

“Let’s Get the Front Row Seats!”—Proverbs 25:6-7

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Let’s Get the Front Row Seats!”, is Proverbs 25:6-7 → *Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, “Come up here,” than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Are you a person who likes to get the front row seats? I’ve spoken with many people who strive to get the front row seats at sporting events, shows and concerts. They want to be able to experience the event without having to sit in a “nose-bleed” section of the facility with binoculars. Some have told me they need to sit towards the front in order to see anything because they’re “vertically challenged.” Likewise, because these seats are so cherished with a more “up close and personal” experience, they are considered the best seats in the house and may also carry a hefty price tag. In contrast, just think of the benefits of going to worship. You can have the front row seats free of charge!

The warning given in our text speaks of wanting “the front row seat” for a different reason than simply to enjoy the event better. In the context of approaching a dignitary who has authority over you, the proverb instructs you about an attitude with which you approach him. *Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great* (verse 6). It is a warning against displaying an attitude of arrogance or entitlement.

It seems that human nature finds some kind of satisfaction or feeling of importance when one is part of something bigger than oneself. For example, many are in awe when in the company of a famous person. Some people may even spend thousands or millions of dollars just to possess some article that was in the famous person’s possession at one time or another. In high school many youth are willing to do most anything just to get the feeling that they are a part of the “popular” group. How many times have you encountered a person who exaggerated a truth just to try and impress you somehow? How many times has that person been you?

Human nature has a way of seeking to build oneself up in sinful pride. It may lead you to want the “front row seats” (i.e. the places next to greatness in some fashion) in order to feel more important. As difficult as it may be to ascertain, we wonder what motivates people to act this way? It certainly is something far more serious than simply wanting the

front row seats to experience the entertainment better. It's actually a reflection of sinful pride, fueled by insecurities, producing the need to build oneself up in an effort to relieve the feelings of not meeting up. Unfortunately, the feelings of inadequacy continue to linger, only to experience the truth of Proverbs 16:18 → *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*. Acting out of arrogance and sinful pride in an effort to lift **yourself** up in some way destroys relationships on many levels and leads to being humiliated in the end.

Thus, the proverb of our text tells you to come into *the king's presence* humbly, not taking *the place of the great*, but being willing to take the place of the lowly. Certainly *it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble* (verse 7). A humble attitude can avoid a humiliating experience. Jesus spoke a parable pointing out how natural it was for people to pick the best seats in the house and how it could lead to their being humiliated (cf. Luke 14:7-11), stating the truth in Luke 14:11 → *Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled*.

So far the proverb and this analysis of sinful pride and arrogance conveys basic truths of human dynamics in life with some really good advice. So . . . what does it have to do with your spiritual life? After all, this proverb is a part of the Holy Spirit's inspired text of God's written Word.

Well, what if the King in Whose presence you stand is Jesus, the *King of kings and Lord of lords* (cf. Revelation 19:16)? Now you are not simply standing in the presence of a dignitary but you are standing in the presence of God Himself. If you think you didn't "meet up" before, standing in the presence of God will heighten those feelings because His holiness demands holiness from you. This sense of inadequacy and guilt has cause many to reject the Person & Work of Jesus Christ in arrogance and sinful pride. Now the destruction which accompanies sinful pride is even more serious because it involves eternal suffering in hell.

Your King, Jesus, recognized this struggle in sin so much—and your inability to deliver yourself from it—that He humbled Himself, not only dealing with the sinful arrogance and pride of those He encountered, but actually taking that sin upon Himself. Why? Ephesians 5:25-27 says it's because He loves you and *gave Himself up for you, that He might sanctify you, having cleansed you by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present you to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that you might be holy and without blemish*. The King in Whose presence you stand went through the humiliation of sin in all its forms and still willingly offered Himself up as the perfect sacrifice to pay the just penalty which your sins deserved.

However, the King in Whose presence you stand also rose from the

dead, victorious over death which is a result of sin and the devil's work in the Garden of Eden. Then He ascended into heaven and *God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (cf. Philippians 2:9-11). He Himself experienced **for you** the truth of His parable when He said: *and he who humbles himself will be exalted* (cf. Luke 14:11).

God desires to exalt you and give you “the best seats in the house” as well, calling you to *come up here* to the “seats” in His eternal presence and love! He calls you to come to Him in humility, repenting by confessing your prideful sins and relying on the sacrificial blood of Jesus to cleanse you from all sin. Thus, He is calling you to *come up here* to the altar in humility, placing your faith in King Jesus to receive His forgiveness of sins in His body and blood. He commands you in 1 Peter 5:5-6 to *clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.*

As you walk away from God's means of grace forgiven, you truly know what it means to be exalted, having the burden of guilt taken away from your heart in forgiveness and being made new in your spirit by the

power of the Holy Spirit. It empowers you to *put yourself forward in* the presence of others with humility, knowing you constantly stand *in the King's presence* as you do so. You represent Him and bring His grace, love and forgiveness. When being exalted in God's grace, love and forgiveness, the Holy Spirit creates the desire to put others in "the front row seats" of the cross as you strive to be Christ's servant to them. Amen.

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,
but in humility count others more significant than yourselves . . .
Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*

(Philippians 2:3,5)

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