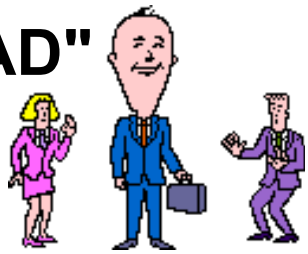
"Deflating a BIG HEAD"

(I Corinthians 4:6-21)
3-26-2023



Introduction:

*** How can you avoid having an inflated *"Puffed Up"* head?**
(How can you be free from foolish pride?)

I. **D*on't let your head be swelled by***
<u>WHO</u> YOU <u>KNOW</u> (v.6)
(The pride of associating yourself with famous people)

II. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
<u>WHAT</u> YOU <u>ARE & HAVE</u> (v.7)
(The pride of gloating over personal achievement)

III. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
HOW <u>SMOOTH</u> YOUR <u>LIFE</u> IS (v.8-12)
(The pride of wealth, power & prosperity)

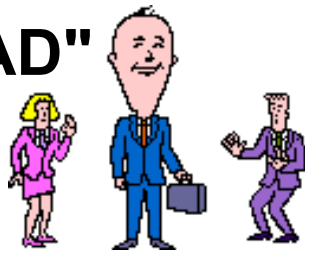
IV. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
<u>FORGETTING WHO GOD USED</u> TO NURTURE YOUR FAITH (v.13-17)
(The pride of spiritual independence)

V. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
<u>WHAT</u> YOU <u>KNOW</u> AND CAN <u>SPEAK</u> (v.18-21)
(The pride of pseudo-intellectualism and eloquent verbosity)

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Introduction:

The key recurring phrase in vv. 6 - 21 is ***"puffed up"*** (v. 6, 18, 19).

Use BALLOON ILLUSTRATION

"Puffed up" - *phusioo* = to inflate, blow up (to have an inflated, exaggerated, untrue view of one's self).

In the first four chapters Paul has been confronting the Corinthians about how wrong it was for them to exalt human wisdom and human leaders (they prided themselves in both).

*** How can you avoid having an inflated *"Puffed Up"* head?**
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I. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
<u>WHO</u> YOU <u>KNOW</u> (v.6)
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***"These things"* =** The examples Paul used (chapters 1 - 4) to show how absurd and foolish it was for the Corinthians to be loyalists to mere men.

1) They were <u>divisive</u> in a cultic way over personalities (1:11-13)

2) They were impressed by a man's <u>verbal impressiveness</u> and <u>human reasoning</u> (2:1).

3) They became blinded to the true <u>source</u> of <u>spirituality</u> and <u>Christian maturity</u> (3:6-7)

4) They were <u>glorying</u> in a <u>particular servant</u> of God when they could have benefitted from many that God sent their way to minister (3:21-22)

5) They failed to see that God's men were humble <u>slaves</u> and <u>managers</u> for Jesus Christ (4:1)

"In a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos" - Paul used himself and Apollos repeatedly throughout the context (ch. 1-4) as examples of men they were following, although in actuality they also had other personalities that they became cultic followers of.

"Not to think of men above that which is written" - God's Word teaches us to give respect or honor to others (Ro. 12:10, 13:7); to love and serve others (Gal. 5:13); but never to idolize a person, never to deify a person, never to bow and worship a person, never to stoop to viewing a mortal as a guru.

(The Catholic church's official position on the Virgin Mary and the Saints is a prime example of people thinking more about mere mortals than God's Word allows.)

(Now the "Faith Teachers" [EX: Hagen, Fred Price, & Copeland] are in a sense deifying man, claiming themselves to be "gods.")

"No one of you be puffed up for one against another" -

> --Why is it that a child will say, "My Daddy is bigger (smarter, better) than your Daddy?"
>
> --Why is it that people have a tendency to be loyal fans to one particular sports team?
>
> --Why is it that countries have nationalistic pride and view their own cultures and customs as superior to others?
>
> --Why do many practically worship a particular rock group, famous celebrity, or sports hero?

Answer: PRIDE.

By our identifying with them, we share in the glory they receive.

Where do you get your identity? (hopefully in Christ)

Vain people often seek to "borrow" glory by associating themselves with "great men."

Factions, sects, and cults are always the result of people glorying in a man. Satan knows this, and he wants to see division in Christ's Church, so he appeals to man's pride by suggesting that they become exclusively loyal to one teacher of truth.

II. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
WHAT YOU ARE & HAVE (v.7)
(The pride of gloating over personal achievement)

"Who maketh thee to differ from another?" - Paul is asking "Who is dividing over you?" "Is anyone regarding you as superior?" If no one is idolizing you, why are you idolizing others?

If you realize your finite mortality, and then you see that all men are created equal, you will see that no creature should be idolized.

To prick their conscience, Paul asks the Corinthians the three questions in verse 7.

"What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" - Answer: Nothing

"Almost everything we are, physically, mentally, spiritually, was thrust upon us, wholly without our choice, before we had any voice in the matter whatsoever. Physically, you are what you are, not by choice, but by birth. You came into this world without being consulted about your birth or anything about the condition in which you find yourself today. You were born with a body, in the choice of which you had no part. No one asked you whether you wanted to be black or white or yellow or red. No one asked you whom you wanted for your parents. You did not choose the country, the home, the environment in which you were to be born. No one asked you your choice of physique, whether tall or short, lean or fat. No one asked you what color of eyes or hair you wanted. In fact, your entire physical being was thrust upon you without your own knowledge or your own consent, or without any consultation with you. And while proper care of that body may determine health or sickness, strength or weakness, the basic characteristics of your physical being were all genetically determined at the moment of your conception. They are a matter of simple genetics, not of choice." (DeHaan, p. 54).

"Were you consulted as to your choice of a place of birth? Were you born of Christian parents who perhaps early taught you the Word of god, and how to pray, and pointed you to the Lord Jesus christ? You did not choose those parents. As far as your say in the matter is concerned, you might have been born in a save, cannibalistic hut in the jungle. Did you choose to be born in a community where the Gospel was preached? We all know better than this, and so when we heard the Gospel and believed it, it was but the culmination of a long train of circumstances beyond our control, which were thrust upon us even before we were born, and over which we had absolutely nothing to say." (DeHaan, p. 56).

Everything good we have is by God's grace and from His hand (Ja. 1:17).

--Our health ("*The Lord is the strength of my life"* - Ps. 27:1)

--Our wealth (*"It is He that giveth thee the power to get wealth"* - Dt. 8:18)

--Our salvation (*"Salvation is of the Lord"* - Jonah 2:9)

--Our success (is the result of obedience - Joshua 1:8)

--Our spiritual understanding (Col. 1:19)

--Everything we need (Ps. 23; Phil. 4:19)

John the Baptist said: *"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. . . He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease"* (Jn. 3:27, 30).

A young man once said, "Please pray that I will stay humble." To which his friend replied, "Tell me, what do you have to be proud about?" (Wiersbe, p. 583).

"Glory" - to brag or boast. Pride always shows itself by bragging.

When someone is "full of themselves" out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Lk. 6:45).

"...As if thou hadst not received it?" - If you have been given that which you have, why do you brag as if you independently manufactured all the blessings of your life by yourself.

All that I have and all that I am is by His grace (*"By the grace of God I am what I am"* - I Cor. 15:10).

By grace, God revealed His Word to me and instilled faith in my heart via His Word (Ro. 10:17); to the degree that I have been obedient to His Word I have been blessed. But even my obedience has been by His inspiring and energizing grace.

Someone has said, "Everything we have outside of hell is the grace of God" (cited by DeHaan, p. 56).

Dr. James M. Gray said it best in this hymn:

Naught have I gotten, but what I received
Grace hath bestowed it, since I have believed.
Boasting excluded, Pride I abase;
I'm only a sinner, saved by grace!

III. ***Don't let your head be swelled by***
HOW <u>SMOOTH</u> YOUR <u>LIFE</u> IS (v.8-12)
(The pride of wealth, power & prosperity)

In verses 8-12, Paul contrasts his humility with the Corinthians' conceit.

V. 8

"Full. . . rich" - The Corinthians gloated over how wealthy they were.

They took pride in their financial prosperity and viewed it as an indication of God's favor on them.

Is financial prosperity a barometer of one's spirituality? Absolutely not!

Like the Church of Laodicea, they bragged that they were *"rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"* (Rev. 3:17).

"Ye have reigned as kings" - They gloated over the power they felt they had.

The Corinthians thought that they had arrived!

"I would to God ye did reign" - i.e. in the Millennium with Christ (Rev. 20).

V. 9

If God did <u>not</u> exalt the "great Apostles," but allowed humbling experiences to be their daily lot in life, how could the Corinthians (who didn't endure such humiliation) think so much of themselves when they did not have such a grant office?

Am I too good to suffer for Christ? No.

"A spectacle unto the world" - "The imagery used here is of doomed people brought into the arena condemned to die as criminals (MacArthur, p. 110).

(To be slaughtered by the lions as entertainment for those in the grandstands)

v. 10

Paul contrasts himself with the Corinthians:

--Intellectually - ***"Fools. . . wise"***
--Physically - ***"Weak. . . strong"***
--Socially - ***"Honorable. . . despised"***

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose" (martyred missionary Jim Elliot)

V. 11

Paul often endured inadequate food (***"hunger"***), water (***"thirsty"***), clothing (***"naked"***), protection (***"buffeted"***), housing (***"no certain dwelling place"***).

Should we in pride ever look down on someone who lacks in any of these areas?

V. 12-13

Paul didn't merely endure hardship, he endured it in a Christ-like manner.

--He worked for his bread;

--He blessed his revilers (those who cursed him);

--He patiently endured persecution (those who gave him trouble);

--He softly and kindly responded to those who defamed his character

V. 13

"Filth" - refuse; scum

"Offscouring" - the hardened leftovers or crusty dregs that one would scrape off of a dish or pan into the garbage can.

(Use a crusty plate illustration)

Are you humble enough to be made fun of, viewed as foolish, outdated, ridiculed, spit upon, imprisoned, beaten, mocked, and treated like criminals for what you believe?

Pride will cause man to shun identification with Christ.

The test of your faith is what you do when your faith is tested. You need the faith to see that you are not scum in God's eyes to support you when you are viewed as scum by the world.

IV. *Don't let your head be swelled by* <u>FORGETTING WHO GOD USED</u> TO NURTURE YOUR FAITH (v.13-17)

(The pride of spiritual independence)

Many in pride fail to see how they need the fellowship of other believers.

--We do <u>need</u> each other
(Heb. 10:24-25 - *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.")*

--We do <u>benefit</u> from each other
(Prov. 27:17 - *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.")*

--Your <u>life</u> is being <u>observed</u> (and it is either an encouragement or a stumbling block)

V. 14

As a father would admonish a son, so Paul speaks, not so as to embarrass the Corinthians, but to correct their arrogance.

V. 15

Though they had many teachers ("child trainers" - tutors) who had picked up where Paul left off (built on the foundation he laid - 3:10), Paul was the one who had introduced them to Christ.

Paul was the human element that God used to lead those people to Christ. In that sense, he was their spiritual father. Evidently, Timothy was also the product of Paul's evangelistic efforts (v. 17) (*"Timotheus, who is my beloved son"* - cp. I Tim. 1:2).

V. 16

In light of the fact that Paul was the one who initiated them to Christianity, this gave a basis for them to continue to follow his humble example.

"Followers" **=** imitator or mimic (not of his personality, but of his example in spiritual things, his example of humble servitude).

V. 17
We have a tendency to forget how we came to the spiritual standing we have in Christ at the present. Now we stand "high and mighty," forgetting the people God used to nurture and instill Biblical principles into our lives. We see how far we have matured and think we did it independently. Paul was sending Timothy back to Corinth to remind them of his (Paul's) life and testimony.

V. *Don't let your head be swelled by*

WHAT YOU KNOW AND CAN SPEAK (v.18-21)
(The pride of pseudo-intellectualism and eloquent verbosity)

V. 18

Some cultic leaders at Corinth said in effect: "Paul will not come to us! His bark is worse than his bite!" (II Cor. 10:8-11) (Wiersbe, p. 585).

V. 19

"If the Lord will" - What we do, where we go, etc., is determined on whether God will allow it or not.

(Beware of presumptuous arrogance when it comes to planning your life - cp. Ja. 4:13ff).

"Not the speech . . . but the power" - Paul was not impressed by the words of men (gifted speaking ability, "verbal advantage"), but by the power of God in their lives and on their ministry (many preachers, teachers, and evangelists excel in their ability to articulate but have rotten fruit in their lives and ministries)

V. 20

No doubt many teachers deluded the Corinthians into thinking they were Apostles, on par with Paul (and in presumptuous arrogant pride, they boasted and bragged that they were worthy of exclusive allegiance). "Away with Paul," they no doubt said, "We are the men of god!" They could talk a good talk. This is what Paul warned the Romans of (SEE: Rom. 16:17-18).

God's Kingdom is not one that is built by man's words, but by God's power!

The proof is in the power! (transformed, humble lives is the proof that the Gospel "took" root in people).

Bishop John Ryle was convinced that one of the keys to the 18th century revival in England was the simplicity of the preaching of such men as Wesley and Whitefield. He said, 'They were not ashamed to crucify their style or sacrifice their reputation for learning. They carried out the maxim of Augustine, who said that a wooden key is not as beautiful as a gold one, but if it can open the door when the gold one cannot, it is far more useful'." (MacArthur, p. 118).

V. 21
Paul, being an Apostle, had apostolic authority unshared by anyone at Corinth. He could wield such authority to chastise (EX: Elymas struck with blindness - Acts 13:8-11).

Conclusion:

Until you humble yourself, there is no salvation for you.

As long as you feel you have something of merit, worth, or spiritual strength to get you into God's heaven, you are not even a candidate for salvation.

"When God creates a new thing, He always begins with nothing" (cited by DeHaan, p. 58).