The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 1 November 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Deceitfulness of Pride

Esther 5:8-14

This past week, as I was looking through an old yearbook from my primary school years, I came across a picture of one of my primary school teachers. In the picture, my teacher was standing next to the desk of a student, and was pouring some fizzy drink into the girl's cup. (Apparently, there was some kind of class party going on.) However, something in that picture really stood out: the teacher wasn't smiling. In fact, she had a very big frown, which bordered on a scowl! Meanwhile, the girl for whom she was pouring the drink had a big smile. Now, I don't know why the yearbook staff put that picture in the yearbook; but it was *not* a normal pose for her. She is a very sweet lady, who is always smiling; but for some reason, in that particular picture, she didn't look happy at all. Perhaps she was worrying about some problem outside of the workplace, or was in pain; or perhaps she was annoyed by the behaviour of her students that day. One thing is for sure, though: it appeared that she was having a really bad day, and that her mind was elsewhere. (And she couldn't hide it!) Yet, she kept on serving her students, and pouring that fizzy drink.

Like myself, you know what it's like to have a bad day, when you're deeply troubled about a personal problem; and no matter how hard you try not to look troubled, it shows. Now, most likely, the people in your life are thoughtful enough to recognise when something is bothering you; and they allow you to have that one-off "bad day." Imagine what it would be like, though, if you were *not* allowed to have a bad day. In fact, imagine what it would be like if having a bad day, and showing it on your face, could be deadly. Imagine if your very *life* were in the hands of your boss; and your boss were, shall we say, a bit "temperamental." Imagine if your boss had an extreme ego problem, combined with paranoia—to the point that if you have a sad look on your face, you might be suspected of trying to kill or usurp him (and for good reason, since people *have* occasionally tried to kill him). Imagine if you *had* to put on a good face and a pleasant demeanour, or else it could cost you your *life.* Imagine if you worked in the palace of an absolute dictator like Saddam Hussein or Kim Jong Un; and the slightest frowny face could be viewed as a sign that you're up to something, and could result in your immediate execution!

That is what it was like for Esther on the day when she petitioned King Ahasuerus to attend a banquet that she had prepared for him and his vizier, Haman. Esther was having a *very* bad day; yet, her arch-enemy, Haman, whose cup she was filling with fresh wine, was having a very *good* day. In his heart, Haman was gloating over the honour that was being shown him; and all the while, Esther's heart was flooded with troubling emotions. (And she didn't dare express *any* of them!) Haman had risen to yet another peak of

honour and glory (or so it seemed); and he was basking in his glory as a pig rolls around in the mud. Yet, it was all an illusion. Little did Haman know that his hour of glory would be very short-lived, and that he was heading toward a deadly fall. The title of this message is ***The Deceitfulness of Pride.***

Read Esther 5:8-14.

I. Haman's furious rant (5:8-13)

Imagine the emotions that must have been rushing through Esther's heart as she was hosting this banquet. For one thing, the lives of an entire nation were hanging on whatever she would do or say during that banquet. Hundreds of Jews in Shushan knew about her meeting with the king, and were counting on her. (That's pressure!) For another thing, she was dealing with grief over what might happen to her cousin Mordecai, and to all her people, should she fail. She was dealing with *personal* fear for herself, should she say the wrong thing, or speak prematurely. She was probably also struggling with her thoughts toward Haman—evil though he was. Not only did she need to keep a pleasant face whenever she looked in the direction of that snake, so as not to arouse suspicion, but as a believer in the God of Israel, she knew that she was not to *hate* her enemy—not even a despicable one like Haman. She was allowing God to use her as a vessel to stop Haman's murderous plot, and save her people; yet, she knew that she didn't have the personal right to desire revenge. She remembered how David had showed nothing but kindness to her ancestor, King Saul, when Saul was trying to hunt him down and murder him. She remembered how the prophet Isaiah had howled and cried for the nation of Moab as he prophesied of God's coming judgment on them—even though Moab was a hateful enemy that had afflicted and terrorised her people. She remembered how God Himself had said, ***"Have I any pleasure at all in the death of the wicked…and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"*** (If *God* rejoice not in the death of the wicked, what right have *we* to rejoice in it?) Esther knew that she couldn't allow herself to *hate Haman personally,* or to rejoice over his death, should it come to that. This required serious prayer and self-examination, to make sure that her heart was right with God.

Hating an enemy in your heart has *never* been an option for God's people. In **Exodus 23:5** the LORD warned the people of Israel, ***"If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him."*** In **Leviticus 19:17-18** the LORD said, ***"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."*** Now, many Jews took this verse to mean that God expected them to love only a *fellow Jew* who was an enemy, and not a Gentile; however, Jesus, in His parable of the Good Samaritan, made it clear that their "neighbour" was *anyone*

in their life—even a Gentile. (This means that you must love your enemy, even if he be a *foreign* enemy.) **Proverbs 25:21** says, ***"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."*** (Esther was doing exactly that—giving her enemy food and drink!) Jesus Himself said, ***"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."*** The dying prayer of Stephen, as he was being stoned to death for his faith in Christ was, ***"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"***; and God used that *prayer for his enemies* to prick the heart of Saul of Tarsus—the very man who was overseeing his execution. Saul ended up believing on Christ, and being transformed from a raging, hateful mass-murderer into one of the most loving men of God who ever lived; and it was all because Stephen blessed his enemy, and cursed not. Let's see what Job said about this.

Read Job 31:29-30.

Did Esther personally hate Haman for what he was attempting to do to her people? I think it would be naïve to say that she didn't *struggle* with having a hateful spirit toward him; however, I believe she was *conquering* those feelings by the power of God. The fact that she was able to be calm and pleasant in the presence of such a spiteful enemy (*two days in a row,* no less) shows that she was being controlled by the Holy Spirit; and one of the most important qualities that the Spirit imparts to believers is ***"temperance"—***self-control. Now, in contrast, Haman did *not* have self-control. Let's look again at **verses 9-13. (Read Esther 5:9-13.)**

When Mordecai once again refused to bow down to Haman and acknowledge him as a "god," he was filled with rage, like a fire-breathing dragon. What was this man's problem? Why did he have such an insane hatred toward Mordecai—and toward his entire nation? Well, as we saw in a past message, part of the reason is that Satan hates the Jewish people. The Jews are God's covenant people, through whom the Messiah came into the world; and for this reason, Satan is constantly stirring up Gentiles to have an insane, irrational hatred toward them. However, this wasn't the only reason why Haman was so irrationally angry. It went even deeper than that. There was a white-hot anger burning within Haman, that went even deeper than blind, ignorant racial hatred. What *was* the real source of his anger? In fact, what is the source of *our* anger? What causes us to get angry in the first place? Knowing the source of anger is important, because if you know the cause, you can know the solution.

So, what *is* the cause of anger? I will first say what it is *not.* What is happening *outside* you is *not* the cause of your anger: rather, what is happening *inside* you is the cause. The people in your life who have done you wrong are *not* the problem! The cause of your anger is a spiritual problem that springs naturally from your sinful heart: and it is called **pride.**

Read Proverbs 21:24.

Did you catch what Solomon said about ***"wrath"***? He called it ***"proud wrath."*** Wrath, by its very nature, is proud. Think of the very first narcissist in history. Lucifer, whom God had originally created as a holy being, became filled with pride on the day when he suddenly desired to be like God; and in his pride, he tried to do something that was absolutely insane: he got one-third of the angels of Heaven to follow him, and tried to seize God's throne. Satan lost that war, and was cast down from Heaven; but in his wounded pride, Satan "got back" at God by enticing man—the crown jewel of God's creation—to sin.

Read Isaiah 14:12-15.

Read Genesis 3:1-6.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus once recalled to His disciples how, thousands of years earlier, He had beheld Satan, ***"as lightning, fall from heaven."*** *That* had to be humiliating to Lucifer! When Lucifer failed to get his way, and failed to seize control of Heaven, his pride was seriously wounded; and his wounded pride led him to irrational anger. In his spite and anger, he lashed out at Adam and Eve, by seducing them to become wicked rebels, just like himself. In his pride, he literally ruined all creation! To this day, Lucifer actually thinks, somewhere in his proud, demented mind, that *God has done him wrong*. The same is true of us, too. Anger is nothing by wounded pride; and when you are proud, you are imitating the Devil himself. You don't even think rationally when pride is controlling you. You somehow convince yourself that the people that *you are hurting* by your selfishness are the "bad guy," and that *they* have wronged *you*. You even think that *God* has wronged you, instead of the other way around. You make yourself out to be the victim, when it is actually just the opposite. Pride lends to *anger*; and the more you are controlled by pride, the more you will act like a fire-breathing dragon. Let's see what God said about Satan, the "king of pride."

Read Job 41:1-34.

What are we reading about here? We are reading a description of an enormous, scaled, fire-breathing, semi-aquatic *dinosaur.* All those legends about dragons from ancient cultures are *not* the product of people's vivid imaginations. All over the world there are ancient records, drawings, and carvings of dinosaurs, which show that dinosaurs and men *did* live at the same

time—just as the Bible says. For example, in Cambodia, there is an ancient Buddhist monastery called "Ta Prohm" (which was built in the 1100's); and on one of the walls of this monastery there is a large, prominent carving of a stegosaurian dinosaur—complete with all the pointed plates running down its back. It's right there in plain sight, saying "*Hel*-lo!" to everyone who clamps eyes on it. Anyone who has seen a picture of a stegosaurus immediately recognises this carving as a depiction of a dinosaur. Yet, evolutionists pooh-pooh this carving, and say, "Oh, no, no, no. This is *not* a carving of a dinosaur, because we all know that dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago, before any human species even existed!" (Yeah, right!) Folks, dinosaurs were created on the sixth day of creation; they lived at the same time as man; they survived through the Flood, along with all the other animals; and after the Flood, they gradually died out, as conditions became more and more inhospitable to them.

Now, let's get back to **Job.** What was God's point in reminding Job about this enormous dinosaur called Leviathan? For one thing, God was reminding Job of His own power in creation. If Job couldn't stand before a creature like Leviathan, how could he stand before *God*? That is God's main point here. However, this isn't God's *only* point. God also speaks of Leviathan as a symbol of the Devil. Let's read **verses 33 and 34 again. (Read verses 33 and 34.)** God says that Leviathan is ***"king over all the children of pride."*** At this point, God isn't talking about the *animal* Leviathan anymore; He is speaking of Leviathan as a figurative type of Satan! In **Isaiah 27:1,** Satan is referred to as ***"leviathan the piercing serpent,"*** and as ***"the dragon…in the sea."*** In **Revelation 12** Satan is called ***"the great dragon…that old serpent…the Devil."*** Satan is, indeed, like a fire-breathing dragon. Why? Because just as the fire-breathing dragons (think "dinosaurs") destroyed whatever was in their way, so Satan, in his fury, destroys men. But notice the link between anger and pride. This same Satan, who breaths out anger like fire, is also the ***"king over all the children of pride."***

Now, we who are saved are no longer in Satan's kingdom; but we still have the old sinful nature. When we allow pride in our hearts, we are imitating the nature of our old master; and, just as a fire-breathing dragon could wreak great destruction, so *we* can wreak great destruction on those around us as we allow wounded pride to cause us to breathe out *anger*.

Pride is the root cause of all anger; but there is another close *auxiliary* to pride, which also causes anger: and that is **guilt.** When there is sin in your life (such as lust, unforgiveness, or refusal to do anything that you know God wants you to do)—yet you, in pride, refuse to acknowledge your sin and confess it—the tension of that guilt causes you to be angry toward others. For one thing, those around you who are doing *right* are irritating to you, because their obedience to God exposes your own *dis*obedience to God. In **1 John 3:12,** John points out that Cain slew Abel because his brother's works were righteous, and his own were evil. However, those who are doing *wrong* are subject to your wrath, as well. Why? Because you

are looking for a way to justify your own sin: thus, you magnify the sins of others, so that your own sin doesn't seem so bad: and you lash out at them for it. Today people call this "virtue signalling"—flaunting your "virtue" by expressing outrage against some injustice (such as "homophobia" or the Gaza war); but the Bible calls it plain old, wicked "pride."

Pride is the root of anger. Unresolved, unconfessed guilt is also a secondary cause of anger. As long as you allow these monsters in your life, you will be a perpetual slave to anger; and your anger will hurt everyone in your pathway. Now, perhaps you don't even have the power to uproot pride from your life, because you don't have *God* in your life (because you've never received God's gift of salvation). Your pride may not be as outwardly heinous and out-of-control as Haman's pride was; but it is no less abominable to God than Haman's pride was. In **Proverbs 6,** God lists seven things that are an abomination to Him; and the very first abomination that God lists is ***"a proud look."*** I am here to tell you that you will *never* make it into Heaven until you abandon your pride; humble your heart before God, and admit that you are a guilty sinner; believe that Jesus, God's Son, died for your sins and rose again; and, by simple faith, receive that gift of salvation that He is offering you. If you would like to know how you can do this, please come to me after the service today, and I will open God's Word and show you how you can become a child of God.

II. Zeresh's fatal recommendation (5:14)

(Read Esther 5:11-14.) The moment that Haman arrived home, he called his wife, his ten sons, and all his counsellors, and gave them a big, long "brag fest" about how great he was. I'm sure they were overjoyed to sit through *that* little speech! (Surely even his family and friends must have gotten tired of his bragging!) Yet, despite the good afternoon that Haman had just had at the queen's banquet, he couldn't contain his fury. In his demented mind, all his honour, wealth, and power were nothing unless Mordecai were eliminated. It infuriated him that that miserable little Jew wouldn't bow down to him. It bothered him so much, that he could hardly stand it. His inner peace was actually broken by the fact that one man wouldn't call him a "god"; and his family and friends advised Haman that the only way he could have peace of mind was to kill Mordecai immediately. (How twisted is that?)

This reminds me of the warning that King Solomon gave his son about the danger of hanging around wicked people. After urging his son to ***"take fast hold of instruction,"*** and not to let it go, he went on to warn him about hanging out with wicked friends. He said, ***"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done <u>mischief</u>*** [‘evil’]***; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence."*** Haman was a wicked man; and his family and friends were

very much like him, because they were following him in his evil path. They were a big "think tank" of evil. They were ready, at a moment's notice, to put their heads together, and come up with a murder plot. In essence they said, "You have all the clout you need, Haman. Why wait another eleven months to kill this Jew? Just come up with some trumped-up charge against him, and have him killed before you even go to the banquet tomorrow."

Well, before the evening was even over, it was done. Within hours, Haman's servants constructed a "gallows" (which, in ancient Persia, would have been a stake for impaling a person's body). It wasn't small, either. It was 50 cubits high (75 feet, or 30 metres). Haman wanted Mordecai to be made an example to everyone in Shushan. He wanted Mordecai to go down in shame and disgrace. However, little did he know that within 24 hours, *he* would be the one going down in shame and disgrace, on that very stake!

Read Proverbs 16:18 / 11:2.

Now, before we close this morning, there is something very important that I'd like to point out. Do you think it's any coincidence that Haman's family advised him to murder Mordecai *before* he went to Esther's banquet the next day? Of course it wasn't! This was no coincidence! Satan was monitoring everything that was going on; and he knew that Esther was about to expose Haman. Satan was moving Haman to murder Mordecai *immediately*, so as to cause a family emergency, and thus prevent Esther from hosting this banquet, and unveiling Haman's plot. He also wanted to strike Esther with paralyzing grief and fear, so that she would never try to petition the king to save her people again.

Christian, this is how the devil works! He is out to kill, steal, and destroy. He is *always* watching God's people, and he is *always* looking for ways either to distract us from doing God's will, or to discredit us, by enticing us to sin—or (if he can't do that), to harm us, or hinder us in some way. While Daniel was praying and fasting for 21 days, one of God's angels was trying to deliver God's message to him; but at the same time, two of Satan's most powerful demons were fighting him, to keep the message from being delivered. The message *did* get through to Daniel three weeks after Daniel began to pray; but it was only because he *kept on praying* that it reached him. The Apostle Paul told the church of Thessalonica that he had tried more than once to go to Macedonia to visit them; but, he said, ***"Satan hindered us."***

Brethren, it's time to wake up from our "normalcy bias" (the idea that there is nothing sinister going on behind the scenes—that whatever we see with our eyes is reality). We believe, of course, that Satan and his demons are real; but we don't seem to attribute much power to them. Christian, Satan would *kill* you if he could! He hates you with a white-hot passion. He

hates (and *fears*) the fact that you have the authority and power, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to do damage to his kingdom, and to snatch sinners from his snare. God is mercifully protecting you every single day, in ways you'll never know this side of eternity. However, God isn't protecting you so that you can live a comfortable life of pleasure and enjoyment for yourself. God protects your life so that you can serve *Him* with your life, and fight against Satan, and do damage to *his* kingdom. The Apostle Jude urged Christians to ***"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."*** We cannot forgive anyone's sins, or wash anyone's sins away; nor can we make anyone get saved. However, we *can* "save" people in the sense of being that human vessel that God uses to warn sinners of God's wrath, and of the judgment to come—and to tell them the wonderful Gospel message, that can save their souls. Christian, you may be the last believer that some lost people will ever meet before passing into eternity; and you don't know how much time *you* still have on this earth to reach them. Are you doing everything you can to reach them? And as you do so, are you praying fervently against the powers of darkness, that Satan's attempts to hinder you will be pushed back, and turned around for good?

Now, with that thought in mind, there is one other thing you need to realise, Christian. Not only is Satan working overtime against *you*: he is also working overtime against *the lost*. Not only would he love to kill *you*: he would also love to kill *the lost*, so that they will never get a chance to hear the Gospel. God mercifully protects lost people every day, so that they *can* hear the Gospel; yet, this doesn't happen without the cooperation of God's people. Christian, God wants to use *you* as a vessel to pray for the lost. Pray that God will put a hedge of protection around them from the devil's angels. Pray also that Satan's attempts to distract the lost from considering the Gospel will be foiled. I can personally testify that when I invite a lost person to come to church, or to a one-on-one Bible study, weird things often start to happen. Satan works overtime to keep that person from *making it* to that church service, or to that appointment. Sometimes that person is suddenly struck with sickness; or a family member is struck with sickness. Sometimes the person sustains an injury; or an employer calls him into work on Sunday, or on the day I was to meet with him. There have been many times when I've been sharing the Gospel with someone; and all of a sudden, a barrage of non-stop calls and texts began to flood into that person's phone, from family and friends. I knew that this was *not* a normal thing, because even that lost person was shocked by it. Once or twice I have even ventured to *point out* to that person that I believed that Satan was trying to prevent him from hearing the Gospel; and that person actually said, "I think you might be right."

Brethren, we are in a battle every day—just as Esther and Mordecai were. However, we don't have to be afraid. Jesus said, ***"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*** All power in heaven and earth is given to the Lord Jesus Christ; and He *gives* us that power as we

need it, so that we can serve Him. However, we *must* ask Him for that power. We must be steadfast in prayer. Humble yourself, Christian. Confess that you are powerless without the Lord, and ask Him for the power that you need to live for Him.

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask, "Are you saved?" Can you point to a time when you personally repented of your sin and trusted in Christ? If not, don't play games. The *devil* isn't playing games. You already belong to him by default, because you were born into this world as a sinner, already alienated from God; and he wants you to *stay* in his family for all eternity. He wants you for keeps. He the king of all the children of pride; and he will stop at nothing to keep you from humbling yourself before God, and receiving His gift of salvation. Don't let the enemy prevent you from coming to Christ today. Repent, and believe the Gospel! The Bible says, ***"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."***