

# Who Are the Proud?

## 1. Malachi 3:13-16

13 "You have spoken arrogantly against me," says the Lord.

"Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?'"

14 You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty?'"

15 But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it."

16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

In this passage, the people of Israel are expressing discontent and questioning the value of serving God. They perceive that those who are arrogant and do not follow God's ways seem to prosper, while those who are faithful feel burdened and gain nothing. The passage emphasizes a dialogue between the people and God, where the people are essentially complaining about the apparent lack of reward for their faithfulness.

However, in verse 16, there is a shift. It mentions those who "feared the Lord" talking with each other, and the Lord listens and hears. A scroll of remembrance is written concerning those who fear the Lord and honor His name. This suggests that, despite the apparent challenges and disparities, God is aware of the faithful and keeps a record of those who honor Him.

The passage encourages believers to persevere in their faithfulness to God, assuring them that their commitment does not go unnoticed by the Lord, even if it may seem that the wicked are prospering. It underscores the importance of trusting in God's justice and maintaining faith even in difficult circumstances.

## 2. The Proud

The term "the proud" refers to individuals who are characterized by arrogance, self-sufficiency, and a lack of humility before God. The passage depicts these people as those who have spoken arrogantly against the Lord. Let's break down some key points related to "the proud" in this context:

**Arrogance Against God:** The proud individuals mentioned in Malachi are those who, despite their rebellion against God, seem oblivious or indifferent to their actions. They question the value of serving God and express a sense of futility in following His commandments. Their attitude reflects a form of spiritual pride and self-sufficiency.

**Discontent with God's Ways:** The proud individuals complain that serving God is of no gain to them. They observe the apparent prosperity of evildoers and question why they should adhere to God's requirements if, in their perception, there is no tangible benefit.

**Calling the Arrogant Blessed:** Interestingly, the proud individuals in the passage not only express their discontent but also go to the extent of calling the arrogant blessed. This suggests a distorted perspective on prosperity and blessings, where they attribute success to those who may not follow God's ways.

It's essential to recognize that the Bible often warns against pride and arrogance, emphasizing the importance of humility before God. Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) states, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." The proud individuals in Malachi are depicted as being in a dangerous spiritual state, questioning the worth of serving God and underestimating the significance of humility and obedience.

In contrast, the passage also highlights a different group – those who fear the Lord and honor His name. These individuals engage in dialogue with each other, and the Lord takes note of them, suggesting that there is a distinction between the proud and those who maintain a reverent and humble attitude toward God. The scroll of remembrance mentioned in verse 16 symbolizes God's awareness and acknowledgment of the faithful ones.

## 3. Consequences For The Proud

In the context of Malachi 3:13-16 and the broader teachings of the Bible, the consequences for those who are described as "the proud" or those who disregard God's teachings can include both spiritual and practical repercussions. It's important to note that the specific consequences may vary, and the Bible provides a nuanced understanding of God's justice. Here are some general consequences that can be inferred:

**Separation from God's Blessings:** The proud individuals in the passage question the value of serving God and seem to perceive little gain in following His commandments. One consequence of such an attitude might be a separation from the blessings that come from a relationship with God. In various biblical contexts, obedience to God is often linked with receiving His favor and blessings.

**Spiritual Blindness:** The proud may experience spiritual blindness, unable to see or understand the deeper truths of God. This can lead to a distorted worldview where they may perceive the prosperity of evildoers as a sign of blessing, rather than recognizing the consequences of disobedience.

**Lack of Divine Protection:** Disregarding God's teachings might result in a lack of divine protection. The Bible often emphasizes God's role as a protector of those who trust and follow Him. Choosing to walk in disobedience may mean foregoing the shelter and guidance that God provides.

**Eventual Consequences of Sin:** While Malachi 3:13-16 does not explicitly detail specific consequences, other parts of the Bible highlight that persistence in sin can lead to negative consequences. Proverbs 14:12 (NIV) states, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death." This suggests that the apparent success of the proud may be short-lived, and there can be eventual negative consequences.

**Missed Opportunities for Spiritual Growth:** The proud may miss out on opportunities for spiritual growth, transformation, and a deeper relationship with God. Disregarding God's teachings can hinder one's spiritual journey and prevent the experience of the abundant life that Jesus speaks of in John 10:10.

It's essential to approach these considerations with a balanced understanding of God's mercy, grace, and the opportunity for repentance. The Bible teaches that God is merciful and forgiving to those who turn back to Him in genuine repentance. The consequences mentioned are not solely punitive but can also serve as a call to return to a right relationship with God.

## 4. Humbling Yourself

Humbling oneself and changing an attitude of pride or disobedience involves a deliberate and sincere process of self-reflection, repentance, and a commitment to align one's life with the teachings of God. Here are some practical steps:

**Self-Examination and Awareness:** Reflect on your thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Be honest about any pride or disobedience in your life. Consider the consequences of a prideful attitude and disobedience, both spiritually and in practical terms.

**Seeking God's Guidance:** Turn to prayer and seek God's guidance. Ask for wisdom, humility, and a heart that is open to correction. Read and meditate on Scripture, particularly passages that emphasize humility, repentance, and obedience.

**Repentance:** Acknowledge and confess any pride or disobedience as sin. Repentance involves a change of mind and a turning away from sinful behaviors. Express genuine remorse for any actions that have been contrary to God's will.

**Submission to God's Will:** Surrender your will to God's will. Submit to His authority and recognize that His ways are higher and better than our own (Isaiah 55:8-9). Commit to following God's teachings and aligning your life with His principles.

**Cultivate Humility:** Practice humility by recognizing your dependence on God and acknowledging the strengths and contributions of others. Be open to correction and constructive feedback. Humility involves a willingness to learn and grow.

**Gratitude and Contentment:** Cultivate gratitude for what you have, recognizing that every good gift comes from God (James 1:17). Avoid comparing yourself to others, as this can lead to pride. Instead, focus on being content with what God has provided.

**Accountability and Community:** Share your struggles with a trusted friend, mentor, or spiritual leader. Accountability can provide support and encouragement in your journey toward humility. Participate in a community of faith where you can be surrounded by others who are also seeking to live according to God's teachings.

**Continuous Growth:** Understand that humility and spiritual growth are ongoing processes. It's a journey rather than a one-time event. Regularly assess your attitudes and actions, and be willing to make adjustments in alignment with God's Word.

Remember, transformation is a work of God's grace, and the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in guiding and empowering individuals to live in accordance with God's will. Be patient with yourself and trust in God's ability to bring about change in your heart and life.

## 5. A Prosperous Way Of Life

The concept of repentance and humility is central. The Bible, for instance, repeatedly emphasizes the possibility of forgiveness and redemption for those who humble themselves, repent, and turn towards God.

In the context of Christianity, there are numerous passages that speak to the idea of God's willingness to forgive and restore individuals who genuinely repent and humble themselves. One of the most well-known verses in this regard is from the New Testament:

James 4:10 (NIV): "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

This verse suggests a promise that when individuals humble themselves before God, there is the expectation of God's uplifting and restoration.

Similarly, the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32 is a powerful illustration of God's grace and forgiveness. In the parable, a wayward son squanders his inheritance in a distant country but, upon realizing his mistakes, he humbles himself and returns to his father. Instead of rejection, the father embraces him with love and celebration.

It's important to note that genuine humility involves not just a superficial change in behavior but a transformation of the heart. When there is true repentance and a turning away from pride and disobedience, there is a consistent theme in religious teachings that God is gracious and merciful.

In summary, the proud can indeed be rewarded with forgiveness, restoration, and a renewed relationship with God when they humble themselves, repent, and seek His mercy. This theme of redemption and forgiveness is foundational to many religious teachings.

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