

The Price of Pride - by Faber McMullen, Pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church

The sin above all the other sins is the sin of pride. God hates pride. I think it might do us all good to take out our Bibles this morning and to write in big bold letters on top of the 4th Chapter of Daniel "The Price of Pride".

This Chapter is unique in that it is the only Chapter of the Bible written by a pagan King. It is a Babylonian state document. It is written in the Aramaic language and yet the Holy Spirit of God led Daniel to include it in his book which we are currently studying.

You will remember that in Chapter 2 and 3 of Daniel we see Nebuchadnezzar warming up to the things of God. He still was not a believer, but by the end of Chapter 4 we see him declaring "My Lord and my God." It has been said that in Ch 2 of the Book of Daniel God dealt straightly with Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter 3 he dealt sternly with Nebuchadnezzar, but now in chapter 4 we will see God deal severely with Nebuchadnezzar.



Sadly we leave our old friend Nebuchadnezzar behind with this chapter. He is never heard from again. It is sort of interesting that he only appears in 4 chapters of the Bible but the stories of Nebuchadnezzar and of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be told and retold until Jesus returns to the earth.

Stand now as we read the key portion of today's scripture from God's Word. These are the words of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon describing his second dream.

10 'Now *these were* the visions in my mind *as I lay* on my bed: I was looking, and behold, *there was* a tree in the midst of the earth and its height *was* great.

11 'The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,
And it *was* visible to the end of the whole earth.

12 Its foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it *was* food for all.

The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

13 I was looking in the visions in my mind *as I lay* on my bed, and behold, an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

14 He shouted out and spoke as follows: Chop down the tree and cut off its

branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it And the birds from its branches.

15 Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,

Let us Pray

The Bible is full of verses about pride: James 4:6 tells us that God resisteth the proud but gives grace to the humble Proverbs 11:2 reminds us, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." And then probably the most famous of all is Proverbs 6:16-19 that lists the sins that God most hates, and pride is at the top of the list. "These six things doth the Lord hate, yeah seven are an abomination unto Him.... A proud look" and then they are all listed out.

Pride is the most diabolical or evil sin because it is me saying "Everything is about me and I am ALL that is important." Remember what brought sin into the world. It was not lying, stealing, cheating, sexual sin, drunkenness, carousing or any other such fleshly sin. It was Adam and Eve saying, "I WILL BE LIKE GOD."

CS Lewis summarizes it well in Mere Christianity

"The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility...According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind."

True Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.

Today in the 4th Chapter of Daniel, God will give us a life application of Proverbs 16:18 where it says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

In Verses 1-3 Nebuchadnezzar gives us the reason for this story - He wants to give his testimony of what God has done for him.

- 1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language that live in all the earth: "May your ^apeace abound!
- 2 It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.
- 3 How great are His signs And how mighty are His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom And His dominion is from generation to generation.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to tell the whole world about what God has shown him. This reminds me of how little we share with others the great things that God has done in our lives. We should be ready to tell the whole world that "great are His signs and mighty are His wonders." I continue...

The Vision of a Great Tree

- 4 “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.
5 “I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and *these* fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

Nebuchadnezzar was at a point in his life when he had it "all together". Things were going his way and Babylon was so great it will be used till the end of time to signify man making things as great as man is able to do. He had a dream that once again upset his spirit.

- 6 “So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.
7 “Then the ^amagicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.
8 “But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is ^ba spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, *saying*,
9 ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell *me* the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

When we first read this we wonder why in the world Neb keeps going back to the same old wise men who can do him no good. They weren't able to help him before and they sure can help him now. But church, don't we do the same thing? We rely on our flesh: our body, mind, intellect, and emotions because we've trained ourselves to do so.

Finally, he remembers good old Daniel who has never let him down. You know, there was something about Daniel that kept Nebuchadnezzar knocking at his door. Notice in verse 8 he comments on Daniel saying "in whom is the spirit of the holy gods" Then again in v.9, he comments about Daniel saying in him is the "spirit of the holy gods" And then again in v. 18 we see him commenting about the "spirit of the gods" Daniel was a spirit-filled believer. Nebuchadnezzar didn't know how to exactly describe what that was, but he knew Daniel was different.

You see, Nebuchadnezzar just knew there was something about Daniel that was different and special, but he couldn't quite put his finger on what it was. Let me say that the world may ridicule you, and the world may make fun of you, but if you let the Spirit of God dwell in you and work in you as soon as those get in trouble they will come to your for help. I remember a friend who made fun of me since my late teens when I came to Christ. It hurt when someone told me that he had jokingly asked another high school classmate, "What's Faber up to? Is he still majoring in Jesus?" Let's live our lives so given to the Lord that when people meet us they will know that they have been in His presence. Let's continue.



Now in verses 10-18 Nebuchadnezzar is reciting the Dream. We've already read this so I will not repeat it, but this great tree is a picture of Nebuchadnezzar at the height of his glory. The tree was so big that you could see it from all the earth, and it fed the whole earth. It provided life and sustenance for all of the earth. And then out of nowhere came an order comes from heaven.

The "watcher and the holy one" is talking about an angel who says,

v. 15 Leave the stump and let "him" be wet with the dew of heaven. Let "his" heart be changed. In the Book of Daniel a "time" is a year. This is a prophecy that this metamorphosis is going to happen for a period of 7 years.

Notice how the text moves from describing a tree to describing a "him". This is talking about a person.

16 "Let his mind be changed from *that of* a man And let a beast's mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him.

17 "This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men."

18 This is the dream *which* I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belshazzar, tell *me* its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.'

The angelic being comes and proclaims the sentence. Nebuchadnezzar will lose his mind and the mind of an animal will be given to him. And this business of 7 times refers to seven years.



19 "Then Daniel, whose name is Belshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, 'Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.' Belshazzar replied, 'My lord, *if only* the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!'

In Verses 19-27 we are given the revelation of the dream. When the text says that Daniel was perplexed it doesn't mean that he doesn't know the meaning of the dream. It means he was troubled in his spirit. He had come to love this old king, and here he saw the future of his friend. He wrestled with what he had learned. He said, "My Lord I wish this dream was about those who hate you and about your enemies."

Guys, Daniel is showing how to preach judgment it is to be done with a broken heart. Church, we can point out sin yes, but it should break our hearts to do so.

- 20 ‘The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height
reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth
21 and whose foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which *was* food for
all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of
the sky lodged—
22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty
has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the
earth.
23 ‘In that the king saw an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and
saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in
the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze *around it* in the new grass of the
field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the
beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”
24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which
has come upon my lord the king:
25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts
of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew
of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that
the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He
wishes.
26 ‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your
kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that *it is* Heaven *that* rules.
27 ‘Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from
your sins by *doing* righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to
the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’

Church, notice that God is merciful. He gives Nebuchadnezzar the opportunity to repent and to forgo the misery and the price of his pride. Daniel says to him, "break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity." You know church, God still gives us opportunities to repent and to turn from what we are doing that displeases God. But does Nebuchadnezzar do that? Sadly, no he doesn't. So let's now read about the judgment.

- 28 “All *this* happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.
29 “Twelve months later he was walking on the *roof of* the royal palace of Babylon.
30 “The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have
built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my
majesty?’
31 “While the word *was* in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, *saying*,
‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from
you,
32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place *will be* with the



beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’

33 “Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched

with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ *feathers* and his nails like birds’ *claws*.

34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.

35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

36 “At that time my ^areason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

Church, I want to make a few comments this morning about this passage. First, just think about how much God loved Nebuchadnezzar. He gave him Judah. He gave him personal contact with Daniel, Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael. He gave him opportunity after opportunity to come to see God's grace at work. Guys, God never gave up on him! (and He never gives up on you! Secondly, God was merciful to Nebuchadnezzar. He gave him opportunity upon opportunity to repent. God does the same thing for each of us! Thirdly, Nebuchadnezzar paid the price for his pride. There is always a cost associated with sin, and the cost is probably the greatest when we are engaged in the sin of pride. Guys, if you can't get over pride you will pay a great price! And fourthly, God was merciful in restoring Nebuchadnezzar. His kingdom was restored to him.

So, Church, where do we go from here? We really need to know and understand this because if the Lord loves us, He will chasten us. And He will not look past the sin of pride in His children. If you can't get past the sin of pride it could cost you everything that is precious to you because the price of pride is higher than we can imagine.

1) Develop a correct view of God. - simply stated, "He's great and you're not". If you tend to think too highly of yourself, then focus more on the greatness of God. Get into a Bible study on the nature of God, especially concerning His majesty and power. Ask God to reveal Himself more clearly to you. You will find that your thoughts, emotions, intellect, and resources will be centered on Him and not on yourself.

2) Revise your false beliefs. - we all have lies that we believe. Stop thinking you know everything and that you always know what's best for you. Such attitudes indicate self-centeredness, they may indicate pride. Your identity in Christ is one of self-denial and grace-filled humility. Allow Scripture to inform you of the views you should have of yourself, other people, and life in general so that you will not be proud in a sinful way.

3) Repent of Your Sin - admit to God that your pride is a problem. (1 John 1:9) Realize that pride is subtle. It is hard to spot in yourself. Some indicators might include: 1) fault finding 2) Harsh spirit 3) Superficiality 4) Defensiveness 5) Presumption before God 6) Being desperate for attention 7) Neglecting others

4) Defend against Spiritual Attacks - Satan will give you more and more opportunities to exercise your pride. Don't do it. Humility is not thinking less of yourself. Humility is thinking less of yourself. Try to get in the habit of not thinking all the time about yourself and your circumstances.

5) Flee Temptation - focus on your relationship with God. Latch on to God's promises.