

STRONGER

Part 4 | Keeping A Soft Heart In Hard Times

June 22&23, 2013

Daniel 4:1-18 ESV

King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation. Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods[c]—and I told him the dream, saying, "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. He proclaimed aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.' This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

DANIEL 5:1-6

Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.

ROMANS 1:21-25

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

A contrast in heart conditions

Nebuchadnezzar = A soft heart of humility

Belshazzar = A hard heart of arrogance

How pride works:

1. Pride will deceive you

OBADIAH 1:3

"The pride of your heart has deceived you."

- A. Security – Belshazzar thought Babylon was impenetrable
- B. Wisdom – that your logic is greater than God's mystery (looked to magicians)
- C. Self-Importance – pride elevates our sovereignty and subordinates God

2. Pride will bring you disgrace

PROVERBS 11:2

"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."

PROVERBS 18:12

"Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor."

3. Pride will cause you to be humbled

PROVERBS 29:23

"A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor."

- A. The safest place to be is on your knees
- B. We will either learn through humility or humiliation

4. Pride will bring the discipline and rebuke of God on your life

PROVERBS 15:2

"The LORD tears down the proud man's house but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact."

5. Pride will cause God to oppose you

JAMES 4:6

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble"

- A. If we aren't working to glorify God, we are living to glorify something else
- B. God cannot "bless" disobedience
- C. As a loving heavenly father, he "disciplines" us to restore us

6. Pride will cause you to forget God

DEUTERONOMY 8:14

"Then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God"

The power of humility:

1 PETER 5:6-7

*"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time **He may exalt you**, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober minded."*

JAMES 4:7-10

*"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and **he will exalt you.**"*

- 1. Humility Brings God into your situation
- 2. Humility is an act of Spiritual war against the enemy
- 3. Humility positions you for promotion
- 4. Humility puts God at the proper place - First

Keeping your heart soft towards the Lord:

Hebrews 3:7

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden

your hearts as in the rebellion”

COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you identify with the heart condition of either Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar?
2. In what way has pride deceived you?
3. Have you felt like God was opposing you? If so, can you see how your pride may have been a barrier between you and God?