

LESSON 8

THE DANGER OF PRIDE

CENTRAL TRUTH: Humility toward God is an essential virtue of Christian character.

MEMORY VERSE: Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. – Prov. 16: 18

LESSON TEXT

Daniel 5:3-6, 17-23; 1 Peter 5:5-6

Daniel 5:

3 So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

4 As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

5 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.

6 His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking

17 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.

18 “Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendour.

19 Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples 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.

20 But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.

21 He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

22 “But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.

23 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.

1 Peter 5:

5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

INTRODUCTION

Pride that drives us to try impress others or that vainly attempts to cover feelings of insecurity can have negative effects on our lives and could open us up for God’s discipline (James 4:6). This kind of pride can cause us to close our eyes to reality and pretend that the difficulties of life are not real. This week’s lesson endeavours to teach us that the way to success in life does not lie in hiding behind the cover-up of pride. Rather, security and success in life comes as we humble ourselves before God, placing full confidence in His plan and purpose for our lives.

LESSON

Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. He made a great feast. The feast itself showed Belshazzar’s contempt for the power of men. Then, to show his contempt for the power of the true God, he ordered that the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem be brought back to the banquet hall so the assembled merry-makers might drink from them. In drinking the people honoured the gods made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Nabonidus, Belshazzar’s father, had attempted to strengthen the Babylonian religion. In keeping with that, this act by his son may have been an attempt to undo the influence of Nebuchadnezzar’s honouring the God of Israel (**Daniel 4:34-35**). While he and his lords became drunk and riotous, the fingers of a man’s hand appeared, writing on the wall.

The King cried out with alarm for his wise men to come and interpret the message. However, none of them was able to do that. At the queen’s suggestion, Daniel was summoned to

interpret the writing. In his reply, Daniel summarized God's dealing with Belshazzar's predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar.

He related lessons that Nebuchadnezzar had learned from God's dealings with him. When Nebuchadnezzar failed to recognize that the power was God's and not his own, he became arrogant and proud. God then humbled him and dethroned him by making him live like an animal with the wild donkeys. Through this discipline, Nebuchadnezzar came to recognize the greatness of God's authority (**Daniel 4:34-35**). Daniel then indicated that just as God had judged Nebuchadnezzar's pride by removing him from the throne, so He would judge Belshazzar's pride by taking the kingdom from him and giving it to another people. This judgment was written in the words that appeared on the wall.

We must be careful to avoid the prideful tendency of ignoring the lessons learned by others in the past. Pride can be a feeling of self-sufficiency. And the result of self-sufficiency is an attitude that we know it all. This aspect of pride, like all others, can be conquered when we surrender to the lordship of Christ.

LIFE APPLICATION

Pride gives a false sense of security. It can cause a person to deny the seriousness and danger of a particular situation, and to act in an unrealistic and irrational manner. Pride may also keep a person from taking appropriate and necessary actions. This is exactly what happened to Belshazzar. Rather than judge his predicament honestly, he chose to host a great feast. In his pride he probably assumed the armies of Babylon would defeat the approaching Persian army.

How often do we face the difficulties in our lives the same way? God's Word never asks us to deny the reality of what is happening around us. Rather, the Scriptures teach us to honestly evaluate the situation, recognize that victory lies in confessing our inability to save ourselves. Let us humble ourselves before God, and exercise complete confidence in His ability to deliver us.

1. How does pride manifest itself in people's lives?
2. What steps can a person take to fully humble him/herself before God?
3. Why do people often fail to learn from the mistakes of others?

-----**DAILY BIBLE READING**-----

- Monday – Do not forget the Lord (Deut. 8:11-18)
- Tuesday – Pride Leads to Destruction (Proverbs 16:16-20)
- Wednesday – The Arrogant Will Be Humbled (Isaiah 2:11-17)
- Thursday – True Humility Brings Exaltation (Matthew 23:2-12)
- Friday – Use Your Gifts Humbly (Romans 12:3-8)
- Saturday – Love is not Proud (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)