

Humility Required  
February 6, 2022  
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Daniel 4:28-37

Opening: **Proverbs 16:5 (ESV) — 5** Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished. That means pride is a sin. Why is pride a sin?

In Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis had this to say about why God hates pride: *“...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.”*<sup>i</sup>

God hates pride because He loves people. We see the real danger of pride taken to the extreme in **Psalms 10:4 (ESV) — 4** *In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”* Extreme pride can lead to an eternity without Christ.

Here’s the truth that should change us: When I get confused about Who God is and who I am, I’ve slipped into the pride zone. As one commentator put it: *“Pride is giving ourselves the credit for something that God has accomplished. Pride is taking the glory that belongs to God alone and keeping it for ourselves. Pride is essentially self-worship.”*<sup>ii</sup> If you’re thinking, *“I’m glad I’m not like THAT”* be careful, that might just be the subtle sin of pride.

- This text is about a powerful King consumed with extreme pride that resulted in extreme punishment from God.
- It’s a little bizarre, but there’s a lesson for us.
- One of the gifts God gave Daniel was the interpretation of dreams. In this chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar had a bad dream about a tree stump.
- He asked Daniel for an interpretation. God said tell him “the tree is thee.”
- If he doesn’t stop sinning, he will make a “beast” of himself – literally.
- We use metaphors like “stubborn as a mule” or “pig-headed.” This was not a metaphor; the punishment would be seven years of living as an animal.
- You’ve heard of the “Tiger King.” This was the “animal king” for real.
- The King wouldn’t listen. His prideful rejection of God went on for a year.

**Daniel 4:28–33 (ESV) — 28** All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. **29** At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, **30** and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” **31** While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you,

**32** and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” **33** Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws.

- A powerful king became like an animal in a state of mental illness.
- This was the punishment God warned him of, but he wouldn’t change.
- We might ask, “Do you think this really happened?” Yes, I believe my Bible; but a powerful man turning this weird is not that much of a stretch.
- I thought of Howard Hughes at the end of his life. At one time he was the richest man on earth yet his final years were spent as an eccentric recluse. *“He became extremely germophobic, insisting that anything handed to him be wrapped in tissues. A painkiller addict, Hughes also refused to cut his hair or fingernails and wore Kleenex boxes as shoes.” “His hair, beard, fingernails and toenails were long, his tall 6ft 4in frame weighed barely 90lbs and the FBI had to use fingerprints to conclusively identify the body.”* And yes, he stored his urine in bottles.<sup>iii</sup>
- His obsession with wealth, power, and self-reliance led Howard Hughes to a bizarre, drug-induced existence. The king’s extreme pride and refusal to acknowledge God turned him into a grotesque wild animal.
- Verse 30 tells the tale as the king said to himself: *‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city...’*<sup>iv</sup>
- Verse 31: While the words were still in his mouth, God’s judgment fell!
- Because God is a God of grace, there was a path for the king’s restoration. In verse 26 Daniel had told the king: *“...you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.”*<sup>v</sup>
- Those words were spoken a year before. Did the “animal king” remember?

**Daniel 4:34–37 (ESV) — [The king speaking] 34** At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to 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, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?” **36** At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. **37** Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

- With a heartfelt confession of his pride and arrogance, Nebuchadnezzar went from eating grass to preaching a sermon on God's sovereignty!
- The king was no longer confused about Who God is and who he was.
- That last verse is like James 4:6: ...*"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* James 4:10 says, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."*
- We've all been warned in **Proverbs 16:18 (ESV) — 18** Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- This was a great warning for prideful kings but how does it apply to us?
- We're not egotistical megalomaniacs obsessed with our own power!
- The sin of pride can be a very subtle sin that is hard to diagnose.
- Let's deal with this first: Is it okay for me to be proud of my spouse, my kids, my yard, the hard work I've put into my career or education?
- Billy Graham replied to this question: *"It's not necessarily wrong to take pride in our work, of course; if we don't, our work will probably end up sloppy or incomplete. Paul urged his young companion Timothy to be "a worker who does not need to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15)."*<sup>vi</sup>
- The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: *"...I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy."* 2 Corinthians 7:4 (ESV) He was "proud" of what God had done in them.
- Now that we know we can brag on our kids and grandkids, what are some examples of the subtle sin of pride and how do we spot it in ourselves? Here are some diagnostic questions we should ask.
- Remember the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18? "I'm glad I'm not like HIM!" When I see the brokenness of others (the tax collector) do I pat myself on the back (like the Pharisee) saying, "I'm glad I'm not like that!" or do I say, "but for the grace of God" that could be me.
- How about self-reliance? [Illustration: Knox – "I got it!" until he "doesn't"]
- When things are going well, is my attitude, "It's okay Lord, I've got this" or do I remind myself even in the best of times, "I need Thee every hour?"
- When I see the sin of others, do I say, "I would NEVER do that" or do I say, Lord by your grace help me to see my "hidden faults." (Ps. 19:12)
- Here's a tricky one: If I say, "I don't have a pride problem" that just may be the sign that I DO have a pride problem. See how subtle this can be?
- Like King Nebuchadnezzar do I think, "look at what I accomplished" or do I remember the words of 1 Corinthians 4:7 *"...What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?"* Everything I am or have came from God's hand not mine.
- Then there is false humility. Have you heard the term, "humble brag?" What is a "humble brag?"
- One writer commented, *"Christian humblebrag often begins with words like, "Blessed to be ..., Honored to be included in ..., So grateful for ...."*<sup>vii</sup> Who is getting the glory, me or God? ☺
- False humility is really pride in disguise.

- Oswald Chambers wrote, *"There is nothing more awful than conscious humility; it is the most satanic type of pride."*<sup>viii</sup>
- **Proverbs 27:2 (ESV) — 2** Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.
- Could habitual worry be a form of pride? What? We all worry and fret but if I'm obsessed with worry am I trusting in God or myself to fix the problem?
- Those are just a few of the many symptoms of subtle pride.
- Here is the ultimate danger of pride: "In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God" (Psalm 10:4).
- The ultimate form of pride is when someone rejects God's offer of salvation through Christ because they believe in the words of the poem "Invictus," *"I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul."*<sup>ix</sup>
- As we read in Proverbs 16: The "arrogant in heart [are] an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished." If they reject Christ that punishment will be for eternity.
- Other thoughts on the subtle sin of pride?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Pride can be a subtle sin and we are all susceptible to it.
- So, how do we guard against the sin of pride?
- We must constantly recognize God is God and we're NOT.
- We should say what King Nebuchadnezzar said after he "looked up to heaven": *"I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases...No one can stop him or say to him, 'What do you mean by doing these things?'"*<sup>x</sup>
- This week let's honor God for His Sovereignty in all we do and thank Him that HE is God and we are NOT.

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.azquotes.com/author/8805-C\\_S\\_Lewis/tag/pride](https://www.azquotes.com/author/8805-C_S_Lewis/tag/pride)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/pride-Bible.html>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/howard-hughes/>  
<https://madghosts.com/coolfacts/toward-the-end-of-his-life-billionaire-howard-hughes-was-known-for-storing-his-urine-in-bottles/>

<sup>iv</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Da 4:30). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Da 4:26). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>vi</sup> <https://billygraham.org/answer/remain-humble-in-your-accomplishments/>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://baptistnews.com/article/humblebragging-a-double-technical-foul/#.Yf6WXC2ZN-U>

<sup>viii</sup> Devotions for a Deeper Life: A Daily Devotional By Oswald Chambers (Aug. 8)

<sup>ix</sup> [https://poets.org/poem/invictus?gclid=Cj0KCQiA3fiPBhCCARIsAFQ8QzWI8YrOmUAsluqFOkLepkiVL871g8MuLJbeApaJTeV3qR4WBV5OcSkaAgKgEALw\\_wcB](https://poets.org/poem/invictus?gclid=Cj0KCQiA3fiPBhCCARIsAFQ8QzWI8YrOmUAsluqFOkLepkiVL871g8MuLJbeApaJTeV3qR4WBV5OcSkaAgKgEALw_wcB)

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<sup>x</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Da 4:34–35). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.