

# Pride and Self Deception

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Brethren, in about a month, we'll all be observing the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I'm sure most of you are aware, prior to the Passover, we're all commanded to do self-examination. To take an honest look at ourselves and see what we might need to improve on. What areas of our spiritual life that we still need to be doing overcoming to get our life in order and to have a proper relationship with God. That's something we're all commanded to do this time of year. But Jesus Christ warned us in the Book of Revelation in the letter to Laodicea that the end time Church would have a particular problem fulfilling this command. And the reason is because He tells us that the end time Church will be in a state of self-delusion believing that they're in great shape. As He puts it, they think they are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." They're in great shape. But His evaluation is quite the opposite. He says they're really in a horrible condition and on the verge of losing their salvation.

So, what we're going to do today is take a look at this subject and particularly look at probably one of the biggest challenges -- one of the biggest obstacles that we can have to overcome to be able to do an honest self-evaluation of where our spiritual lives are really at. And that is the problem of pride. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

## Pride and Self Deception

Because as we're going to see in this sermon, if we let our carnal pride get ahold of us, it will very much deceive us. In fact, we can be in a state of absolute delusion of our own spiritual condition and the world around us. So, to start off with, let's turn over to Revelation 3 -- to the letter to Laodicea -- and we'll see this warning that Christ gives us.

You're probably familiar with the fact that Revelation 2 and 3 are oftentimes referred to as "the letters to the seven Churches". And I think one of the ways that these apply -- there's several applications to these letters -- but one of the ways that they can apply is what's called "Church eras". In other words, basic points in time in the history of the New Testament Church, that these letters describe the general condition of the Church in that time period. And it doesn't mean that everyone in that time period fits exactly that description, but it's a good general description of what the Church would be like in that time period. Here's what Christ had to say about the end time Church. This is in Revelation 3:14.

**Rev 3:14** *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15) 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16) So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.' (NKJV)*

Or as some translations put it, "I'm about to vomit you out of My mouth". Now, that's a symbolic way of saying you're about to get ejected out of the body of Christ. In other words, out of the Church. You're on the verge of losing your salvation is what He's saying. Now pick up in verse 17.

*"17) 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—" (NKJV)*

See what He's saying is the end time Church is in a state of self-delusion. Of thinking "We're in great shape. We've got everything together. We just need to hang on and wait for the Kingdom to come." That's the self-assessment that many people would be making. But He's saying it's the opposite. That this is the problem. You're actually in a horrible condition. So, what we're going to do today is, again, kind of look at what we need to do to avoid falling into this pitfall. Because as we're going to see, human nature just by its very definition, tends to be deceptive and delusional. We tend to be dishonest with ourselves about reality, but that's particularly true if we allow ourselves to be overcome by the sin of pride. So, to start off with, let's just notice some basic human nature scriptures. Turn over to Proverbs 14:12.

**Prov 14:12** *"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." (NKJV)*

See, what it's telling us is we can be fully convinced we're going the right way. We're doing the right thing, but it's not the right thing. We're actually headed for death. So, that tells us that human nature is inherently out of touch with reality, and we don't even realize that there's a problem. And see, human beings as a general rule tend to operate off of a very simple, practical logic. And that's that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. So, see, if we think that we're doing wonderful, but we're not, we are not going to strive to do better because we think we're doing fine. And we have to realize that our own human nature is deceptive. In fact, it lies to us. The human heart is just by nature, very deceptive. And to see that turnover to Jeremiah 17 and we'll start reading in verse 9.

**Jer 17:9** *"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10) I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings." (NKJV)*

God sees us as we really are. He's not deceived about our condition, but we can deceive ourselves. And we can deceive ourselves into believing that we're in great shape when that's not His evaluation of us. So, that's something we need to be aware of and be always watching to make sure that we don't fall into that self-deception. Because if we don't think it's broke, we're not going to fix it. If we don't perceive that there is a problem, we're not going to take action to try to resolve the problem. While human nature itself -- as we've just seen -- is inherently deceptive and tends to lie to us, this is particularly true if we allow our human pride to overcome us. If we allow our pride to

really get ahold of us and to lie to us, we can become absolutely delusional, and it can be our downfall and our destruction. To see this turn over to Proverbs 11:2.

**Prov 11:2** *“When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.”* (NKJV)

So, we're going to see here in several scriptures. It's going to always contrast being proud with being humble, because being humble, being small in our own eyes, not thinking we're all that great. That's the polar opposite of pride and arrogance. But that's a natural human tendency to want to have a bigger opinion of ourselves than is really reality. But notice here it says that “when pride comes, then comes shame”. The reason being is that it makes us delusional and then we make stupid decisions. We do stupid things that wind up bringing shame upon our lives. In fact, it can be our absolute downfall and cause our destruction. And to see that, turn over to Proverbs 16 and we'll start in verse 18.

**Prov 16:18** *“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. 19) Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.”* (NKJV)

Again, we see this contrast of humility as being the opposite of pride. But notice how it says, pride can be our absolute destruction. It can absolutely ruin us, and the reason being is because, again, pride is the major cause of self-deception or self-delusion, where we're just not in touch with reality. We don't see the real world around us, and we can't make good decisions. And to see that, turn over to Galatians 6 and we'll start reading in verse 1.

**Gal 6:1** *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2) Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3) For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”* (NKJV)

Notice, if we allow pride and arrogance to get ahold of us, we become delusional. We lie to ourselves, and then we can't see ourselves accurately. We can't perceive what's going on around us accurately. And verse 4.

*“4) But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5) For each one shall bear his own load.”* (NKJV)

See, again, it's giving us that instruction of examining ourselves because we're going to see pride can be a major obstacle to that. Because if we allow ourselves to get a puffed up opinion of ourselves, we become absolutely delusional. And to understand just how powerful this is and what level of delusion that this can cause in our lives. What we're going to do is look at the example of the individual that the Bible describes as “the king

of all the proud". In other words, the poster child for having a pride problem. As you've probably already guessed that's Satan the devil himself.

Turn over to Job 41 and we'll see here a chapter that's referring to Satan symbolically as Leviathan. Now he's oftentimes described in the Bible -- again, it's a symbolic description referring to him as "Leviathan". Leviathan is referred to as a sea monster. Now, obviously this is a symbolic reference describing Satan. He's not literally a reptile that lives in the sea. This is more of a symbolic reference. Because you oftentimes see in the Bible that his domain is described as the "sea". Because you see like the beast powers that he is the power behind, they're rising up out of the "sea". Again, it's a symbolic picture of Satan's domain. He's pictured as Leviathan, this sea monster, but again, it's a symbolic description of him. Now we're going to look at the earlier part of chapter 41 here a little bit later in this sermon. But at this point, just skip down to the end of the chapter in verse 33.

**Job 41:33** *"On earth there is nothing like him, Which is made without fear. 34) He beholds every high thing; He is king over all the children of pride."* (NKJV)

So, it's basically telling us here, if you want the ultimate example of what a pride problem looks like, look at the example of Satan and what happened with him because he's the king of all the proud. So, to understand not only pride, but the level of self-delusion that a pride problem can result in, turn over to Ezekiel 28. We'll see here a description of Satan's downfall because he wasn't always this evil twisted being. At one point, he was wise, he was beautiful. He was living in obedience to God and serving right at the very throne of God the Father. But then things changed when he allowed pride to get ahold of him, and then he became delusional. And then, he made just horrible decisions and really made a fool of himself. At the time he's thinking he's being very clever. He thinks he's very smart and he's outsmarting everybody and showing them how great he is. When in reality he was really making a fool of himself and ensuring his own destruction. Let's pick up the story here in Ezekiel 28:11.

**Ezek 28:11** *"Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 12) 'Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13) You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. 14) 'You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.'" (NKJV)*

And now notice, he actually served directly at the throne of God the Father. Now again, if you just look at the symbolism that was portrayed in the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. This was basically a symbolic representation of the footstool of God the Father because that was the symbolism. Like on Atonement when they would come into the Most Holy Place. It was like going before the throne of God the Father at His

footstool to atone for the sins of mankind. But if you look at the way it was designed, there were cherubim on each side that surrounded Him. Well, what this is telling us is that Satan had previously served in one of these roles. He had been right there at the throne of God the Father.

So, he was a firsthand witness to the glory of God the Father. He saw the physical creation of the universe. He has seen firsthand the magnificence of God the Father and of Christ. So, he wasn't like someone in our world today, who may be confused about is there a God? Is atheism the right route because maybe there's not a God that exists now? He was very clear that God existed. He had been there at His throne. He had personally witnessed and interacted with Him, and he had seen how powerful and magnificent He is. So, again, this helps to understand the level of delusion that occurs once he allowed pride to get ahold of him. Now just pick up in verse 15.

*"15) You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,..." (NKJV)*

So, he wasn't always this evil, twisted individual. He used to be wise and beautiful and lived in harmony with God the Father and Christ. But now notice what happened.

*"...Till iniquity was found in you. 16) "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. 17) "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;..." (NKJV)*

Now what this is getting at is this sin of pride. Now, let me share with you the Hebrew word that's translated into English here as "lifted up". The word is transliterated into English as "gabah". It's Strong's #1361. And the definition I'm going to give you is out of The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter. And as you'll see as I read through this definition, the word can be used with positive connotations and negative connotations. Now obviously in the context here, we can see there's a negative connotation to this. But let me just quote how they define the word.

*"A verb meaning to be high, exalted, arrogant. It describes anything that is literally tall or high, such as a tree or vine; the heavens, people. It is used figuratively to refer to persons or things of high or great dignity: God; God's ways; the Servant of the Lord will be high and exalted before Him; kings who are exalted by the Lord. It refers to pride or being lofty, literally exalted in heart, in either a good sense or more often in a bad sense."*

So, as you can see here, obviously in this context it's meant in a negative sense. Because what this is getting at is, as we would put it in modern day terminology, he became "full of himself". That's how we oftentimes refer to a person we see you who always seems to be boasting and proud and trying to tell everybody how great they are. We look at that person and say, "That guy's really full of himself". That's really what

Satan became. He became “full of himself” and impressed that he was just so great, and this led him into delusion. Because notice the very next sentence that’s stated here. How this corrupted his wisdom. And picking up in verse 17.

*“...You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you. 18) “You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you. 19) All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, And shall be no more forever.” ’ ’ (NKJV)*

See, what this is foretelling for us is basically prophesying his future. That he's ultimately going to be thrown in the lake of fire. Now these verses also help us clear up a common misunderstanding. Now I covered this probably a month or two ago in a sermon I gave titled “The Lake of Fire”. Because as we're going to see later in this sermon, Revelation 20:10 tells us that Satan is ultimately cast in the lake of fire. Him and the demons that have of all followed him. But due to the symbolic wording in that verse, sometimes it's assumed that he's just tormented forever like the pictures of the fires of hell and there's never an end to it. In reality though, the wages of sin is death. And as we can see here as verse 19 told us, “you shall be no more forever”. In other words, he's destroyed because the lake of fire is the “second death”, and that's really a more correct way to understand that.

If you have questions about the translation there in Revelation 20:10, I would refer you to the sermon I gave titled “The Lake of Fire” where I covered that in more detail. But what you can see here is, Satan went from being an archangel who's serving right at the throne of God the Father. Who's perfect in beauty and wisdom, and life is great, and he winds up basically just ensuring his own destruction. Because what we're going to see here is the attitude that he had. He became very -- as we would put today in our modern terminology -- very “full of himself”.

So, just turn over to Isaiah 14. We'll see here another chapter that kind of gives us more details of Satan's thought process and how his downfall with pride ruined him. Because what we're going to see here is the ultimate example of behavior you have probably witnessed in your life at some point. And what I mean by that is, you've probably known someone at some point in your lifetime, whether it's just your friends or someone you knew at work or someone you've encountered in your life, who we would describe again in our modern day terminology as being really “full of himself”. Someone who really had a pride problem and had an inflated view of themselves.

And oftentimes what tends to happen is they have a delusional view of themselves. They see themselves as just the smartest, greatest, most talented person around. And as a result of that, they tend to see themselves as everywhere they go they should be in charge. And they should be telling everybody what to do because they're the expert on everything. Everyone would benefit from them being in charge and telling them what to

do. And they tend to make themselves obnoxious interacting with others because they're always trying to insert themselves to be in charge of things that nobody asked them to be in charge of. And they're trying to push their will on other people. But what's interesting is you'll oftentimes see that they can't figure out why they rub people the wrong way, and why they stir up strife everywhere they go, and people tend not to like them when they behave like this.

In fact, if I just think of a personal example I experienced in my life. I knew a person who unfortunately was actually a Church of God member. Someone who attended the Church of God for many years and was baptized. This person used to love to brag about themselves. And in fact, this was a direct quote I heard many times from this individual. He would say, "People see me as an alpha male. Everywhere I go, they want me in charge." And the first time I heard him say this, I'm thinking surely he means it as a sarcastic joke -- just being lighthearted and trying to be funny. He doesn't seriously believe that. But then I realized over time, no he seriously views himself like that. He literally believes that to be true. Because there were times where I would just try to nicely challenge that to get him to see that that doesn't really win friends and create positive relationships with people, and it's not really the kind of thing that serious Christians go around saying.

But what I found is when I would challenge that, he would double and triple down bragging. In his mind I just didn't understand just how great he was. He was just the greatest "alpha" in the history of "alphas". And everybody wants him in charge everywhere he goes. Typical of individuals that kind of have that attitude, you could look at his personal life and how he affected people around him, and it was a cautionary tale of just one disaster after another. Alienating relationships and going from one Church group to another being formerly asked to leave each time he's in another group and not being able to connect the dots to consider the idea that maybe the problem is me. Maybe this approach isn't working so well, and people are having a negative experience with this and it's not convincing anybody. Because you could tell in this person's mind, he was convinced that the more he doubled down and bragged well, if he did that well enough you were just going to understand just how wonderful he was. And you'd be hanging on his every word and want to put him in charge of everything you do. He just couldn't see reality. This is the self-delusion that pride causes. And this is exactly how Satan behaved because Satan decided that he needed to be in charge. He needed to be in charge of the universe. And he literally attempted to make that happen. So, start here in Isaiah 14:12.

**Is 14:12** *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13) For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' 15) Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit."* (NKJV)

See, he decided somewhere along the way that he was so fantastic and so wonderful He needed to kick God the Father off His throne and take charge and show Him how it should be done. And he really thought he was being clever. He really thought that if he just had an opportunity to shine, well, he would just convince all the spirit world that he's really the one more qualified to be in charge. And they would all just exalt him and put him on the throne, and everybody'd be happy following him.

And this was utterly delusional because if you put the whole picture together. This was an individual who had worked again directly at the throne of God the Father. He'd had been one of the covering cherubs right next to God the Father's throne. He had witnessed the majesty of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, the physical creation being done. And what he apparently didn't realize or somehow deluded himself out of understanding is that God the Father was multiple steps ahead of him the entire time. And what I mean by that is, from the time He created the angelic world and gave them free moral agency, gave them the opportunity to choose. They could choose to be obedient and choose life and live forever in a harmonious relationship with Him, or they could rebel and go their own way, and be destroyed.

See, from the moment He created them, He knew all He had to do was sit back and wait and there was going to be a group who was going to rebel. They're going to go their own way. Now, he had to let time prove out which ones were going to choose their own way and rebel, but He was smart enough to realize that that's how free moral agency works. So He already had a plan in place of how He was going to utilize those who rebelled, and then dispose of them when His plan was fulfilled.

Now if you're like myself, and you've been in the Church of God for many years -- I grew up in the Church of God since birth. So, I have been involved almost 60 years now. But one of the things I was taught as a child is -- and it was a well-intentioned notion, and I'm not condemning anyone for that. But I just need to illustrate the logic. The logic that was taught to me when I was a child was that Satan's rebellion and the rebellion of one third of the angels that this apparently just totally caught God the Father by surprise. It's like He didn't see this one coming. And after they rebelled, He basically had to sit back and regroup and do a "plan B". Like He didn't understand how free moral agency worked.

Now again, I'm not trying to condemn anybody or bash anybody in the past. I think that was the best understanding at the time. But when you logically think it through, it's a ridiculous notion. Because if you think about the picture that this paints, the way I like to put it is it paints the picture that God is Gomer Pyle. Now, some of you may not recognize that particular reference. Back in the mid to late 1960s, there was a popular television program. It was on TV in the United States. I was too young at the time to watch it when it originally aired, but I saw it later in syndicated re-runs as a kid growing up. The title of the show was "Gomer Pyle". And the main character in the show, kind of what it was all based around, was this guy who had grown up in a small southern town where everybody knew everybody, and everybody was friendly to one another. And he's this wonderfully good hearted guy who's kind and generous and nice to everybody that

he meets. And he's just got this wonderful, pure good heart, but he's really naïve. Because in his mind, everyone else in the world, well, they're just as good natured and good hearted and kind people as he is. So, when he sees bad behavior from others, he just can't fathom the idea that there's evil people in the world. He assumes that any negative behavior just must be a misunderstanding. They must have meant well because he just can't fathom the idea that there's evil people in the world with bad motives.

Now, the reason I bring this up is because if we assume that God the Father created free moral agency. He created all these angels, and He gives them the ability to choose, but He never considers the possibility that He's going to have a group who makes a bad choice and who decides to rebel? It's really painting the picture that God is Gomer Pyle. That He created free moral agency. He just wasn't smart enough to understand how it worked. Again, I think it was a good intention notion when we kind of came up with that idea decades ago, and that was taught. But again, if we just logically think it through it's obviously ridiculous.

What we need to understand is this illustrates just how delusional and out of touch with reality Satan became. God the Father was way ahead of this from the very beginning. From the moment He created angels and gave them the opportunity to choose. He knew how free moral agency works. He knew that there was going to be a group that was going to get self-willed and was going to decide to rebel and do their own thing. And He already had a plan for how He was going to deal with this. So, it was silly for these angels to rebel and think that, somehow, they were going to accomplish something, and they were going to come out winning.

Turn back over to Job 41. This time we'll look at the beginning part of the chapter. What we'll see here is an exchange between God the Father and Job. And of course, He's really just illustrating to Job how powerful He is and how limited, weak, and frail that Job is. And He is trying to give him an understanding of that. But in the process, we're going to see here, there's several verses here where He basically presents a number of rhetorical questions to Job. And it's in regards to Leviathan, which is, again, a symbolic representation of Satan the devil. But we'll see here how He basically plays Satan like a fiddle. He has full control of Satan. Because what He's trying to get across to Job is, from Job's perspective, Satan is this very powerful being that Job would be better off not to mess with.

What He's basically expressing to Job is, you don't want to mess with him. He'll make mincemeat out of you, but I play him like a fiddle. He's like my dog on a leash, and I have full control of him. But because, see, this was true from the very beginning. The reason I'm pointing this out is again, it illustrates the level of self-delusion that pride can result in. But just pick up here in Job 41:1.

**Job 41:1** *"Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, Or snare his tongue with a line which you lower? 2) Can you put a reed through his nose, Or pierce his jaw with a hook? 3) Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to*

*you? 4) Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him as a servant forever?" (NKJV)*

So again, these are rhetorical questions, but what He's illustrating here is, He's taking Satan as a servant. Satan thinks he's a big shot and like he's going to win somehow, but what God the Father is saying is, "I got him like a dog on a leash. I'm in full control of him. He thinks he's smart, but He's not clever at all."

*"5) Will you play with him as with a bird, Or will you leash him for your maidens? 6) Will your companions make a banquet of him? Will they apportion him among the merchants? 7) Can you fill his skin with harpoons, Or his head with fishing spears? 8) Lay your hand on him; Remember the battle— Never do it again! 9) Indeed, any hope of overcoming him is false; Shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of him? 10) No one is so fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who then is able to stand against Me? 11) Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine." (NKJV)*

See, He's basically expressing to Job, you don't want to mess with Leviathan, with Satan. From your perspective, he's a powerful being you don't even want to think about messing with. But I got him like a dog on a leash. I'm in full control of him. I play him like a fiddle. What this shows us is, again, the power of the self-delusion that pride can result in. Because see, what He's expressing here is Satan is way more powerful than any human being. Human beings wouldn't want to mess with him, but again, in comparison to God the Father he's nothing. He's just a dog on a leash. If the self-delusion of pride can take someone, a being as powerful as Satan was, and take him from being a wonderfully wise, beautiful individual and turn him into an absolute disaster, imagine what it can do to us. Because see, he's a cautionary tale of what this can result in. And so, that's why I look at the example of the king of pride. If we look at what pride did to him and then realize how inferior we are in comparison to him, it's a cautionary tale of what pride can do to us.

What we want to look at now is how this ended. Just turn over to Revelation 20. As I mentioned before, some of the wording in this verse is oftentimes misunderstood. But again, just to realize the delusion that pride caused in Satan. Now, obviously, when he rebelled and convinced a third of the angels to follow him, he thinks he's being clever. He thinks he's going to pull off a coup and he's somehow going to get himself in charge of the universe. And all he did was ensure his own destruction. Just like we read earlier in Proverbs, pride tends to result in shame -- in making a fool of yourself and doing very dumb things. While you think you're being very clever, you're being really dumb and foolish. And it also basically causes destruction. That's exactly what happened to him, because we're going to see what his future is here in Revelation 20:10.

**Rev 20:10** *"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (NKJV)*

Again, as I mentioned previously, about a month or two ago, I did a sermon titled “The Lake of Fire”, and it goes into a lot more detail to understand that last statement there. This is not the fires of hell where Satan is just tormented for all eternity and there's no end to it. As we read previously in Ezekiel 28, he will “be no more forever”. In other words, when he's cast into the lake of fire – the lake of fire is the second death -- he'll be destroyed. That's what his future is.

But what we can see in all of this is again, he had a really good start. Things started out very well. Then pride got ahold of him and that caused his destruction. That basically ruined his life, and it ultimately resulted in him being sentenced to death and winding up in the lake of fire. He could have served for all eternity at the throne of God the Father and had a very pleasant and positive future. Instead, he gets to look forward to his destruction and his death.

But now to see what we can learn from all of this. Let's turn back over to Revelation 3. Because we started off looking at the letter to Laodicea and Christ's warning to the end time Church. And we're going to pick up here in the next verse where we left off. As we're going to see here -- we read the first part of this previously and we saw that Christ was warning the end time Church that they're in a state of self-delusion. You think you're in a great spiritual condition and you got it all together and you're the apple of God's eye. In reality, you're on the verge of losing your salvation. You're about to be vomited out of His mouth is the way He puts it. But again, that's a symbolic description that they're in danger of losing their salvation. So, now pick up in verse 18. What we're going to see here is there's a formula that Christ gives basically of a roadmap for how you turn this around. But what we're going to see here as we go through this in detail is actually the first step before you can even utilize the formula that Christ gives here is having some humility and being small in our own eyes. Because if we don't have that, we can't even utilize the formula that He gives. This is Revelation 3:18.

**Rev 3:18** *“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich;...”* (NKJV)

Now notice, first of all, that He says, who are they going to buy this from? He's saying, buy it from “Me”. Now it's Christ who's talking. So, basically, He's saying we have to come to Christ to receive this gold refined in the fire. Now, I'm not going to go through all of the scriptures today that kind of show what the symbolic representations are here, because I've covered this in numerous sermons in the past. What I'm going to do today for time sake is just summarize this, but gold refined in the fire is a symbolic reference to faith. So, what Christ is saying is come to Me to receive the faith that that you need. But we're going to see here is that there's a three step process that Christ is laying out here, but He's describing it in symbolic language. But again, the first one here again, the gold refined in the fire, is faith. Now pick up in verse 18.

*“...and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed;...”* (NKJV)

And again, what that's referring to is taking action on that faith. Because we won't take the time to turn to Revelation 19, but you'll see in Revelation 19 when it's describing the Firstfruits at the Marriage Supper marrying Christ. It talks about them being "clothed in white garments". And it directly says that "the white garments are the righteous acts of the saints". So, it's telling you that white garments are a symbolic picture. That they're clothed in righteousness is what it's really getting at. So, what you can see here is, step one is faith. Step two is taking action on that faith and doing righteous acts. And then we'll see here in step three.

*"...and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." (NKJV)*

Because it's basically saying once you start following God and basically behaving in a righteous manner, you get clearer vision. You see yourself and the whole world around you much more clearly, and that really clears up your perception of yourself and the world around you. But let's notice -- continue reading here -- because there's another key here. Because remember, the first step was come to "Me" for the gold refined in the fire. And the "Me" that we're talking about is Christ. So, keep that in mind. And verse 19.

*"19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." (NKJV)*

But notice in verse 20.

*"20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." (NKJV)*

Now, obviously, the way He words this, He's expecting that a lot of this group is not going to hear Him. Because He says I'm on the outside knocking. That's a scary picture all by itself. Because this is the picture of the Church of God and Christ is on the outside knocking trying to get into people's lives. That tells you why their spiritual condition is in such sad shape because they've pushed Him out of their lives, and He's on the outside knocking, trying to get in. Well, if they're not hearing the knocking to even let Him in to buy the gold refined in the fire, the faith from Him.

So, the first step is they have to first stop relying upon themselves and to start relying upon Him. They need some humility. Because that's the problem. See, they think they're "rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing". "We got everything. We don't need anybody else." They're depending upon themselves. They're full of pride and self-righteousness, and that's what's created this delusion of not being able to perceive their spiritual condition. So, we can see that's really the first step. They've got to have some humility first before they can even start utilizing this whole formula. But just to continue on the with the rest of the letter here. Pick him in verse 21.

*"21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' ' (NKJV)*

But now, as I pointed out here, what's happening with the Laodicean Church is they're not listening to Christ because they're trusting in themselves. They're not looking to Him for the faith and the strength that they need because they're rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing. They don't need any help from anybody else. And see that is their downfall. It's a lack of humility. So, turn over to Luke 18 and we'll see a parable here where Christ explains the heart of this particular problem.

**Luke 18:9** *"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:"* (NKJV)

Notice that the core of the problem is that you think you're in great shape all by yourself. You're trusting in yourself. And what tends to come with that? Looking down on others, despising others. An easy way to see this -- and it's a common problem in the Church of God today. You can see why Christ would say that the end time Church -- or the Church we have today -- is in this sad state of delusion. Because what do you often hear in the Church of God today? "God only works through our group. We're the apple of God's eye. All those other people, they're Laodicean, but we're the good Philadelphians."

And what do you often see with people who espouse that attitude? They're despising and looking down upon others, because they're not good enough. They're not as righteous as we are. See, that's a red flag that a person is depending upon themselves that they're righteous. They're not looking to Christ and to God the Father to have mercy upon them and to enable them with the strength to overcome because they think they're they got it all together. They're rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. And notice here the example He gives of the Pharisee. This is exactly how he acts. And pick up in verse 10.

*"10) 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12) I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'"* (NKJV)

Notice he's beating his chest and saying, "I'm rich and increased with good and need of nothing. I've got it all together and I thank you that I am so righteous." He doesn't see a need for a savior. See, why would he be listening for Christ to knock at the door to let Christ in, to be his savior and to save him from himself? He doesn't perceive that he needs that. See that's the self-deception that comes with pride and arrogance. But now let's notice the humble reaction, which is, again, the polar opposite to pride. Pick up in verse 13.

*"13) And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* (NKJV)

So, you can see here, we have to first perceive our own need for a savior. To have a realistic view of how sinful we are -- of how frail that we are. And not having a puffed up view of ourselves. Because that's step number one. Because if we have a realization that we need a savior to save us from ourselves -- that we can't depend upon ourselves -- then we're looking for that help. Then we want to invite Christ into our lives. And that's the source of the gold refined in the fire. To start that whole process -- to get the faith -- we have to invite Christ in. To do that, we have to be acknowledging that we need a savior in the first place. That we need someone to save us from ourselves. Because see, it's an absolute curse upon us if we're trusting in ourselves. And to see that turn back over to Jeremiah 17 and this time we'll start in verse 5.

**Jer 17:5** *"Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD." (NKJV)*

Now notice, if we're depending upon ourselves what automatically happens? We start departing from God because now we're trusting in our own righteousness and that never ends well. In verse 6.

*"6) For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited." (NKJV)*

Now notice it didn't say that good is never going to come to this guy. That he'll just be cursed and good will never come his way. No, it didn't say that. It says, he won't see when good comes. He's in a state of delusion. Not only does he not accurately perceive his own condition and where he's at, he doesn't make good decisions regarding what's around him. He can't read what's going on around him and make good decisions. But now pick up in verse 7.

*"7) "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.  
8) For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit." (NKJV)*

Notice also the guy who trusts in God who trusts in God the Father, in Christ, and lets Them into their lives. It's not saying that this guy is never going to face adversity. That things are never going to go bad for him. No, bad things are going to happen. He's going to be tried by fire, but things will work out well for him. He'll get delivered through it. But again, one of the keys to that is we have to humble ourselves and be willing to get rid of our pride and to fight that so that we can be depending upon Them.

So, notice one other scripture on this. Turn over to Proverbs 28. We're going to see what this is going to tell us is that the guy who trusts in himself -- in their own strength -- is just an absolute fool. It's Proverbs 28:25.

**Prov 28:25** *“He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.”* (NKJV)

Notice, a proud heart, what does that do? It tends to stir up trouble everywhere you go. Things do not work out well. But as I mentioned before, oftentimes you'll see someone who's consumed with pride will have a life full of that. Everywhere they go, trouble seems to follow them. They cause problems everywhere that they show up. But if you talk to that individual and try to point that out -- you're the common denominator in all this disaster. They won't see it like that. No, they just had bad luck. It's everybody else. They're just the victim. They've just been mistreated by everybody else. Couldn't be them. Because they're in a state of self-delusion. But just pick up in verse 26.

*“26) He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.”* (NKJV)

See, the dumbest thing we can do is to be depending upon ourselves. To have an inflated view of ourselves. Because the reason that causes shame and destruction is we get delusional, and then we can't read what's going on around us. We can't make good decisions. We don't have wisdom. And then we get very foolish, and the dumb decisions that we make as a result of that lead to our shame and our destruction.

Well, what is the key to turning this around? The key is we need to be actively seeking to be humble. Now I'm not saying that you ask God to just slap you down to humble you. That can be very painful. Ask God to help you to be humble and be clear that you're not asking to be beaten up. Because that could happen. But we need to be seeking humility willfully so that we don't force God to have to do it the painful way. Turn over to 1 Peter 5:6.

**1 Peter 5:6** *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7) casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9) Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10) But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11) To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* (NKJV)

Notice, he particularly tells us to humble ourselves and immediately follows up with a warning to be aware of Satan's devices that he uses because he's out there after you. Because Satan knows from personal experience that pride is probably one of the best ways he can get to you. He's a lion that's seeking to destroy you. But one of the chief means he's going to use to do that is to try to play upon your pride. To try to get you full of yourself and depending upon your own strength and not looking to God. And see, we also have a warning of this in the Book of James. James 4:7.

**James 4:7** *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9) Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (NKJV)*

Notice once again, he's telling us how to resist Satan, and one of the big things that it mentions is being humble. Humble yourselves and avoid pride and arrogance because again, that is a massive downfall for us, and it will easily trip us up. It's what tripped up Satan himself. So, he knows that is one of the biggest tools to use against us. Because then we will become our own worst enemy. Then once we become full of ourselves, then we push away God because we don't need Him. We're strong enough to do it on our own. We're depending on ourselves. Then we become just downright delusional.

And see, it's important that we take proactive action to try to humble ourselves and we don't force God to have to do it the painful way. Because see, we can learn a lesson from Nebuchadnezzar on this one. Turn over to Daniel 4. Now see, in Daniel 4 here, we're just going to cover the latter part of the story here. But God had tried multiple times to get Nebuchadnezzar's attention. Initially he has a dream, and it really troubles him, and he reaches out to get others to try to interpret it for him. And Daniel's the one that comes to him and is able to tell him what he dreamed and then to interpret it for him. And Daniel directly tells him that it's the God of Israel that has given him the ability to do this this. Well, this gets Nebuchadnezzar's attention for a little while.

Then later, he gets full of himself and tries to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a fiery furnace simply for not bowing down to an image and appeasing Nebuchadnezzar's ego. Once again, this powerfully gets Nebuchadnezzar's attention, but he still doesn't get rid of his pride. Then he's specifically warned that if he doesn't repent of his pride, he's going to get turned into a beast and he's going to lose his kingdom. He's going to have all his power taken away from him. He still doesn't listen. He still is just so full of himself that he thinks he's invincible. And then he has to be humbled the hard way. He's humbled the painful way. Let's notice here in Daniel 4:28.

**Dan 4:28** *“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29) At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30) The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (NKJV)*

See, he's going around beating his chest. “Look at me. Look how great I am. Look what a big alpha male I am. I have created all of this on my own.” This did not work out well. Now he gets humbled the hard way. Verse 31.

*“31) While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32) And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass*

*over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” 33) That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.” (NKJV)*

So, he got everything taken away from him. Now he finds some humility. But notice how after that this is over, how much clearer his thinking is. And his perception of himself, his perception of the world around him and his relationship with God -- where God is at and where he is at. He's got a much clearer review of things now. This is in verse 34.

*“34) And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35) All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?” 36) At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. 37) Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.” (NKJV)*

See, now he's not beating his chest and bragging about what a big alpha male he is. Now he realizes he's not really that significant, and he better be a little more humble because he doesn't want to go through this painful experience again.

Brethren, as I mentioned from the beginning of this sermon, Christ warns us that the end time Church -- at the time that applies to our lives right now -- the Church of God would be in a state of self-delusion. And as we know, if we look around and are honest with the condition of the Church around us, we can clearly see that. But we also need to be honest about ourselves. And to take a look at ourselves and see if we are getting caught into that. Are we getting full of ourselves and thinking too much of ourselves and depending upon our own strength?

Because as Passover approaches here over the next month, we all need to be taking an honest look at ourselves. Kind of doing a spiritual inventory to see how well we're doing in our walk with God. And to make an honest assessment of ourselves, we have to have a clear head. And to do that, the first step we have to do is to humble ourselves, and to make sure that we're not full of ourselves and we're not diluted with the self-deception and self-delusion that comes from pride.

So, brethren, as we begin our preparation for Passover, let's start by seeking humility and, again, asking God to do it in mercy not as He did it to Nebuchadnezzar. I don't think any of us want to go through that experience. But asking Him in mercy to help us

to have humility so we can be small in our own eyes, and we can have a clear picture to do a self-assessment.