

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*



*St. Paul's Mission in NE Washington*

## Rising pride

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As I drove to church Sunday morning I happened to be following a compact pickup with a bumper sticker on the rear window showing an image of an American flag and the caption "The Power of Pride." Of course, I have seen this depiction many times since September 11, 2001, and always found it disturbing, but Sunday morning in the aftermath of the loss of the space shuttle Columbia, I could not help but wonder if American pride in some sinister way, led to the loss of Columbia's crew.

The devil is in the details, and so with this episode. While investigators are currently pointing to the failure of the heat shield as the prime culprit, the underside of Columbia's left wing probably was seriously damaged when struck by some insulation upon deployment. The fact remains, some aspects of the incident point to negligence, or the power of pride as a significant contributor. And we all are to blame.

For many years congress has not funded NASA at appropriate levels. Nor did it occur to the engineers that looked at the potential for damage, that a catastrophic failure might occur. But they really had limited options. What might have happened, if there was some sort of contingency plan. But from the information currently available, if the insulation from the launch caused the damage to the Columbia, from that moment the crew was fatally doomed. If this was the case, perhaps God in his mercy allowed this type of horrible ending to occur, in place of something much worse.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand, the Power of Pride, indeed was the devil in the Columbia's loss.

The colloquial saying, "Pride goes before the fall." is just an older translation of Proverbs 16:18: *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

The Bible makes it clear that in spite of its many warnings against pride, both personal and

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national, pride does lead to destruction. For pride is the raising up of an idol in the place of relying upon God. Hence most pride is some sort of religious pride. And even though it is not recognized as such, religious pride is a deadly sin, to self, and in this case to others.

Just how far this nation has ventured on this harmful path can be seen in the many aspects of how the nation is now preparing for war with Iraq.

I am a firm believer in the evil of this world, and that nations are called to bring judgement against evil societies. Sometimes this is brought about by a more righteous people, as the Bible declares when ancient Israel conquered the Promised Land.

Sometimes it is brought about by more evil nations, to bring a more righteous country to repentance, before the evil nation is in turn destroyed. This again occurring with the diaspora of the Jews from the sixth century b.c. until this day.

In this coming war with Iraq, America and its allies, whomever they turn out to be, will seek a rapid victory with limited cost and no general sacrifice. If that is not an epitaph to the power of pride I do not know what one might be. Even though these prideful consequences may take years to be fulfilled.

Teddy Roosevelt made popular the saying, "Speak softly and carry a big stick." My research shows that this originally was a West African proverb, but it served Roosevelt well through out his political career as New York Governor and in his Presidency.

From Roosevelt's wisdom a century ago we have evolved into a prideful nation that talks bigger than it is willing to walk. War is not something that one pursues without accruing costs. I am reminded of the prideful military saying, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For I am the meanest (expletive deleted, your choice) in the valley."

Another saying I keep getting confused is it, "Right makes might." or is it, "Might makes right."?

Pride, of course develops out of self esteem, which we have been indoctrinated to believe is a good thing. Following the Biblical standard, self esteem leads to pride, and pride leads to destruction.

What is the true biblical model? The true good thing? Humility, leads to repentance, and repentance unto holiness.

Worldly leadership models, foster the self assertive, the aggressive, the prideful, and the inanely foolish.

Jesus lived the biblical model of leadership, self sacrifice, service, and a whole host of attributes that show love in the face of evil.

In my own condition these last few weeks, I must confess I have developed a deeper understanding of life, which I did not have before. Once I understood the end of this life, I was somewhat better able to get a glimpse of what lies before, beyond the veil of death. This really is much greater than jumping breathlessly from building to building.

From that vague eternal view, the idea of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, became even more amazing. I have known no other existence, than what we see on this earth. Until now and through my commitment to see it through until God's end for me, this shall be my lot for many more years, if God so wills.

But Jesus Christ, the hope of glory, came in love from glory to this dead planet, filled with pride and arrogance, and mostly contempt for His existence. In the finite realm, He again by the power of His love, secured my redemption and my justification.

Through my own pride, I can only write the words, but the words actually fail, along with my imagination, to report of these possibilities. I still take this way too much for granted, especially the grace of God I have known for most of my life. But this I have learned, there is no substitute for that grace. And I have become aware of my compliancy, and the complete inability of my own merit, to pay that price necessary to secure the power over my pride, that priceless redemption.

I, like all the rest of America, and the rest of the world, have been educated in the power of pride. The problem is, the power of pride needs no educational curriculum. In this world it is a given, like the rising of the sun and its setting.

The future of America should not lie in the power of pride, but the redemptive love of God through the one path led by Jesus Christ. That path is understood in the context of the Bible, but as I heard again this week, the words of Psalm 20 are a very good summary. In the uncertain times that lie ahead, may God's people and America find their only pride in these words:

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

*May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble;  
May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;  
May He send you help from the sanctuary,  
And strengthen you out of Zion;  
May He remember all your offerings,  
And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah*

*May He grant you according to your heart's desire,  
And fulfill all your purpose.  
We will rejoice in your salvation,  
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners!  
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.*

*Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;  
He will answer him from His holy heaven  
With the saving strength of His right hand.*

*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;  
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.  
They have bowed down and fallen;  
But we have risen and stand upright.*

*Save, LORD!  
May the King answer us when we call.*

## **Seeds for Prayer**

Well I just got back from the University of Washington Medical Center. After consulting with Dr. Gabriel Aldea, I am tentatively scheduled to have my ascending aorta replaced with the piece of dacron of some sort on February 25th. I have never been in the hospital since I was four when I had my tonsils removed. Other than some trips to the emergency room for injuries on a couple of occasions, that is it.

Over the past couple of weeks I have had the opportunity to look at my life, and given the situations God has given me, my life has been full. But thinking about it seriously perhaps for the first time, it is not the thought of dying that bothers me so much, but right now not understanding why so many promises I feel God has made for my life here, still remain to be fulfilled. And I can not at this time dismiss them as unimportant, so I guess at least for now I must hold fast to them to be fulfilled post my scars.

Anyway, I covet your prayers at this time.

Jerry