

Christ Fellowship 6/4/23

“Pride” – Daniel 4

A few months ago, I officiated a wedding for the daughter of some good friends of mine. I’ve known the family for 40-50 years and I have known the bride since she was born although I’m not real close to her. But I appreciated being asked to do her wedding and it turned out real nice. When it was all over, I wanted her and the family to know how much I appreciated it and so at an appropriate time I got everybody’s attention and I told a story about when the bride was probably only 1-2 years old and how she sang a song – I think it was Jesus Loves Me – and how wonderfully she sang it. I told how her precious departed grandmother, who was also a dear friend of mine, loved her so much and would have been so proud of her. I gushed on and on about how beautiful everything was and how much I appreciated being able to be a part of it and it was meaningful to me.

I kid you not, this was the bride’s exact response: ***“Well, you were our second choice. The other preacher couldn’t make it.”*** That was her response. Thank you, dear. I’m sure I needed to be taken down a notch or two. And don’t we all? Don’t we all need somebody to knock us off our high horse every now and then? I’m pretty sure that’s at least half the reason God made women for men. 😊

God always has a way of keeping us humble. Why is that? Why does God want us to stay humble? **Proverbs 8** says that God hates pride. But what is pride? Is there more than one kind of pride? Does God hate all pride? I found one definition of **good** pride as being *“a positive feeling of satisfaction, confidence, dignity, and self-respect. It is often associated with pursuing something to the best of one’s ability, having a lot of effort, and exhibiting mercy, building up people, and being persistent.”* When your team wins the championship and you have played fairly and to the best of your ability, that is something to be proud of. Nothing wrong with that.

But it can be a slippery slope because that can lead to bad pride which says, *“Look what I did. I’m the best player on the team. Did you see the homerun I hit? I’m pretty good.”* In **2 Corinthians 7**, Paul tells the church in Corinth that he is very proud of them. But he doesn’t say, *“Look at the church I built.”* I think we all know the difference in the kinds of pride and we all hate the wrong kind of pride. That’s why none of us ever struggle with the sin of pride, right?

You know, I’ve been going to church all my life and I have never once heard anybody at worship time or Bible study or small group time ever say, *“Will y’all please pray for me? I struggle with being proud.”* It never happens. So, evidently no Christian is ever proud or...we are and don’t

realize it in ourselves. Oh, it's an easy thing to see in others but you and I don't have that problem. Do we?

I want to show you a person in scripture that struggled with pride. If you will, please turn to the Old Testament book of Daniel. Daniel is between Ezekiel and Hosea. I know for some of you, that doesn't help. It's okay to look at your index. Daniel is toward the middle of your Bible but to the right of Psalms and Proverbs a ways.

In **Daniel chapter 4** we see the story of King Nebuchadnezzar. Ol' Neb as his friends used to call him. Ol' Neb was known for having crazy dreams that needed interpretation and for throwing the three Hebrew boys into the fiery furnace. You wouldn't call him a spiritually good king but he had some potential. And he was good at other things. He was quite the builder. You have probably heard of the hanging gardens of Babylon? He built those. He built several beautiful palaces and one of them was built for his wife and because his wife missed living in the mountains, Nebuchadnezzar actually built a couple mountains on top of her palace and had the hanging gardens there.

Now, when I say "palace", you might think of a big, nice house. But I guarantee you this palace was bigger and nicer than anything we can imagine. Nebuchadnezzar built three walls in Babylon. One outer wall, and two inner walls and the wall around his main palace was nine miles long and chariots could drive around on the top of it. The outer wall was wide enough for two chariots to have drag races. And every aspect of his palaces was top notch. Gold and silver were everywhere. He had statues and carvings of animals and dragons all over. He had conquered Jerusalem and had taken all the silver and gold from the temple and put it in his palace.

So, he was pretty proud of himself and even had a giant statue of himself made out of gold that was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. It was that statue that three boys would not bow to and so they were thrown into the fiery furnace. You can find that great story in chapter three. But in chapter 4 several years have gone by and the king has another dream. He calls all his wisest men together to interpret the dream but, of course, they can't. So, he calls in good old Daniel to interpret the dream.

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a huge tree and an angel said to cut down the tree and leave the stump and of course Nebuchadnezzar didn't know what to make of it...but Daniel did. Let's pick it up with Daniel telling Nebuchadnezzar about the dream in **chapter 4, verses 24-27**.

"This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: 25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild

animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. 26 The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. 27 Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”

So, the interpretation is, Nebuchadnezzar is going to basically lose his mind and start living like a wild animal for seven years. But Daniel gives him some really good advice and tells him that if he changes his ways, maybe God will relent. Let’s see what happens. Any guesses? Let’s read it in **verses 28-34**.

All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” 31 Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.” 33 Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. 34 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.

Okay, go back to **verse 30** and we see where the problem is. *“the great Babylon I have built...”, “by my mighty power...”, “for the glory of my majesty...”* I, my, my. God heard that and said, *“Okay. You were warned a year ago. Off to the pasture you go.”* Why do you think God hates pride so much? **Psalm 10:4** says, *“In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.”* **Isaiah 14** tells us that Satan was cast out of Heaven because of pride and we are never more like Satan than when we are prideful. Somebody said, *“Pride is the only disease that makes everyone sick but the one who has it.”* God hates it. We hate it. And yet, it is probably the most common sin in the world and always has been.

Pride ruins everything. Pride will cost you your job, your friends, your relationships with God and loved ones. It causes depression, jealousy, self-pity and a hardened heart toward God and

other people. But it is so hard to see in ourselves. I found some red flags online that might help you see the pride in your life. There was a long list of things but I'll just give you the top 8 or so. And as I read them, try not to think of somebody else that has these characteristics. Look at yourself and see if you have any. I will do the same.

- You cannot submit yourself to higher authority.
- You find it difficult to accept corrections.
- You are too big to say "I'm sorry" or "I don't know."
- You think that your success or achievements are based on your efforts.
- You find it easy to find faults in others.
- You worry about what others think about you.
- When criticized, you are immediately defensive.
- You find it hard to compliment others or be glad for their success.

Those are all signs of pride in our lives. And, thankfully, there is one good and simple way to get rid of that pride. Ask God for forgiveness and then repent of that lifestyle. That's the good news and, actually, it's great news! Thank you, Lord, for your forgiveness and grace and mercy. And did you notice in the case of Nebuchadnezzar how God was so generous to give him extra time to do that? He gave him 12 months. But at the end of that 12 months, Nebuchadnezzar had not asked God for forgiveness of his pride so God had to do it Himself. God will wring that pride right out of you. He has ways you can never imagine. Just ask Job, right?

Now, let me give you another way you might realize that you have pride in your life. Let me give you another example of being proud that might set off some alarms; that might make you want to rethink your lifestyle. This might be a red flag in your life if you dedicate a whole month to celebrating your pride.

When I looked up the word "pride" in the dictionary, one of the definitions actually said that pride is *"the promotion of the self-affirmation, dignity, equality, and increased visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people as a social group. Pride, as opposed to shame and social stigma, is the predominant outlook that bolsters most LGBT rights movements. Pride has lent its name to LGBT-themed organizations, institutes, foundations, book titles, periodicals, a cable TV channel, and the Pride Library."* (Wikipedia)

Now, we have already seen that this kind of pride is a sin. When you say, "Look at me. Look who I am. Look what I have done." You are giving yourself credit for what God has done. And God hates that. Now, when you say, "Look at me" and actually point to the sin in your life and you celebrate that sin and you want everybody to recognize it and even affirm and give dignity to that sin, how do you think God feels about that?

Isaiah 5 says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness." **Galatians 6** says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps

what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

And just so we are clear, **Leviticus 18** in the Old Testament says God calls homosexuality an abomination. In the New Testament, **Romans 1** says it is dishonorable and unnatural. **1 Corinthians 6** says those that practice homosexuality will not inherit the Kingdom of God. **1 Timothy 1** says that homosexuality is contrary to the Gospel of God. I've had people try to argue that being gay is not a sin and if you don't ever read the Bible, maybe you believe that. But when you combine the sin of homosexuality and the sin of pride together – when you say, *"Hey, look at my abomination! Hey, everybody, look at my perversion. Y'all watch me be dishonorable."* – God is patient, just like He was for Nebuchadnezzar, but His patience has a limit. And flaunting your sin and being proud of your sin is a good way to suffer the justice and wrath of Almighty God.

I have heard people say something along the lines of, *"Oh, It's no big deal. Gay people just sin differently than you do."* And there is some truth to that. In one respect, sin is sin. Any sin is enough to keep you out of Heaven without belief in Jesus. And every sin puts a barrier between us and God even when we are believers. But any kind of sexual sin is worse and different than other sins and I'll tell you how I know that. It's how I know anything. Scripture says it. **1 Corinthians 6:18** says, *"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body."*

You know, electricity is a great thing. I don't understand how it works. I just use it. And when I have a problem, I just call Gary or Mike to come fix it. Because I know enough to know that if you cross a wire or hook something up wrong or connect a black wire with a white wire or a red wire, something bad is going to happen.

It's the same with sex. Sex is a gift that God has given a man and a woman in the context of marriage. And in that context, it's great and wonderful. But when done wrong; when done in any way out of that context, something bad is going to happen. You never see a parade of electricians saying how proud they are that they are known for hooking up wires wrong. There is no flag for electricians that like to attach red wires to black wires. No, they have funerals for those guys because bad things happen to them.

Now, some people today hear a message like this and immediately call it hate speech. But I don't hate people that lie, cheat, steal or even murder. And gay people are no different in that respect. We are all sinners and I preach against all sin. And there are consequences to sin and I don't want any of us to have to face those consequences. In fact, not only do I not hate homosexuals, I love them too much not to tell them the truth just like I preach the Bible's truth about every other sin.

And when somebody sins and then marches in a parade celebrating that sin, saying, *"Hey, look at me!"* I don't want them to face the consequences like Nebuchadnezzar did. Even

Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't want you to face those consequences. Look at what he said when it was all over. For seven years Nebuchadnezzar lived like a wild animal eating grass in the pasture because of his pride. But in **verse 34** he says, *"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."*

It's not too late for you yet. Most of you rarely eat grass at all, I believe. Do like Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar to do before it is too late. Daniel told him to renounce his sins. He told him to repent. You are not too far gone. I promise. Do that right now. Repent. Turn from going in the wrong direction and go in the right direction. Ask God to forgive you of your pride and of all your sins. There is no sin He won't forgive except the sin of unbelief and for those that die in their unbelief, scripture says they will spend eternity in Hell.

God doesn't want that for you and He has given you plenty of time to change your ways and change your mind and change your life. But you can't even do that on your own. It will only happen when you come to God – with no pride – and give your whole life to Him to do as He pleases. Go to Him right now in prayer and with empty hands asking Him to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you of all unrighteousness. Do it right now as the music plays.