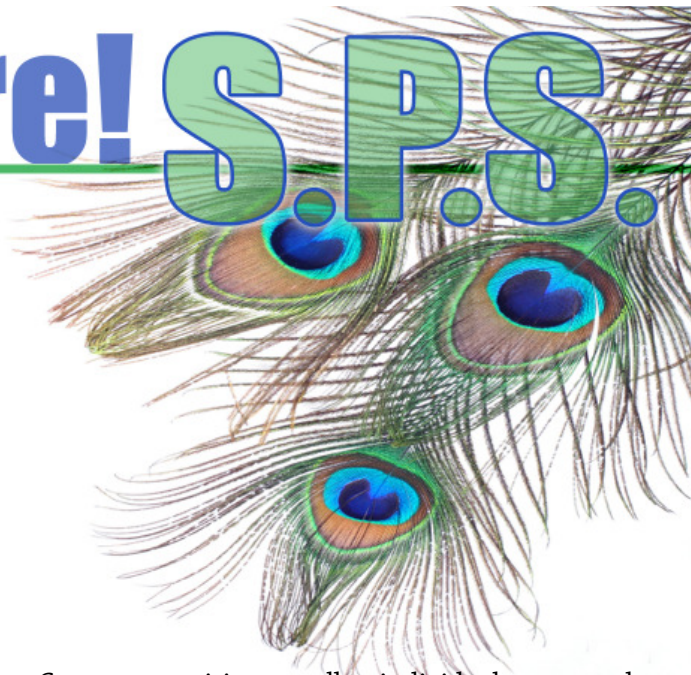


by
Pastor
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Beware! S.P.S.



Have you ever overheard a conversation between little children when one child boldly announces his pride over something he has done or what he is purportedly able to do? Sometimes a smile creases our face. At other times the tendency of a child to engage in such pride-filled activity causes parents to try to stem the practice, knowing that later in life it may become annoying if not destructive. I can remember at an early age my Mom on such occasions firmly and slowly repeating three letters, “S-P-S”, which she had earlier announced meant, “Self pride stinketh.” So when the letters came from Mom’s lips I knew that I was being overly proud or arrogant, and I needed to adjust my attitude. Mom knew the danger of pride and what it could do to one’s life.

Pride is a human trait that seems to be as natural as breathing. The word in the Greek language literally means “showing oneself above others.” The Greeks, like the philosopher Theophrastus, saw pride as “a certain contempt for all other people.” In the New Testament, according to Vine, the term is always used in the evil sense of being “arrogant, disdainful, or haughty.” In his epistle, James reminds his readers that, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (4:6) – probably citing Proverbs 3:34. Evidently Mom was in good company when she repeated those letters “S-P-S.” God sees a problem with pride too!

The problem with pride is that it is often deceptive. As William Barclay observed, “Those who suffer from it might well appear to be walking in downcast humility, while all the time there is in their hearts a vast contempt for other people.” Pride can so mask itself in a subterfuge of lowliness that the proud are even self-deceived.

Another problem Barclay notes is that “...pride shuts itself off from God.” He offers several reasons: “(1) It does not know its own need. It so admires itself that it recognizes no need to be supplied. (2) It cherishes its own independence. It will be indebted or obliged to no one and not even to God. (3) It does not recognize its own sin. It is occupied with thinking of its own goodness and never realizes that it has any sin from which it needs to be saved. A pride like that cannot receive help, because it does not know that it needs help, and therefore cannot ask.”

Corporate entities as well as individuals may need to be reminded of S-P-S. Churches can easily become prideful so that they shut themselves off from God. In Revelation Jesus says that the church at Laodicea has a problem with pride, “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (3:17). He then counsels, “Buy from Me gold refined in fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed...and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (3:18). The only antidote to pride is to come to Jesus so that we can see all that He is and then realize all that we are not. Such an action is more effective than a subtle repetition of the letters S-P-S!

Satan allowed pride to cause him to believe that he did not need God and indeed could become like God (Isaiah 14:12-14). Is it any great surprise that he wants us to accept the same distorted reasoning? Thank God and glorify Him for all that He has made you to be. At the same time follow Paul’s advice, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment” (Romans 12:3). Let us also follow Christ’s example as “...He humbled himself and became obedient to death” (Philippians 2:8). The only one who had the right to be proud, wasn’t!

How different we and our church would be if these principles would alter our thoughts and lives! Then each of us would look “not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (2:4). That certainly would be counter-cultural!