

Studies in Daniel #5 – Humility

The overall theme of Daniel is: **God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.** Dan. 4:3, 4:34, 6:26, 7:14, 7:27, Ps. 145:13

In the first three lessons, we looked at who God is: the source of wisdom and knowledge and the revealer of secrets, that he is absolutely sovereign, and that he has an eternal kingdom. Last time we looked at the need for complete loyalty and obedience to God, regardless of personal cost.

Theme #5: Humility (vs. Pride)

What is humility? Dictionary.com says it is to have a modest opinion of one's own rank, importance, ability, etc. It is not necessary to deny these things, but to recognize them as gifts from God, and that we have a responsibility to use them wisely under Him. Daniel is a good example.

For example, it is false humility to always be saying, "I am a nobody, I can do nothing", etc. If that is true, others will know it without you saying it, but otherwise it comes off as a backwards form of boasting. We should be free to acknowledge the gifts God has given us, but never act as if they are given because we are something special, or that we are therefore more important than others.

Dan. 2:27-30 – When giving the dream and its interpretation to the king, Daniel said "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets". He also said "But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living ...". He did not try to become great or rewarded based on a revelation that could only come from God.

Daniel exhibited humility, whereas the next two examples show its opposite – pride. Again from dictionary.com, pride is "a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority, whether as cherished in the mind or as displayed in bearing, conduct, etc."

In chapter 4, the king had a dream of the colossal tree that was cut down. The whole lesson and warning was that Nebuchadnezzar had become proud, and that he would be humiliated until he learned that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." (4:17) Daniel's advice to the king was that he "break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." (4:27) But after 12 months, he had forgotten the warning and boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (v. 30) Immediately the judgment fell and he was driven from men, living as a mad man in the wilderness for seven "times" (years?). 4:34-37 shows his repentance and the restoration of sanity and the kingdom to him, acknowledging that God is indeed Lord over all and "none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?". He finished by giving praise and honour to God, "all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and **those that walk in pride he is able to abase.**"

Chapter 5 gives the story of king Belshazzar and the writing on the wall. which Daniel interpreted. He reminded him of the humbling of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 4), who was deposed from his throne when his mind was hardened in pride, In 5:22-23, Daniel rebuked Belshazzar, saying "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven ... and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified"

From this we see that we are not only to learn lessons by God's direct dealings with us, but that we are expected to take heed and learn from the experiences of others.

What does God think of a truly humble person?

They are his delight, and he is pleased to strengthen them and allow them into his presence. Isa. 57:15 – “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Humility is so important to God that it is one of his main requirements of us

Mic. 6:8 – “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

What about Jesus telling the young man that the greatest commandments were to love God with all the heart and soul and mind, and then to love thy neighbor as thyself? I would say that there is no way really to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God except as the result, or the fruit, of keeping those two “greatest commandments of the law”.

Humility can also be understood as the opposite of pride.

Contrast Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

Prov. 16:18-19 – “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”

Prov. 21:4 – “An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”

Pride, haughtiness, and the high look are what is seen in those who always look down on others, or act as if they are too good to associate with those “beneath them”.

How should humility be expressed in the life of the believer?

Humility is concerned, not with what we are, but what we think we are. Rom. 12:3 – “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Paul never denied his power or authority as an apostle of Christ, but he constantly maintained that it was the gift of Christ by grace, not something he “deserved”.

We are to have genuine humility in our dealings with one another in the church. Not a disgusting condescension and looking-down-the-nose, but real love and concern for others that never causes them to feel inferior. 1 P. 5:5-6 – “... Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”. Your clothing is what people see, so when they look at you, do they see real humility, or some assumed importance? Do they think you really care about them, or that you are in a hurry to move on to more important things?

The warning is quite serious – God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. If you are walking in pride, God will bring you to the dust, like Nebuchadnezzar. If you are really humble, not only will he give you his grace, but others will be able to see that grace, and glorify him.

Does your life magnify God and his gracious work, or do others just see you?