

## Recognizing Pride

Daniel 5:17-31

### Preface

King Belshazzar throws a big party with over a thousand guests. To show off his power and arrogance towards God, he orders in the gold and silver goblets from the temple in Jerusalem to be used. Everyone begins to drink from them and as they drink, they praise the pagan idols made from gold and silver.

While they are partying it up, suddenly a finger of a human appears and writes in the plaster of the wall. The king watches and begins to fall apart. He turns pale, his knees shake and his legs give out from under him.

Belshazzar orders in all of the pagan astrologers and diviners but no one can tell him what the writing says. His wife tells him to call in Daniel who is known for interpreting dreams and such.

### Scripture

<sup>17</sup> Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

<sup>18</sup> "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. <sup>19</sup> Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. <sup>20</sup> But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. <sup>21</sup> He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High

God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.

<sup>22</sup> "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. <sup>23</sup> Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. <sup>24</sup> Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

<sup>25</sup> "This is the inscription that was written: mene, mene, tekel, parsin

<sup>26</sup> "This is what these words mean:

*Mene* : God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. (*Menah – to number or reckon*)

<sup>27</sup> *Tekel* : You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. (*Tekal – to weigh up something*)

<sup>28</sup> *Peres* : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (*Parsin – to divide or break up*)

<sup>29</sup> Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

<sup>30</sup> That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, <sup>31</sup> and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two. Daniel 5:17-31 NIV

### Introduction

Illus: My mother has told me many times of a point in her life when she thought to herself, "I have the world by the tail." Within a short period of time she lost everything (tell story).

She repeated this story to me just this past week - twice. I suppose she is warning me against the perils of pride. But most of all I think she is just praising God for bringing her home to Him. She is giving testimony of the punishment God can bring for pride and the reconciliation that can come when we turn back to God.

Pride is sin. Like many sins, pride can slip upon us before we know it. It comes in the disguise of ambition and even blessings.

Pride believes good fortune is the result of our efforts rather than a blessing from God. Pride is failing to give God the glory for the things you have accomplished and received.

Let's look at three characteristics of pride.

## Content

### 1. Pride Treats What Is Holy as Common.

In our story, what Belshazzar does is the height of arrogance. For Belshazzar to use these items he was publicly proclaiming that he and his gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone were greater than the one and only true God, Yahweh.

In fact, you can almost picture that they are partying and feeling good and praising all these pagan gods and Belshazzar thinks to himself, "I know another God we can drink to..." And so he treats the One True God as if He were no better than idols.

Sometimes we lose sight of the very first commandment, "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" Exodus 20:3 NIV

We need to recognize this is not a sin of days gone by. This is a sin our nation and our people face today.

America has lost sight of the source of her blessings. Our society today treats things that were once sacred as common things and even as worthless (Bible, Cross, Prayer, Worship).

Not only is our nation guilty of pride but so is the church and Christians. Many Christians today place their treasures above their worship. Today we often live as if God were not the sole source of our blessings. We boast of our accomplishments without giving God the credit.

The ultimate example of our pride today is our disregard for things we should hold as Holy and sacred. Such things include worship, the name of God, the teachings of God and most of all, the gift of God; the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

### **What things in life do you esteem as sacred, precious and holy to you?**

What things in your life do you give God complete credit for?

Today I encourage you to take inventory of the blessing you have from God and ask yourself if you give God credit publicly and privately or if you to take the credit.

By the way, you can get a quick answer by looking at your tithe.

### 2. Pride Believes Things Will Last Forever.

King Belshazzar was living as if his kingdom and all the trappings that go with it would last forever. But in one brief moment he found out differently.

Illus: Chances are you have felt this sudden emptiness. If you have ever been told you or a love one has cancer you know this sinking feeling.

You also know this feeling if you have lost a loved one unexpectedly. Life is going along normal and all of a sudden in the blink of an eye; your entire world has changed. Suddenly what mattered so much yesterday is meaningless today.

The king thought his wealth could solve any problem he had but he was about to learn differently. He offered wealth and power to whoever could tell him what the writing meant.

The fact that he would reward the one who read the writing on the wall as the third highest ruler in the kingdom was arrogance in itself; as if that really meant something.

Proverbs 27:1 reads, *“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”*

James 4:14, says *“... you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”*

If we can look past our pride, we will discover that every single day we live and breathe is a blessing from God.

We must not take anything for granted; our children, our spouse, our family; everything is a blessing from God.

Pride forgets that God is in control. Pride assumes that life is all that WE make it. But Belshazzar found out that God gives and God can take away. Things do not last forever!

### 3. Pride Never Expects Judgment.

Look how Belshazzar felt...

*“<sup>5</sup>Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. <sup>6</sup>His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way...” Daniel 5:5-6 NIV*

Where was the king’s pride now?

The message on the wall was, “numbered, weighed, and divided.”

We live in a world today who does not believe in judgment. Many professing Christians do not believe in judgment. They live their day lives as if there will never be a day of judgment. We have preachers today who do not believe in judgment and do not preach about judgment **because it is so unpopular.**

Like an ostrich, they stick their hands in the sand and pretend it will never come. But it does come!

God’s word promises us we will be judged. In fact, we will be judged exactly like Belshazzar; “numbered, weighed, and divided.”

For every one of us our lives will be numbered, our deeds weighed and our eternities divided.

The good news is that the blood of Jesus makes our eternity sure.

But the New Testament says that you can only enter the kingdom of heaven as a little child. You will never get there by standing before God and proclaiming how good you are.

I believe our churches have many people in them that pat themselves on the back thinking, “God must be really happy to have ME on His side.”

We have others who reason that they can live their life any way they choose and God will never punish them.

We must live expecting to be judged.

### Conclusion

Pride does not have to be a sin. Pride can be a good thing when our pride is in God.

We can take pride in how God has blessed us and we can give Him the credit for our accomplishments and success.

In verse 17 Daniel says, *“You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else.”* Daniel wanted no part of the Kings tainted gifts. He placed his pride in God.

Remember Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego. They replied to Nebuchadnezzar, *“Our God is able to deliver us, but even if He doesn’t – we will still not bow down and worship your statue.”*

<sup>23</sup>“But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.”

Are you honoring the God who holds your life in His hands?