

## **The Parable of Conceit**

This is a parable about a man that built his house on a mountain called Pride. And this man had great wealth and prosperity and had a magnificent abundance of everything money could acquire. And his name was Conceit.

And one day when Conceit went down unto the town to purchase fresh fruits and dates and nuts, he stumbled upon a merchant selling beautiful idols. And the idols were splendid to look upon and expertly crafted with precious metals and jewels. And there was one idol that Conceit had admired more than others.

It was shaped like a cat and its fur was made of bronze and its tail was made of gold. Its eyes were diamond jewels and its belly was made of beautiful silver. Its feet were made of jade, as green as grass on a summer day, and its claws were a majestic ruby. This idol was named Sin.

And the man picked it up and held it and admired the splendor of its beauty. "How much for this one?" he asked. The man behind the booth turned around and smiled a weird, unnatural, smile. "That one," he said, "Is priceless."

The man did not look like any man of this world. His face was withered and wrinkled. Droopy and sinister. His eyes shone with rage and hatred. But when he spoke- oh, the voice he did use. It was a sharp and cool voice, one that lurked in the very atmosphere about them. And in his voice was a slight bass, like the roaring of a lion. And this man was named Beelzebub.

After a while, Conceit became attached to the idol and longed for it. "Tell me," he begged, "how much must I pay for this precious idol?" Suddenly, Beelzebub was beside him. He was so close that Conceit could feel his breath stroke against his ear. "No money in this world could buy such a thing."

Conceit became perplexed. "Is there some currency that I do not know of?" He asked this because he was schooled in the Roman law and knew every sheckle there was.

"The wages of sin is death," Beelzebub said sinisterly.

After a long while, Conceit hiked back up his mountain called Pride and set his beautiful idol on a high shelf in his bed-chamber. And every day he would bow to it and worship it and would come subject to it.

And it came to pass that when Conceit had made an end to praying to his idol Sin, he stood on his high mountain admiring all the things that he had. And as he was looking at his flock of mountain goats he saw a figure moving towards him.

"Who goes there?" He yelled for he could not recognize this man. "Peace!" the man had said when he reached Conceit's home. "Peace be with you."

Even close, Conceit still could not recognize this man. His hair was irregularly cut, his beard hung down to his chest and- oh! What filthy rags he wore. His cloak had lost its color and there were holes scattered all around it. His pants

were stained and his sandals were ruined. Compared to Conceit, he looked like a peasant.

"Who are you?" Conceit asked the man. "Witness," he answered. "Son of Evangelist." "And what are you doing on my mountain?" Conceit demanded, coldly. Witness smiled and pulled a scroll from his tunic. He began to unravel it, and this is what he asked:

"Do you know the Lord?" Quickly, without hesitating, the man answered. "Yes, I do know there is a Lord. He is the Maker of heaven and earth." He said this because he, also, was taught in the synagogues. Witness stood looking at the man and waited until he stopped. And when he did, he began again.

"Do you know the Lord?" And once more, Conceit did answer hastily, as though he did not think. "I know the law and the commandments and I do, indeed, keep the sabbath, it is clear that I know the Lord."

At this, Witness became infuriated and angry, but he did not sin. Suddenly, as bold as an ox, he spoke. "You do not know the Lord," he yelled, shocking Conceit. "You know the Law and the commandments, and you keep the Sabbath, but you do not know the Lord. For if you did you would not have an idol set upon your high place."

"How do you know what I do in the comfort of my home?" Conceit asked, rather rudely. "You have trespassed, that is a greater sin than any idol that I have!"

Conceit, as smart as he was, did not know what he was saying. And, after a few minutes, Witness did proceed.

"I have seen you in the town of Deceit, there you brought an Idol from Beelzebub. In doing so you have given your life for Sin. You have put on the tunic of filth and girded yourself with the belt of unrighteousness."

"How dare you talk about my fine clothes, you peasant." Again, he knew not what he was saying. Witness shook his head in dismay. "You are a fool who thinks he is wise, there is no greater folly than this." And at that, he walked away.

Conceit knew what Witness had said was true, but because he had built his house upon Pride, he did not repent.

Later, when he was worshipping iniquity and transgression- his two newest idols that he had brought from Beelzebub- he heard a slight rasp at his door.

"Peace," a man said when Conceit unlatched the door. "Who are you and what do you want?" Conceit asked the man.

"I am Prophet, from the town of Bondage." Conceit knew that town. It was a place filled with people who are blind, deaf, sick, and demon-possessed. "I know that town," he said. "How did you get delivered?"

"The Lord God delivered me from Bondage and he has called me to be a Prophet. He has called me to you."

*To me, Conceit thought. Surely God doesn't know about my idols.* Prophet, now reading from a scroll, read:

"This is what the Lord God says, lay aside your idols. Purify your house and cleanse your temple. For you have settled your house on Pride. And because of Pride you have hardened your heart and stiffed your neck. And if you do not take down your idols- Sin, Inequity, and Transgression- I will surely destroy you and your treasures." Then he turned around and walked away.

Conceit, having heard the words of Prophet, hardened his heart even more and he thought to himself, *that is a treacherous man, I shall have him taken to the Roman counsel and beheaded.* He thought this to himself because the words that Prophet spoke offended him.

And after he had entered into his house again, he worshiped his idols and came subject before them. That was the last time he did so.

"Conceit!" he heard a voice yell. "Conceit!" But when Conceit looked up, he was no longer in his home, set upon Pride mountain, worshipping his beautiful idols. Now, he was in a burning place, scattered with coals and brimstone, and fire roundabout.

Again he heard the voice say, "Conceit." "Yes, Lord," he answered. And the Lord God spoke.

“You have put your trust in worthless idols. You have put them upon your high shelf and worshiped them as if they were a God. Your Pride has blinded you even when I sent two people in your paths. Where are your idols now, conceit?”

"My Lord, my Lord! Forgive me!" he yelled, hoping, praying, that his pleas and cries for mercy would be heard. But for Conceit, it was far too late. For the wages of his beautiful idol sin, was, as Beelzebub had said, "death."

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