

God's Resolution Series
"Do Not Be Wise In Your Own Eyes"
Proverbs 3.7-8

Introduction:

Last week we launched a new series of sermons looking at six characteristics that our heavenly Father desires to implement into our lives in 2017. We are focusing on six character traits recorded in Proverbs chapter three. We began the New Year by looking at the familiar truth to "trust in the Lord with all of our hearts." If you weren't here I encourage you listen to the sermon online.

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This morning we move on to the second trait, which is "do not be wise in your own eyes." Proverbs 3.7-8 reads:

*Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.
It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones.*

Our text this morning follows a simple pattern by first stating the main point that is followed by a parallel point.

*Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.*

Then the promise is given that followed by a parallel promise:

*It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones.*

The affirmation "do not be wise in your own eyes" can be simply understood as not being prideful, not being haughty, or not thinking too highly of yourself. The Bible is full of references against pride.

Remember, pride was the cause for the fall of Lucifer. (Ez.28.17) Pride is first on the list of the seven deadly sins. (Pro.6.16) And the Bible clearly teaches that pride is not from God but is from the world (1Jn.2.16).

The famous Christian apologist C. S. Lewis calls pride, "the complete anti-God state of mind." This is a very accurate description. When we are prideful, we think we have all the answers and we cannot see our need for God. The Bible says, "*In his pride the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*" (Ps.10.4 NIV)

The Bible is full of examples showing us that God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (J.s.4.6) But there is no better example than that of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter four.



Nebuchadnezzar was the King over the Babylonian Empire during the 6th Century B.C. He was a mighty General defeating all known enemies and armies of his day. History records that he never lost a battle. He was one of the world's greatest rulers – ruling over the entire known world. And he was a great developer, designing and building the city of Babylon into one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.



Nebuchadnezzar designed the city of Babylon not only as the world capital but also as an architectural wonder. The city was built upon the Euphrates River and divided in equal parts along its left and right banks, with steep embankments to contain the river's seasonal floods.

During his reign Nebuchadnezzar ordered the complete reconstruction of the imperial grounds with the construction of eight gates around the city.



Nebuchadnezzar is also credited with the construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon that consisted of skyscrapers designed with plants and trees built in cascaded fashion on the sides and tops of the buildings.

Nebuchadnezzar had a lot to be proud of! He had defeated all of his enemies, was the ruler of the known world, and lived in his self-made paradise. His own words are recorded in Daniel chapter four when he said, *“I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.”* (Dan.4.4) Nebuchadnezzar lived in peace, prosperity, and tranquility. He had no fears, no apprehensions, and no treats to his power. He enjoyed high approval ratings from all the peoples of all the nations and men of every language that lived on the earth said, *“May your peace abound.”* (Dan.4.1)

One night, as he lived in peace and prosperity, Nebuchadnezzar had a frightening dream that destroyed his tranquility. He said, *As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.* (Dan.4.5 NIV) This dream haunted Nebuchadnezzar for several sleepless nights. So he ordered all of the wise men of Babylon so that they might make known to him the interpretation of the dream. But they were not able! (Dan.4.6-7)

He then ordered the Prophet Daniel to come and interpret the dream. This wasn't Nebuchadnezzar's first encounter with the Prophet Daniel. Over thirty year earlier, during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a similar incident when he had a dream, the wise men of Babylon couldn't interpret it, and only Daniel was able to provide an interpretation for the dream. (Dan.2) At that time Nebuchadnezzar said, *“Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery”* and Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel part of the king's court. But Nebuchadnezzar was only paying lip service to God and for the next thirty years he put himself to building his mighty empire.

Now, some thirty years later and after several sleepless nights Daniel comes before the king and Nebuchadnezzar tells him of another dream.

These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed. “In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice: “Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him. The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.”

Then Daniel was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you."

Daniel answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds— Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

"Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'

"This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. (Dan.4.10-26 NIV)

Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue." (Dan.4.27 NIV)

Well, at this point you would think that Nebuchadnezzar would take Daniel's advice. But it's not that easy. It would be easy if we were talking about claiming a New Year's Resolution. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, resolve in 2017 that I am not going to be prideful." No! Daniel is not talking about making a New Year's Resolution. Daniel is talking about is repentance, turning away from sin, and striving through Christ for a new obedience. But instead of repenting Nebuchadnezzar's pride was only temporarily restrained.

Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes." Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.

He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified Him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: "What have you done?"

At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble. (Dan.4.29-37)

The Bible clearly states that Nebuchadnezzar enjoyed his great place of power because of the will of God. The Prophet Jeremiah records that the Lord Himself called Nebuchadnezzar, "My servant." (Jer.43.10) The point is that Nebuchadnezzar enjoyed his power, his palace, and the paradise that he had built because God had allowed him. There is no such thing as a "self made-man." *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.* (Js.1.17a) But in Nebuchadnezzar's case there was variation and shifting shadows. His pride was temporality restrained but it wasn't long until he drifts back into an arrogant egotistical snob.

The Bible teaches that God is the One who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy (ITim.6.17) but Nebuchadnezzar thought that he had gotten all these things by his own mighty power and for the glory of his own majesty. (Dan.4.30) Truly Nebuchadnezzar was wise in his own eyes, prideful, haughty, and thought too highly of himself.

Nebuchadnezzar's experience happened as an example for us and it was written down for our instruction. (ICor.10.6, 11) So let's look at his experience to gain a better understanding about pride and gain some biblical insights so that we can avoid becoming wise in our own eyes.

God was gracious to send messengers to Nebuchadnezzar to warn him concerning his pride. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream to disturb him and the Prophet Daniel to give him godly advice. God sends His Word through friends, Bible teachers, and even the Preacher. We should not ignore God pointing out the areas of pride in our lives. Nebuchadnezzar, however, ignored these warnings and allow pride to grow in his heart.

Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan.4.29-30)

God was patient with Nebuchadnezzar, waiting twelve months for him to repent. *The Lord is not slow . . . , as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2Pt.3.9)* But instead of quickly repenting and renouncing his pride, Nebuchadnezzar repeatedly reflected upon his accomplishments. It is important for you to know that God is not opposed to our achievements. As a matter of fact, God desires for us to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth, to subdue it, and rule over it. (Gen.1.28) Our Church Fathers called this the "Cultural Mandate." Nebuchadnezzar was a great military leader, a world ruler, and a brilliant engineer. That's not the problem. The problem is that he believed that his success was a product of his mighty power and for the glory of his majesty. Nebuchadnezzar believed that he was the author of his success and that glory was due to him. That's pride. That's being wise in your own eyes.

The opposite of being prideful is being humble so in an attempt to understand pride let's look at some biblical comparisons between being prideful and being humble.

Prideful: a person who believes that he/she is the Author

Humble: a person who believes that everything is a gift

Nebuchadnezzar said that it was by his power – he believed that he was the Author of his achievements. The Apostle Paul asked the Christians at Corinth, who themselves were a prideful bunch, *"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1Cor.4.7)* The point is that a prideful person believes that he/she is the Author of their achievements, whereas a humble person acknowledges that God has given every good thing and every perfect gift is from above.

Prideful: a person who believes they are owed recognition for their accomplishments

Humble: a person who gives recognition to God and others

Nebuchadnezzar said that Babylon and the Babylonian empire were for the glory of his majesty. But the humble acknowledge that God gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. A humble person acknowledges that God satisfies our hearts with food and gladness. A humble person says, *"In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts14.17; 17.28)*

Prideful: A person who determines that they are the final authority

Humble: A person who submits to God's authority

A prideful person says, "I am the authority of what I do with my body, my money, and my life." Whereas a humble person says, "I will submit to God's Word concerning my body, my money, and my life."

Pride: brings destruction

Humility: brings *healing to your body and refreshment to your bones*

Proverbs 16.18 tells us that pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Pride destroys relationships and reputation. Nebuchadnezzar's temporary insanity is meant to drive this point home. Pride diminishes us as a person, which is reflected in Nebuchadnezzar becoming like an animal. Humility, however, brings healing, refreshment, and restoration. Notice that Nebuchadnezzar records that *at the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.* God didn't want to destroy Nebuchadnezzar just his pride. God desires to pull out the roots of sin in our lives. God used this whole episode in Nebuchadnezzar's life as a testimony of God's grace and mercy. Actually, Daniel chapter four begins by Nebuchadnezzar saying, *"It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; His dominion endures from generation to generation."* (Dan.4.2-3) And God wants to use His work in your life as a testimony to help others who struggle with the same flaws to be restored and refreshed.

Conclusion:

In conclusion I want to return to the quote I shared with you from C.S. Lewis who described pride as a "complete anti-God state of mind." Lewis could say this because pride is the antithesis of Christ Jesus, the holy Son of God. The only One who can redeem us from pride.

Pride drives us to be more – Christ came to be less

Pride puffs up – Christ was lowly

Pride seeks recognition, honor, and authority – Christ did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil.2.6-8)

For this reason, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil.2.9-11)

Therefore, have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus. (Phil.2.) Acknowledge the God is God and that you are not. Empty yourself of self and become a servant. Submit yourself to God's Word and become obedient to His Will.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt.5.3)

Repent and believe the gospel that Christ can forgive you of your pride and restore you as a child of kingdom.

Pride has kept many people from accepting Jesus Christ as Savior. Admitting sin and acknowledging that in our own strength we can do nothing to inherit eternal life is a constant stumbling block for prideful people. Are you going to allow pride to destroy your opportunity to inherit eternal life? Are you so prideful that you will not admit your flaws and not embrace the grace of God through Christ?

I hope not!

Transition to the Table