



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

March 2015 - *The “Hydra” of Pride*

C.S. Lewis, after a long struggle and search for truth, surrendered his life to Jesus in his early 30’s. Very quickly, as he sought to grow in his faith, he became aware of the depth of his own sin. In a letter to his childhood friend in Belfast, Arthur Greeves, Lewis gives us a humorous, yet alarmingly accurate picture of how pride works in our lives. He writes,

What worries me much more is *Pride* – my besetting sin, as yours is *indolence*. During my afternoon ‘meditations’, - which I at least *attempt* quite regularly now – I have found out ludicrous and terrible things about my own character. Sitting by, watching the rising thoughts to break their necks as they pop up, one learns to know the sort of thoughts that do come. And, will you believe it, one out of every three is a thought of self-admiration: when everything else fails, having had its neck broken, up comes the thought ‘What an admirable fellow I am to have broken their necks!’ I catch myself posturing before the mirror, so to speak, all day long. I pretend I am carefully thinking out what to say to the next pupil (for *his* good, of course) and then suddenly realise I am really thinking how frightfully clever I’m going to be and how he will admire me. I pretend I am remembering an evening of good fellowship in a really friendly and charitable spirit – and all the time I’m really remembering how good a fellow I am and how well I talked. And then when you force yourself to stop it, you admire yourself for doing *that*. Its like fighting the hydra (you remember, when you cut off one head another grew). There seems to be no end to it. Depth under depth of self-love and self admiration. Closely connected with this is the difficulty I find in making even the faintest approach to giving up my own will: which as everyone has told us is the only thing to do.¹



In total transparency, Lewis describes his battle with pride, and helps us see it in ourselves. He points out that the first step in dealing with any sin is identifying it and naming it. The good news is that if we humble ourselves before the Lord, he will come to our aid and draw us closer to Himself – pointing us to our true source of satisfaction and fulfillment.

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

JAMES 4:10 (ESV)

¹C.S. Lewis. *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Volume 1, Family Letters: 1905-1931*. Ed. by Walter Hooper. HarperCollins: San Francisco, 2004, pp. 878-879.