

## Light in Darkness – Pride to Humility

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“Too many people spend money they earned..to buy things they don’t want...to impress people they don’t like.” – Will Rogers

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.” – C.S. Lewis

“Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves.” – Emily Bronte

“We are rarely proud when we are alone.” – Voltaire

“Pride costs us more than hunger, thirst, and cold.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Humility is nothing but truth, and pride is nothing but lying.” – St. Vincent de Paul

“Wealth is a gift from God, and pride is a gift to us from the devil.” – Douglas Wilson

Here we have some quotes on pride. Pride has been a major problem for the human race from the very beginning. Pride is a major reason why divorce is so common in America today. Pride is a major reason church denominations are splitting and going their own way. The list can go on and on. Pride also feeds the darkness of the world. Martin Luther once stated, “The god of this world is riches, pleasure, and pride”. The Google definition of pride is this: a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one’s own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired. There can be healthy pride like pride for one’s child; however, mankind usually goes after the unhealthy pride. Pride usually causes problems. King Solomon tells us this about pride in Proverbs 13: 10, “Pride leads

to arguments; those who take advice are wise” (NLT, 996). The Olympics have been on for the past few weeks and we have seen some good examples of pride – putting down another opponent. We can look at the political realm and see what pride can do since our government oozes with pride – lie about people to make themselves look good and lie about themselves for the same outcome. We live in a very dark world and we have to make sure that pride doesn’t cause us to be the reason for the darkness around us. The Old Testament gives us examples of what pride can do to us. Plus, the Old Testament lets us know that God will not tolerate us being a prideful people. We are to be a humble people instead. Unfortunately, our culture sees humbleness as a weakness. Let’s see how God views pride in the Old Testament.

We’ve been looking at Daniel for the past few weeks and now we’ll go to another person who lived during the time of Daniel. Daniel is held captive in Babylon and his king is Nebuchadnezzar. At this time, he is a great king over a great nation. This is the incident that Nebuchadnezzar has with God in Daniel 4 starting at verse 28, “<sup>28</sup> “But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup> Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. <sup>30</sup> As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’

<sup>31</sup> “While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. <sup>32</sup> You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’

<sup>33</sup> “That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.

## **Nebuchadnezzar Praises God**

<sup>34</sup> "After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever.

His rule is everlasting,  
and his kingdom is eternal.

<sup>35</sup> All the people of the earth  
are nothing compared to him.

He does as he pleases  
among the angels of heaven  
and among the people of the earth.

No one can stop him or say to him,  
'What do you mean by doing these things?'

<sup>36</sup> "When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.

<sup>37</sup> "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud." (Bible Gateway NLT)

Before this story, Daniel explains a dream that the king has. God had given Daniel a gift of explaining dreams. The dream shows the event we just read. Right after Daniel gets done explaining the dream to the king, Daniel states this in Daniel 4: 27, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, please listen to me. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past by being merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper" (NLT, 1273). So, now we come to the story. Nebuchadnezzar does not repent of his sin and after twelve months, we read that the king is taking a walk on the flat roof of his royal palace in Babylon. As he is walking, he becomes filled with pride. In fact, Scripture tells us that the king states he, by his own mighty power, has built the city as his royal residence and as an expression of his own greatness. This king was loving himself. He had forgotten that Daniel had told him that part of the dream was God reminding the king that God is in control who rules over kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone He chooses (Daniel 4: 24 – 26). The king believes he is truly great and he is the reason for the greatness of the Babylon nation. Even though he was warned by Daniel to not sin in this way, Nebuchadnezzar chose to allow his pride

to take over and he gave himself all the credit and glory instead of God. Pride is a very dangerous thing. Pride blocks our mind from the wisdom of God. Pride shows limited love toward others. Plus, pride actually blocks our relationship with God. Pride was doing this to the king of Babylon.

There are three things that the king took pride with: his possessions, his abilities, and his position. As Nebuchadnezzar looked over the skyline of his kingdom, he was impressed with what belonged to him. You see, when people get their eyes on material things, they lose their perspective. Just look at sport athletes and how they buy expensive mansions and want everyone to know about it. Now, we see how money is changing college football. Pride in one's performance can be a sport's downfall. Jesus tells us this in Mark 10: 24, "Dear children, it is very hard to get into the Kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God! (NLT, 1507)" Pride in our possessions helps to block our view of God and in turn helps us to take credit for our possessions. Who has allowed us the ability to receive these gifts and who has allowed us to be alive to receive these gifts? Nebuchadnezzar allowed his pride to be fed by his possessions as king. He also took pride in his ability to be a great human king. He had won many great battles which helped his nation become great. I worked with a store manager during my Weis Market days who took great pride in being manager of a big store. He took so much pride in that, he would do whatever it took to keep that image of greatness even if it meant to lie and cheat. Pride needs to be fed constantly. Nebuchadnezzar took pride in his position in the world. His greatness was displayed by the greatness of Babylon. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, The Gate of Ishtar, even the walls of Babylon were considered a work of art during its day. These pieces of work would show evidence of his greatness as king and would exult him as the greatest human king of that time period. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar thought he was the greatest thing since slice bread. He had forgotten what Daniel had told him in his dream and pride will do that. Pride shapes and limits our thinking.

We read in Scripture that while Nebuchadnezzar was filling his pride, a voice came from heaven and told him his royal authority had been taken from him and

what Daniel had told the king happened. Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from Babylon because he became a madman. He ate grass and didn't take care of himself. What we learn here is that God will punish the prideful. Proverbs 16:18 states, "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall" (NLT, 1002). So, we should want no part of unhealthy pride. Pride that separates us from God. We read this as well in Proverbs 8: 13, "All who fear the Lord will hate evil. That is why I hate pride, arrogance, corruption, and perverted speech. (NLT, 990)" The pride that the king of Babylon had was evil. Pride is very dangerous. Even when we think we have the right to brag about something we did and we say we'll only brag once, it usually starts the ball rolling downhill. The human nature enjoys bragging about itself. Since the Lord doesn't want us to be a proudful people, we must find ways to keep us from being prideful because He will pass judgment on us for our pride.

If we go back to Daniel 4: 34-35, we see that the king repents of his sin of being proud and he writes this to his fellow countrymen in a letter, "At the end of that time, I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" (NIV). This is a total turn around. Nebuchadnezzar now sees the kingdom he rules over totally differently. He now gives credit to God for the kingdom he rules over. He praises God and tells the people God is in control and He does what He pleases. Nebuchadnezzar has humbled himself before God. He had to learn this and God helped him to learn how to humble oneself before God. I had to fix a rotten fence post at the house and I made sure I prayed about it first. It went very well and I had a choice to make – give credit to myself or to God. Without the Lord's help, the process would have been much different. When the copy machine at the church acted up last week, I prayed first for help from God. I know my shortcomings with copiers and printers. We don't get along. When I worked at Weis, the office ladies would not allow me to work on copiers because bad things

would happen. When I got ready to work on the printer, I prayed again and turned on the printer. When I heard the awful noise it was making, I opened a small door on the copier where the noise was coming from and something made me look at the roller and I saw a stone stuck in the roller. The stone must have come from the toner cartridge. Anyway, I got the stone out and closed the door – the copier worked. Human nature says to take all the credit for it. The Holy Spirit says give God the credit because He was involved in it and He was because I wasn't covered in toner dust. That is part of humbling ourselves before God and the Lord will help us to do that. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar states this in Daniel 4: 37, "And those who walk in pride He is able to humble. (NIV)" KJV uses the term "abase" for humble. The Hebrew term is "s pal" which means to subdue and bring low (Strong's Concordance). Jesus can help us to be humble people. Jesus was humble on the cross and He is more than capable to help us to be humble which is the opposite of being proud. Plus, we have to remember this. If we are the salt of this earth and we are to live out the character of Jesus on this earth so people can get to know Jesus, we must learn to be a humble people. Being humble brings light to a dark world and this world needs a lot of humbleness. If the Lord can help a great king like Nebuchadnezzar, who was full of pride, to be humble, He is sure more than capable to help us to be humble. I rather be around humble people than prideful people. Plus, this is what the Lord wants us to be. Pray that the Lord would help you to be more humble.

*NLT Life Application Study Bible.* Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001