



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Seven Deadly Sins

Part 2: Pride: The Mother of All Sins

Tim Badal | August 14, 2016 | Daniel 4:28-37



Last week we introduced our current series, “The Seven Deadly Sins.” This is a subject I think most of us would rather not talk about—how sin affects us, how it affects our relationship with God, with others, and even with ourselves. We explained that in this series we’ll be looking at seven particular sins.

While this list of deadly sins isn’t found in any certain passage of Scripture, we do find lists of sins that God says are detestable. For example, Proverbs 6:16–19 gives us such a list, as does Galatians 5:19–21. These listed sins are unbecoming of a follower of Jesus Christ. But beyond that, there is mention upon mention of each of these sins in Scripture, and they are evident in the lives of biblical people.

Why would we spend seven weeks focusing on seven particular sins? Early in church history, the church fathers sought to articulate some of the vices that Christians needed to steer clear of, and there was a reason that this list became so famous. A man named Evagrius Ponticus created this list in 429 A.D. We need to realize that in the 5th century, most Christians didn’t have access to the Scriptures. Even when they did have one of the few hand-written copies (The printing press would not be invented for another thousand years.), most people couldn’t read. Thus the pastors of those days sought ways to help the people remember what Scripture taught.

Why did they focus their time and attention on these particular seven sins? The early church saw these sins as being the source of all other sins. As one church writer put it, “These are the large branches of the sin tree from which all the twigs and smaller branches feed.” For example, we’ll learn how the issue of pride feeds all other sins in many ways. In this sense, these sins are precursors to all sorts of other sins.

I don’t know if Evagrius realized his list would last as long as it has, but 1500 years later we still have movies about the Seven Deadly Sins. Books are written about the Seven Deadly Sins. And I learned this week—with the help of one of our attendees—that one of the most famous TV shows was designed to personify the Seven Deadly Sins. Maybe I was just blind to it, but the writer and producer of the show “Gilligan’s Island” built the whole premise of his story line on his characters being the personification of the Seven Deadly Sins. For example, the Skipper represented anger. In every episode he gets angry or is filled with frustration. Gilligan was known to be a glutton. He really doesn’t care about anything but consuming and enjoying life. Then Mary Ann, representing envy, is always envious of what Ginger had—her good looks or her charisma. Ginger was a personification of lust. Then we have the millionaire, who was known for his greed. His wife, who did nothing but just kind of hang out, was the picture of sloth. And the professor, who was always the one who had the answer for everything, was the personification of pride.

As I continued to research this, I was surprised to learn that the producer, a man named Schwartz—who was also the producer and writer of shows like The Brady Bunch—had a deep and profound relationship with Jesus Christ. In the writing of Gilligan’s Island, he said he wanted to portray in an easily understood fashion the consequences of each of these sins. I was mesmerized by what he came up with. He said he wanted to build into his writing a recognition that sin always keeps you longer than you

want to be there. How long was that tour supposed to last? Sing it with me: “A three-hour tour.” How long did they stay there? A whole lot longer. And isn’t that true of sin? It advertises itself as a short, sweet little ride for fun and enjoyment, but it always drags out longer than we want it to. It seems to rear its ugly head long after the short ride takes place. Here’s another thing he said which I thought was interesting. They were all bound up on this island of sin, but each of them for different reasons. Seven individuals each dealing with their own particular sin.

In our group here today, we all recognize two very important truths. First—I want you to articulate this in your own heart—we’re all sinners. Now I want you to point to someone close to you and say, “You’re a sinner.” Use your finger and point at them. Doesn’t that make you feel better? There’s something refreshing about telling someone the truth. Now, for the person you’ve pointed to, I want them to point back at you and say, “So are you.”

Here’s the truth. For all have sinned, as we learned last week, and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All means all. But here’s the thing. We all struggle with our own propensity and inclination and drive toward particular sins. The inhabitants of Gilligan’s Island were not all sinning the same sin—they each had their own issue. And in a room this size we recognize that while we’re all sinners, we all struggle with particular sins.

Here’s what the devil loves to do. He loves you to lessen your own sin and widen someone else’s sin. So you might deal with this little sin over here and it seems palatable and understandable, and you can speak it away through all sorts of words of refinement. But what about that big sin that person sitting next to you has? “Oh, they’re really a sinner. Look how evil and dirty and nasty they are.” So while our inclination might be toward particular sins, we are all sinners in great need of a Savior.

The final thing this writer and producer said, which I thought was important, is that they were perpetually lost. They worked and worked and worked, but they couldn’t get off the island by themselves. As sinners, we can try to clean ourselves up. We can try to reform ourselves. But the Bible says even our righteous deeds are as filthy rags before a holy God, and we need Someone to come rescue us out of our lostness.

Why do we spend so much time focusing on sin? Because we all struggle with it, and if we want to be empowered by the Holy Spirit through the blood of Jesus Christ, we must understand what our sin is and what God has called us to be as His followers.

We’re going to look at a case study in Daniel 4. It’s the story of a prideful king who thinks he’s the greatest person in the world. First, God is going to warn this man, speaking truth to him through one of His prophets, but the king won’t listen. So God will exact His judgment on this prideful man, turning his pride into humility. Then, instead of glorying in himself, he glories in God.

Daniel 4 tells the story of King Nebuchadnezzar. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar is the greatest man on the face of the earth. There is no one greater than he is. He has built a phenomenal kingdom. He’s taken over most of the known world. His empire reaches “from sea to shining sea.” He has the world at his disposal, and he begins to recognize how great he really is.

Chapter 4 of Daniel begins with a dream Nebuchadnezzar has. One of the men he has conquered and taken as a slave from the land of Israel is brought to him, because Daniel is known to be able to interpret dreams. Daniel interprets the dream for this king and he tells Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom is going to be taken from him because of his pride. He warns him, “If you don’t get your pride under control and honor God—the One Who gives all things and enables you to be the king you are, with the things you have and your power to control others—if you don’t put that at the foot of God, then God will bring forth His judgment.”

Does the king heed the news? No. He doesn’t listen to the words of a righteous man. We’re going to look at what happens, beginning in verse 28. *“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.”* What came upon King Nebuchadnezzar? Everything Daniel had warned him of. *“At the end of twelve months,”* one year after Daniel had warned him, *“he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 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?’ While the words were still in the king’s mouth...”*

Let me stop here. How often have you said something that, while it’s leaving your lips, you wish you could take back? You wish you could take a fishing pole and reel it back in. King Nebuchadnezzar, while speaking these great words of pride—before they could leave his lips—*“there fell a voice from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you.’”* “You’re losing your kingdom,” the voice from heaven says.

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.

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.

As we discuss this topic—"Pride: the Mother of All Sins" —consider this quote: "Pride is a cosmic crime. It has the dubious distinction of standing alone atop the list of the seven deadly sins, because it is in essence the source of all sins. That is, it gives birth to all others." Now, I'm not sure that's completely true, but it seems to make sense.

Pride of course is the oldest of all sins. Second and third oldest might be adultery and lying, followed by all manner of other sins. But pride is found even before the creation of the world. We know that before creation Lucifer stood in the presence of God as the chief cherub. Because of his splendor and glory, he made the decision in his heart that he was better than God and to rebel against God. A third of the angels agreed with his *coup d'état* and fell with him.

We know Adam and Eve, our first ancestors, also fell to the sin of pride. Remember what the serpent promised them? He said in the day they eat of the fruit, they would become like God. They wanted to be like God and believed they should be like God. As a result, they rebelled and left the truth and goodness of God's righteous decrees and fell prey to a lie.

Only a couple chapters later, a corporate group of people in a city called Babel gathered together to build a great tower that would reach to the heavens. What was their motive? To make a great name for themselves. But God punished their pride, as they tried to be great when God alone should be worshipped and praised. You see, it has been said that while all sins lead us away from God, only pride seeks to elevate oneself above God.

I want to illustrate the insidious nature of pride: Imagine you are at the beach (I know you want to be there right now) and have time to create something so you make a body out of the sand. Imagine that you have the ability to make that body speak and listen to you. Suppose this sand creature speaks back to you, saying, "I want you to know that I'm better than you. I'm smarter than you. I'm more powerful than you. I can do everything you can do." Now, I'm sure in this imaginary story you would look at the sand figure and say, "Wait a minute—I created you. You're small and I'm big. You don't have life without me."

So is the story of the creation of man. Out of the dust of the ground we were created by God. He breathed life into us. And what do we do? We look to the God of the universe Who created everything seen and unseen, and we say, "I'm better than You. I'm smarter than You. I'm greater than You. I am in all ways more majestic and awesome than You are."

Here's how we do that. Every time we choose to go our own way instead of His way, we tell God, "I've got a better way." It's amazing that creatures of the mud would tell the God of the universe they're better than He is. Why would anybody do that? Jonathan Edwards put it this way: "While pride may be most the grievous of all sins, it is also likewise the most hidden, secret and deceitful of all transgressions."

Sadly, we see it in the world of Hollywood. We see it in the world of sports. An icon named Muhammad Ali, who just recently died, would utter at all times, "I'm the greatest. There's no one better than me." I can imagine in the heart of a young guy like Michael Phelps, after all the gold medals he's won, that there is a root of pride tempting him to say he's the greatest. And quite frankly, he's got a good argument. You see, it's easy for us to see greatness that people project in the world.

I saw an interview not long ago where Charles Barkley was talking about his relationship with Michael Jordan. Someone said, "Hey, you guys are close friends. Do you still hang out?" He answered, "No. And here's why. I got tired of Michael telling me he

was the best at everything. I couldn't deal with it anymore. He was always the smartest, always the brightest, always the best—and it just got tiring."

But here's the thing: Pride comes to the church door as well. It impacts each and every one of us. And we have to call it what it is—sin and rebellion against the God Who created us and Who died on the cross on our behalf. So how do we address it?

1. The definition of pride

First we have to understand what pride is. Throughout my study I sought a very succinct and precise definition of pride, but I really couldn't find one. Webster's Dictionary defines it simply as "an inordinate self-esteem—a feeling that you are better or more important than others." I thought, "Okay, that's good. But there's more to pride than that." I found this from a writer named John Maxwell: "There are two kinds of pride, both good and bad. Good pride represents our dignity and self-respect. Bad pride is the deadly sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance."

So let's consider what good pride is. I wish there was a different word for it, but there really isn't. We talk about being proud of things, and there are some things I believe God, in His grace, allows us to be proud of. You've got a project at work and your efforts will determine whether a customer says yes or no to your product. You've invested time and energy on this product. You get a phone call from your boss, who says, "They bought it! They're ordering from us. We did it. We closed the deal!" You hang up the phone and there's that feeling inside of "Yes! I did a good job. Yes! I accomplished the task." I want you to know that in all my reading of Scripture, that is not a sin. That's a sense of accomplishment. Where does that feeling come from? If it's not sin, where does it come from? It comes from God, Who after accomplishing six days of creation said, "It is good. It is good."

God wants us to take pride in the things we do. We need to do so in moderation, of course, but it is good to feel a sense of accomplishment. I feel good when a catering job goes well. I feel good when I preach a sermon that seems to have impacted the lives of people. It's okay to say, "Hey, I think I did a good job. I think I accomplished what was asked of me."

How about having pride in others? Recently I was on a phone call with a person who was asking me about the church. He had never met you. He had never been to a service. He said, "Tell me about your church." Now I want to be honest—I gushed about the church. I said, "Man, we've got a church filled with wonderful people. God is doing great things through this church. He's using the sacrifices and faithfulness of a group of broken people to change and transform lives."

Should I have been chastised? "Hey, you shouldn't be so proud of those guys. Don't say nice things about them." No, the Bible shows us over and over again that God delights in His people. He revels in the good things His people do. He announces them from one generation to another. It is good for us to affirm others and to reflect upon the good and praiseworthy things we see in those around us.

What about my children? Is it good for me to tell my children I'm proud of them? Absolutely. Again, it should be done in moderation. I should never say, "You're the best children in the world." That would be a lie. I love my kids, but there are probably better ones somewhere out there.

But seriously, I have the wonderful honor of being the dad to three of some of the greatest kids. I love them and I'm proud that they carry my name. I'm proud that I can call them my children. And that's okay. It's okay to delight in them. It's okay to be proud of their accomplishments. But be careful. Don't be so pietistic as to say, "I can never say I'm proud of my kids, because pride is a sin. I can never feel a sense of accomplishment when I'm handed a diploma that means I've done something that is praiseworthy." Rejoice in that. Revel in it. But recognize that even within the noble side of that word pride there is a slippery slope to the negative.

What's the negative? I'll give you another definition. Pride is a misdirected and misapplied love towards self instead of God and others. We've been told we are called to love. Jesus was asked, "What command is the greatest?" He said, "I can sum up all the law and the prophets in this statement: love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength" (Luke 10:25-28). Honor God. Love God. His is your number one relationship.

The second relationship is that we love our neighbors as ourselves. Pride wages an all-out war against those two loves we're supposed to have. So it's misapplied and misdirected love. Instead of our love going vertical and horizontal, it comes inward. It says, "I'm going to love myself. I'm going to take care of myself. I'm going to minister to myself. I'm going to make sure self is number one. I'm going to do all I need to do to make sure I'm taken care of. I may do that even to the detriment of my

relationships with God and others.” This kind of love causes us to elevate ourselves above others—and even above God. It’s a detriment to our worship of God, and it will cause divisions between us and others.

How does pride live itself out? It seeks self-exaltation, self-promotion and self-justification. What that means is, “Put the spotlight on me. Make sure the cameras are always on me. I’m the most important figure. When I walk into a room, everybody should stop what they’re doing. When I talk, people should listen. When I need something, I should get it right away, the way I want it.” That’s what pride does.

But notice—pride also takes a subtler form. Some of us will say, “I’m not that way. I don’t think that way.” But more subtly, we can use things like self-degradation, self-demotion and self-condemnation. When someone over here starts getting praise: “Oh, so-and-so has done a wonderful job. They really have a knack for this, that or the other.” And you’re over here in the corner, saying, “Well, I may not be as good as him, but what about me? What about my feelings? Hey, I’m working hard. Bring the spotlight over here. Stop putting it over there. How about me?” We use these things to move the spotlight off of others and on to ourselves. We cry. We moan and groan to make sure people know how bad our life is, so they feel sorry for us and may see us, instead of being able to see others.

To put it another way, pride is elevating self. So any time you wonder whether or not you’re sinning, consider how much you are putting the attention on yourself. How important are your preferences? How important is your way? Do you always have to be right? Do you always have to be first? Do you always have to be the one who gets the credit?

You see, our culture says we’re to look in the mirror and ask, “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the greatest of them all?” I know what my mirror says. “You’re one cool dude. You’re great. You’re wonderful. You do a great job at this. You do a great job at that.” I like spending time with the mirror.

But the Bible says when we look into the mirror of the Scriptures it tells us we’re broken. It tells us we’re people in need of grace. It tells us we’re people in need of saving and rescuing. So we need to recognize pride and consider where we’re sinning as a result of it.

2. The dimensions where pride lives.

Where does this pride live? Notice its domain. In Daniel 4 we see that Daniel has warned King Nebuchadnezzar 12 months before it actually takes place that his pride is getting the best of him. He must get control of his pride, because if he doesn’t, God’s judgment is coming. Is what He does a heinous thing? Yes. He took a king and made him eat like an ox, growing feathers on his body and fingernails like an eagle’s talons. When God deals with pride, it’s harsh. But let us not forget: God gives grace. For 12 months, God said, “Turn from your pride.” Right now God is speaking by His Holy Spirit to some of us, saying, “Stop thinking of yourself so highly. Stop having to be number one. You don’t have to be. Serve others. Honor others.” Yet we choose not to humble ourselves.

We can take pride in our power.

So what happens? For 12 months King Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t heed the warnings. One day he’s walking on the roof of his royal palace in Babylon, and he says, “*Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power?*” (4:30). The first domain of pride is power. The king looks over all that is taking place in front of him and concludes one thing: “I am great. Look at all I’ve created.” And from a human standpoint, if anyone had reason to think he was great, it was Nebuchadnezzar. He was one of the greatest builders in ancient times. Forty-nine different buildings in northern Iraq today have the inscription: Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. He built amazing things. He built 17 religious temples in the city and suburbs of Babylon. He constructed two great walls that surrounded the city. The outer wall was wide enough for chariots to pass each other on it. He installed great fortifications, fountains, roadways and canals. He had sewer systems in a time when those were unheard of. He had business districts and areas of commerce.

As he looked out over the land, he used the phrase, “...which I have built.” Here’s the problem when a prideful attitude enters our hearts. We look at our accomplishments and we take inordinate credit for them. Did Nebuchadnezzar have a part in the greatness of Babylon? Yes, he did. He was the king. Of course he had a part in it. Did he personally place the rocks in the wall? No. Was he the mason who leveled the rocks and put the mortar between them? No. Was he the one who oversaw these

inventive projects? Was he the one who created the architectural plans for this great city? Probably not. He played a small part in a great, great work.

We also need to recognize that whatever our accomplishments are, whatever God has enabled us to do, much of it is the result of the hard work of others. Maybe someone will say, "You've done a great job with that ministry. You've done a great job with that project." Are you quick to say, "Well, yes. I have worked hard on it. I was the mastermind behind it." Do you not give praise or credit to others who worked alongside you?

Nowhere does Nebuchadnezzar say, "I was part of a great team." Nowhere does he mention the people of Babylon who helped build that great city. A prideful heart says, "Look at what I have done."

We can take pride in our possessions.

Besides saying, "I've done all of this," Nebuchadnezzar continues, "...to make a royal residence." He says, "This is for me. All that I've built, all that I've created—all the palaces and roadways and fountains and gardens—are for me." Some of us today may have the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar in our own hearts. God has given us the ability to create wealth and we use that capital to take care of ourselves, but we then say, "This is all for me."

One of the ways you can determine if you are prideful in this way is to look over your last month's expenditures. Did you spend your money on yourself? How much of your money found its way to someone else? How is it being a blessing to other people? How is it furthering the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ? How is it furthering the wellbeing of those who are less fortunate? If you can look at your accounts and say, "Well, the house is about me, the car is about me, my clothes are about me, my entertainment is about me, my food is about me, my vacation is about me..." then you're more prideful than you may realize.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also" (Matthew 6:21). Are you amassing possessions for yourself? Now, everybody needs a house. We need cars. I'm not being legalistic in that way. But if there's no outlet through which your resources are going to others, then you have created a "royal residence" for yourself. Your possessions are all about you.

The Bible is clear that we are stewards of the gifts we possess and that they are intended to be used to minister and bless those around us.

We can take pride in our position.

Nebuchadnezzar took pride not only in his power and his possessions, but also in his position. Notice what he says at the end of verse 30, "...for the glory of my majesty." He was bragging in his power. "All that I have, all that you see—whenever anyone walks into the city of Babylon, what they're going to know is that I built it. It's for me. When you see the great city of Babylon, don't speak of the people. Don't speak of the great services or tranquility this city brings people. The only thing you should think about when you see all I have and all I have done is the greatness and praiseworthiness of me, the king."

How many of us have bought houses or cars, or have pursued nameplates or awards, so people will know we are people of position? Are we trying to tell people we are something? Are we glorying in our own greatness—or in the accomplishments of our kids? "Look at how great I am; my kids are on the honor roll. I'm a great parent; my kid is great at baseball. Look how great I am; my kid is the best musician in the school. Look at our house. Look at our cars. We don't drive anything but the newest and greatest. Look at all our gadgets." Why? "Because I want you to know I'm an important person."

Why do I have to wear the name brand clothes? Because I don't want the kids next to me to think I'm not as cool as they are? You see, we do all these things because we want people to think we're something, that we hold a higher position. But notice what God says in our text. "It is I Who am the most high." God rules the kingdoms of men and gives them what He will.

When we struggle with pride, we believe we are the main character in God's story. We're not. He is. The main character of God's story in human history is Jesus Christ. When pride enters our hearts, we will begin to think we're the main character, the star of the show—and we're not.

3. The dangers pride brings.

What happens? Notice that God doesn't stand idly by and let us think thoughts in pride. He doesn't allow our pride to go undealt with. What does He do? He dealt with King Nebuchadnezzar in an instantaneous way. While the words were still in the

mouth of the king, God brought judgment for “seven periods of time.” We don’t know if that was seven days, seven weeks, seven months or seven years. But I would contend that even seven minutes of having to act like an animal would be too long. Right? We don’t know how long it was, but what a terrible punishment to live like an animal. Nebuchadnezzar is on his belly, growing hair, growing talons, eating like an ox would. He was utterly humiliated.

Understand this: God addresses our sin. At times He’s very gracious to warn us, giving us the opportunity to repent. But at other times, before we know it, God will bring forth His judgments.

When I was a young man, I was serving here in the church in a lay capacity, and every ministry I had my hands in was really doing well. I remember talking with one of the leaders at the time, who said, “Tim, you’ve got the Midas touch. Every time you’re involved in a ministry it turns to gold.” I want to confess that in that moment, at 24 years of age, I said, “Bring it on. Tell me more. Yes, I am great. I’m glad you noticed that. I’m glad to finally get some press.” I’m just being honest with you.

There I was listening to these great words. Leaning back in my chair and enjoying what I was hearing. It fed my ego. But then I remember in that moment God said to me, “Really? Really, Badal? Do you really think you’re that great? Do you really think you’re that awesome?”

I don’t know if you know this, but the word “ego” can be used as an acronym for “edging God out.” That’s what I was doing. “God, get off the throne. Hey, this is praise Tim time.” Have you ever had a moment in your life when you knew that at some point you would have to give an account for it?

I remember walking to the parking lot thinking, “Maybe I should go back and say, ‘I appreciate everything you said, but I’ve got to be honest with you, it’s all about God.’” I remember God convicting me that I should do that. But instead I got in my car and told my wife, “You’re not going to believe the nice things they just said about me.” Amanda paused, but then like a good wife she said, “I live with you. You’re not that great.”

Did I listen to her? No. I let the praise simmer, because I loved it so much. Whenever I didn’t feel good about myself, I’d go back to those words from that individual—who I believe was kind and good-natured and wasn’t intentionally doing anything bad. He was simply trying to encourage me. But I took it and fed my ego with it. I edged God out, thinking I could do this myself.

Fast forward a year or so when I became the pastor of this church. I remember a specific time when God made it clear to me through the reading of Scripture, “Your heart is filled with pride.” He brought me back to that moment and said, “You had an opportunity to give Me the glory. You had the opportunity to give Me the honor, but you took it for yourself.” Then the next year was one of the hardest years of my life. Everything I did became difficult and I knew that God was disciplining me for that moment, because I remember how evil my heart was, thinking I deserved the praise.

For a year, God worked on the heart of this preacher, and He taught me things. Do you know what He taught me? I’ll never forget. I was doing my devotions when I came to the story of Balaam. I read how God used a donkey to correct him. I was meditating on this story I’ve known since I was little, and God said, “Tim, I’m in the business of using donkeys—and you’re one of them.” You see, when you know you’re God’s donkey, you’re not going to think too highly of yourself. You’re just a donkey in the hands of the majestic God. God has used that to remind me that I’m not to edge Him out, but I’m to use the opportunities and gifts He gives me to be a reflector of His glory and grace. So when the spotlight comes on me, I need to be quick to shut that down.

But there are temptations all about us. I’m living a moment in my life when it’s very tempting to think I’m pretty great. I’ve got to be continually reminded that while people may say nice things about me, I am a donkey in God’s army. God is using me for His grace and His purposes to reflect His glory.

Here’s what happens when we choose pride.

Pride defies God.

The Westminster Catechism of Faith says, “The chief goal of man is to glorify God.” Listen, you and I can’t glorify God when we’re glorifying self. We can’t make God great in our world if we’re busy making ourselves great in the world. We can’t speak the praises of God while we’re speaking praises of ourselves. So when God is taken off His throne, we put ourselves on it. When thoughts of pride come into our lives, what we do is a *coup d’état* against God. “Get off Your throne, God. You don’t deserve it—I do.”

Pride defiles man.

Pride, like every other sin, condemns man. Proverbs 16:5 says, *“Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord.”* “Oh, my pride’s not that bad, just because I think more highly of myself than I ought to. It’s not that bad.” God calls it an abomination. Do you know what the prideful thing is? We think that other things God calls an abomination are really sinful—but our prideful hearts are just as bad.

Proverbs 21:4 says, *“Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.”* It’s a sin, and we have to deal with it. The judgment would come upon King Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride, and you and I are testing the heart of God when we think thoughts of grandeur about ourselves.

Pride divides society.

The great preacher of a generation ago, Adrian Rogers, put it this way: “There has never been a war, an argument, a scuffle, a divorce, or a church split where pride wasn’t a major factor.” We’re the problem. And when we think we’re better than we really are, not only will it ruin our relationship with God—because we throw Him off His throne— we will always have issues with our brothers because God isn’t rightly on the throne of our hearts.

That’s why Proverbs 13:10 says pride brings contention. Proverbs 28:25 says an arrogant man stirs up strife. You see, we can’t be proud if we’re going to have good relationships with other people. Pride will divide us. It is good for us to have a level of patriotism as citizens of the United States. I think the Bible teaches that we should be happy about our nationalism, because God created boundaries for where we live and we should take pride in that. But that pride of nationalism can lead us to all kinds of sins, where we treat other countries as less than ours. It divides. Racism is a sin of pride. That’s why we call it white pride and black pride and brown pride and all the other prides we think can of. What it does is it separates society and it says, “I’m better than you are.”

Pride disobeys the Scriptures.

For the Christian, it is absolute idiocy to be proud, because it disobeys the Scriptures. We affirm and uphold the teachings of this Book. And our Master and Savior—Who speaks and guides us and is the example for us—says this: “If you want to be great in My Kingdom, you need to be a servant. If you want to be first in My Kingdom, you have to be last.” We hear and affirm that, and we say as a follower of Jesus Christ, “I want to live that way.”

But then our pride says, “But I’m number one. It’s all about me.” If we want to follow and imitate Jesus Christ, we need to pay attention to Philippians 2, where it says although Jesus *“was in the form of God, [He] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.”* The one Individual Who had a right to be proud—the One Who deserves all the glory and renown and fame and newspaper clippings and accolades and praise—Who could be proud and not sinful, made Himself nothing, taking on the nature of a servant and being obedient even unto death on a cross.

It is amazing that you and I, as Christians—as attestors to this Book and to this Savior—would think we can be followers of Christ with the sin of pride running through our veins.

Pride destroys souls.

Finally, if given enough time, pride will destroy you. It did King Nebuchadnezzar. It ended his reign. Pride ultimately destroys all it controls. In Proverbs 15:25 we read, *“The Lord tears down the house of the proud.”* He will do that. Not might, not may, not could—but will. He may do it in this life—where He takes everything away from you, where you test Him enough that He says, “If you want to live life on your own, then fine. It’s on you. You make it work.”

Or, it will happen in the life to come where you will stand before God. If you have told Him throughout your life and have announced to the world, “I am in charge. I get to determine the direction of this vessel. I’m the one who’s most important. I’m the master of the universe,” then God will say, “If you have not bowed the knee to the true and real Master of the universe, Jesus Christ, then you will depart from Me as a person of iniquity.”

We know pride comes before a fall and brings forth destruction. Will we heed the warnings of God before it’s too late? Nebuchadnezzar didn’t, and he experienced the judgment of God.

4. The direction we need to take

But here's where God's grace comes. God's grace gives a second chance, and Nebuchadnezzar is given a second chance. Notice in Daniel 4 that Nebuchadnezzar comes to his right mind. Verse 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."*

Nebuchadnezzar comes to his right mind. He sees the error of his ways and heads in the direction he should go, and the direction all of us should go. What does it involve?

It requires us to honor God.

The direction we should take begins with honoring God as God. Nebuchadnezzar stops talking about himself and starts talking about the One Who's really important. In some ways this is subtle. What we need to do doesn't take a lot of energy or work, but it does take a change of heart.

If someone says, "Hey, you're great. You're awesome. The work you did or your accomplishments or your family or what you possess—you've got a lot going for you" — in that moment you have a decision to make. "Am I going to receive the glory or am I going to honor God? Am I going to honor Him for the life and breath and mind He gave me? Am I going to honor God for the gifts I have?"

Start your morning tomorrow with the mentality that all you've been given is for His honor. "When someone gives me praise, I will quickly deflect that praise and give You the honor due Your name." How much are you honoring God as people honor you?

It requires us to humble ourselves.

God had shown Nebuchadnezzar who was boss. Notice Nebuchadnezzar's response in verse 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."* God in His grace restored Nebuchadnezzar back to his place. Then he says, *"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."*

Either you're going to humble yourself, or God will do it for you. And I will tell you, it's always better for you to do it. How do you begin to humble yourself? Romans 12:3 says, "Think of yourself with sober judgment." You aren't as great as you think you are. I'm not as great as I think I am. I don't care how great my mom says I am—she's biased. I appreciate the kind words of a loving mom, but listen: I'm not as great as I think I am. I'm a very, very, very small fish in a very, very, very, very big pond. For the Christian, it is unbecoming to be proud in who we are. If we really truly recognize we are sinners in need of God's grace, we ought to humble ourselves.

It requires us to help others.

We must also look to the interests of others. We honor God, we humble ourselves, and we help others. In verse 27 of Daniel 4 we get a little bit of what was going on. Before the events of today's passage, Daniel says to the king, *"O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."*

Nebuchadnezzar had the unique opportunity to take his wealth, power and possessions and to spread them around to those who needed them. But he didn't. He kept it all for himself. You and I have the same decision. God has given us power and possessions and all types of things that we can either keep for ourselves and invest in our own lives, based on what we want, or we can begin to divest them into the lives of others.

God says, "Listen, Christian. I've given you all these gifts. I've endowed you with all these things." But over and over again He also says, "I want you to serve. I want you to give. I want you to use the gifts I've given you to better those around you." The reason why we call the church to serve—why we believe every one of you should have a place of service in the body of Christ—is it battles against pride. We are called to take what we have and give it to others, to serve others. Instead of keeping the things God has given me for myself, for my own good, I want to divest it to others so they may be blessed and served in better ways.

Pride affected a great king, but sadly, it affects many of us in far more ways. Because of this, you and I stand condemned. But aren't you glad we have a Savior Who could have taken pride in Himself—but He didn't. He made Himself nothing, being

obedient to death on a cross, and by doing this He took our sin of pride and nailed it to the cross. The humble blood that was shed on that cross washes away our sin of pride.

And by the Spirit's empowering we now have victory over pride. He enables us to humble ourselves, instead of thinking we have to be lifted up. So we go with Christ as our Model. We go with the Word of God as our guide. And we say "no" to pride in the days to come, "no" to boastful thoughts about ourselves, "no" to elevating ourselves and edging God out. Instead we pursue humility and the betterment of others, seeking a meek lifestyle instead of one that tells the world how great we really are. May you find victory. May we ask the Lord for each of us to find victory in our battle against pride in the days to come.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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