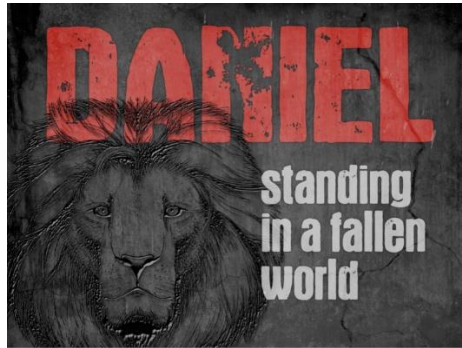


# Distorted Glory



## Daniel 4:34-37

This morning, we're going to look at the only chapter in the Bible, as scholars will agree, that was written by a pagan. If you have your bibles, go to Daniel chapter 4. You will notice that it looks a lot like a letter. It has an introduction, a conclusion, and a body. The reason why is because it's actually a letter from King Nebuchadnezzar that in the providence of God was inserted into the book of Daniel. The reason why this letter finds itself in Scripture is because Daniel learned a lesson the hard way. How many of you have ever learned a lesson the hard way? Most of us, right. When you learn a lesson the hard way, what do you want to do? You want to communicate to everyone else the lesson you learned so they don't have to learn it the hard way, so they can learn from you and not do what you do, but learn what you learn. Nebuchadnezzar learns this important lesson about pride. Nebuchadnezzar is filled with pride, and because of his pride, God humbles him. He doesn't want us to go through this humbling stage, this great fall, so he writes to us so that we would not walk in pride, but walk humbly before our God. So here, Nebuchadnezzar is going to teach us about humility and the warning against pride. As we begin to read, we're not going to read the entire chapter, but we're going to read verses 34-27. That's the end of the chapter, the sum of what King Nebuchadnezzar has learned, but we will walk through the chapter this morning.

## Scripture

***"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; 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?"***

***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. 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."***

(Prayer)

Father, I pray this morning that we would look to the example of Nebuchadnezzar, we would see his great fall and we would be warned of the danger of walking in pride, and instead of falling, we would repent this morning, and walk humbly before You, our God. We pray this in good name of Jesus, amen.

When I first started helping with the youth several years ago, I was just volunteering as a youth leader. I wanted to get to know some of the youth guys, so I decided I would take them out and get to know them. I knew a couple of them had motorcycles, and I still had one from when I used to race professional motocross. I decided I would get them, load them up in a truck, and we would go to TK Raceway in Draffenville, and I would spend the day riding with them and I would simply get to know them. We get to the track, unload, we get our bikes out, and we're getting dressed, and the

moment I take out my jersey and see my name across the back with my racing number and all my sponsors, something switches in my mind. All of a sudden, instead of Kory here to invest to get to know these teenagers, it's a whole different mission. My mission is to get these teenagers to understand I am the greatest person to ever be on a motorcycle. That's my whole agenda now. Forget getting to know them; I want them to get to know how great I am! So as I begin to put on my gear, this pride started to swell up and I remembered who I was. As I get on the bike, I take the first lap and I hit every jump as fast as I possibly can go. Every curve I am hitting as fast as I possibly can because I want their eyes to be fixed firmly on me. I'm wanting their jaws to be dropping as they say, 'look how great he is!' that's the whole agenda here. I realize that at TK Raceway, there's not a lot of jumps that display how really great you are. So I decided that I would have to make up a jump that was not really a part of the track. I began to look around to see what I could do to show everyone there, obviously, I'm the greatest. I decided I would take this berm curve. A berm curve is a mound of dirt that is set up so you can go really fast and never slow down. I saw this berm, and I decided to jump the backside of the berm about eighty feet to land on the other normal jump, which was a tabletop. Of course, this was not part of the track, and there was a good reason why it was not. I get on my bike and I'm making sure everyone is looking. I'm drawing attention, revving my bike up really loud, hey, everyone look at me, something magical is about to happen, make sure you're paying attention, get your popcorn out; here goes! Then I take off towards this jump and I'm shifting all the gears. I'm heading straight towards this launch and I hit the top bar as fast as I could possibly go, and then I just launch off of this jump. The thing I failed to see, the reason it wasn't a part of the track or the jump is because it wasn't tall enough for the suspension of the bike to work properly. So instead of the bike being balanced in the air, the front went down and the back went up. Here I was facedown, bike on top of me, going eighty feet through the air, the longest four seconds of my life! I remember this verse going through my mind, "Pride comes before the..." BOOM! SMACK, right into the face of the tabletop. I remember immediately after that, feeling something in my mouth. I looked down and my leg was mangled and road rash everywhere,

later to find out that I had almost bitten my tongue completely in half. Here I was very much filled with pride, and all of a sudden, immediate humbleness comes upon me, in fact, very tasty humbleness, tasty humility. You see, there's something about all of us. We struggle with pride, we just do. We want people to notice us. We want people to applaud us. We want people to notice when we do something great. We want everyone to know, that sale; that was me. We want everybody to know this promotion, yeah, that's about me. We want everyone to know this thing that's going on, the reason my life is going good is because look who's in charge of it; it's me and I'm really great. You should get on my team and you should really serve me because I am really great. That's what pride does. Pride is all about me. It's got 'I', 'ME'. It is all consuming, but humility on the other hand; humility is all about the glory of God. Humility is all about the good of others.

So, Nebuchadnezzar warns us in this letter that for those who walk in pride, something we all struggle with, we've all got to fight against, God is able to humble. I want to look at the letter and I want us to get some things that we notice from Nebuchadnezzar's life that we can try to avoid.

### **Success Fuels Pride**

Nebuchadnezzar has just said he's writing this letter to all the peoples of the earth. He's wanting everybody to know what he has learned, and here is what he starts by saying in the body: "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. I saw a dream that made me afraid." Nebuchadnezzar has arrived...he is at the pinnacle of his success. He's not in the middle of the battle. He's not in the middle of a building project. He has arrived, he's looking at great Babylon, the great kingdom that he has built, and he is now at ease. He is now very prosperous in his position. He has made it. He has become successful. What we're going to see is that in the midst of his success it's what fuels his pride. Often, our successes can also fuel our pride. In the midst of him coming to the pinnacle of success and being filled with pride, arrogance is reigning in his heart, God shows up with a dream, and it's an alarming dream. The dream scares him to death. He brings all of his people in to try to interpret the dream. All of the wise men come and they can't interpret it. So guess who

he brings in to interpret it. Daniel, because Daniel has had success in interpreting dreams in the past, so he brings Daniel in. As you read this text when you go home, there's an interesting thing Nebuchadnezzar says about Daniel. He said I know you can interpret this dream because in you is the spirit of the holy gods. Now that's not exactly a tight theological statement. We know there are some errors with that, but Nebuchadnezzar is noticing something about Daniel; I don't know what it is exactly, I can't put my finger on it, but in you, it's like God is residing. It's like in you, the spirit of the gods are there.

Just a little side note on the message, here is Daniel's reputation, and I wonder if that might be some of your reputations to the people around you. Even the unbelievers around you; can they look at you and say I don't really understand this indwelling of the Holy Spirit, I don't really understand about God, but when I'm in trouble, I go to you because you've got wisdom. You've got insight. You've got this great sage of knowledge that I run to, I retreat to, because I'm not sure what you have, but you have something that I don't have. This was Daniel. Daniel had something that no one else in the kingdom had; he had the presence of God in his life.

So that's what Nebuchadnezzar notices and he brings him in. He says, Daniel, I've got this crazy dream, no one can interpret it, I need you to interpret it. So Nebuchadnezzar begins to tell Daniel the dream. Here's the dream. Nebuchadnezzar says there is a tree that grows in the center of the earth and it grows and it's glorious. So great that it reaches the heavens. It's a massive tree. All of the earth can see this great tree. The beasts of the fields are making their shade underneath the tree. The birds are finding their rest in the tree. The leaves are beautiful. The fruit is abundant, and all of the earth is getting their food from this great tree. It's glorious. Then all of a sudden, there's a watcher, a holy one, an angel who comes down and makes this declaration: lop down the tree. Cut it and let the tree fall. Then, what's really interesting about the dream is the angel, talking about the tree, then refers to 'he'. So the tree turns into a he, and after it falls, the angel says, he is going to be cursed for seven years. This person is going to be wet from the dew because he's not going to have a

place to live. He's going to eat grass like a cow, and his nails and hair is going to grow, and he will be despised and shameful, until he gets this lesson. Here's the whole point of the dream. Here's the whole point of the thought. Here's the lesson. It is the God most high who reigns the kingdoms of men. That's the dream. Nebuchadnezzar is alarmed, and I think I know why he is alarmed. I think he has a suspicion that he is the tree. So Daniel comes in, and Daniel is alarmed. Daniel doesn't even want to tell him the dream because he doesn't want Nebuchadnezzar to face this kind of judgment. But he gives Nebuchadnezzar this interpretation. The tree is you. You have grown up mighty. You have glory. You have prestige. You have a kingdom that is like none other on the earth. But because you didn't recognize it's the most high God who controls the kingdom, because you thought it was yourself, because in your pride you thought you were the great one instead of God, who is the great one, you're going to be cut down and cast off. You're going to suffer a great fall until you come to your senses, until you realize that it is truly God who rules the kingdoms of the earth.

We see that it was success that fueled Nebuchadnezzar's pride. He was at ease, he was prospering, and he was very prideful. Because of his pride, God spoke judgment in his life: if you don't wake up, if you don't repent, here is what's coming. I want us to understand that our success is often what fuels our pride. What we must do is not let our successes fuel our pride. Instead of receiving applause and credit and glory, we have to give and reflect glory to the one who truly deserves it. In all of our successes, we're tempted to say I did this. I made that grade. I got the A+, or for some of us the C- that we're like yes, we're there! We made that sale. We raised these kids who are now graduated from college. Look what we did. Look what I did. Pride in our success wants to take full credit for the things we do, but in our successes, instead of taking credit, we must give credit where credit is due. The only reason I was able to raise these kids in the way of the Lord is because of the grace of God in my life. If it weren't for Him, I would be nothing. The only reason I'm able to breathe and work this job is because God is giving me life and breath, so He deserves all the glory. When you see me, I know you see something great, but let me tell you the reason; it's because of God. So don't give me credit; give Him

credit. In order to fight against this, in order to fight against success fueling our pride, we must all the time be reflecting our glory to Him. This isn't about me; this isn't about something I did that was great; this is about the glory of God. Look at Him. Who we should be looking at is Him. When we do that, then our pride is then turned to humility. Here's the verse that I really want you to capture and think about as you think about deflecting glory. Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or you drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." That's the key there. In everything we do, instead of receiving glory, we give glory. I've got food, I've got drink, I've got a job, I just made a successful adventure, God gets glory for that, not me. When we take glory, pride begins to fester in our heart. But when we give glory, we stay humble before our God. So we must be careful because it's often our successes that fuel our pride.

### **Pride Gives Birth to Sin**

In Daniel 4:27, it says, "Therefore, 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." What does King David say? He says King, because of your pride, because of your arrogance, because of this pride that is festering in your heart, here's what the result has been: a lifestyle of sin. What pride does is it often leads to sin. It gives birth to sin because pride believes we don't have to abide by the laws of God. We don't have to love the Lord with all of our heart because we're sort of exempt from that. We've sort of grown up from that. We don't have to live with the same standard as everyone else because we are in a special place. We don't have to serve others, because look at us; others should be serving me, because look at the place that I'm in. Pride often thinks too highly of itself. With pride in your life, you begin to think I'm really something. I am above temptation. I'm above servanthood. I'm above the things that God has commanded me to do.

We've seen in the news over this last week a very sad story of General Petraeus. His adultery made the news, and we've seen story after story that has come from that. The question I kept hearing from news reporters was this. Why do men in positions of power find it so easy to be ensnared

in adultery? I think the answer is pretty obvious. It is pride. Pride gets us to a place where we think we're sort of above temptation. We can be with a coworker of the opposite sex in an alone setting, we can have some flirty emails because we're above that sin, and that could never ensnare us. Pride causes us to think too highly of ourselves, and then when we get in that temptation, we fall. Pride tells us as parents, oh yeah, we can make our teenagers not watch that movie, but it's ok if we do. We can handle that very scandalous scene because it doesn't affect us because we're in a place of pride. We're in a place where we're above that. We don't stumble with those things anymore. Pride says we don't have to be in the Bible every day, every week, or every month, because we know all that. We've got all that down. Pride says we don't have to be in continuous prayer before the Father because we know His will. We're walking in it. Pride puts us in a place where we think too highly of ourselves, and Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:12 is "Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." In other words, if you think you have arrived, if you think you're at the place above the temptation, watch it because you are about to fall. Here's what we must do. We must not believe too highly of ourselves. We must not get to the place Nebuchadnezzar was where he thought too highly of himself. Instead, we must constantly be trusting the grace of God at every moment in our lives. We see pride gives birth to sin because we think we're so high that we're not tempted, then temptation comes, and then we fall and live a lifestyle of sin.

### **Pride Ignores the Warnings**

Here is what it says in verse 28, and it's probably the saddest verse of the entire letter. It says, "All this came upon Nebuchadnezzar." In other words, it happened. All of this was fulfilled in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. 'Hey Nebuchadnezzar, you're prideful. If you don't stop being prideful, you're going to fall.' What does Nebuchadnezzar do? Nothing...he continues in his pride. You see, what pride does is it ignores the warning signs.

In April of 1912, there was a large ship that set sail. It was thought to be the unsinkable ship. As it set sail and was getting close to a place of a lot of icebergs, there were six consecutive messages over several days saying



there are icebergs ahead. You need to turn around. But of course, the captains of the Titanic knew something. This ship can't sink. It is unsinkable, so keep course going straight. That's what pride does. Pride ignores warnings; hey, there are icebergs ahead. It doesn't bother me; this ship can't sink.

That's what pride does to you. Pride says here's a warning. You're getting prideful, you can't handle this, you need to repent, and then pride comes in and says you've got this. Keep the course. Keep going straight. For some of you, you are walking in pride right now and this sermon is your warning. God is saying take heed lest you fall. Watch out. Repent now because trouble is coming. Pride says you've got this. This sermon is not for you. For some of you the warning is the loved one who lives with you who every day says, daddy, your pride is killing our family. Honey, your pride is hurting us. It's the pride that swells up and says it doesn't apply to me. You're not talking to me. Pride ignores the warning. Here's Nebuchadnezzar, he's got the warning, he completely ignores it, and he continues in the path that he is on. That's what happens to us. There are all these warnings that God says you need to repent, you need turn the ship, but your pride says everything is fine. Yeah, there are icebergs ahead, but you can handle them. Keep going straight. Of course, we know the story of the Titanic. It wasn't the unsinkable ship, because it sank. Many people lost their lives because of pride. Pride ignores the warnings.

### **Pride Distorts Glory**

Really, the heart of pride, as we're going to see in this letter, is that pride distorts glory. Nebuchadnezzar says in verses 29-30, "At the end of twelve months 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?" That's a pretty prideful statement. We're in church; we all can see that was not a good statement. He's had all the warnings, and now we get to the real heart of what pride is. Pride distorts glory. He's looking out of the great Babylon, which he feels like he built. He's seeing all the amazing architecture, the Hanging Gardens, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World at that time, and then in this moment of pride, he

says look! Look what I've built by my power for my glory. He's said it out loud, but some of us say that in our heart. We look around at the gifts that God has given us, and instead of stewarding those gifts for His glory, we take those gifts and possess them and we own them. We use our talents and our time for the glory of self instead of the glory of God. That is exactly what pride does. Pride distorts glory.

You see, God had set Nebuchadnezzar up. He had given him a great ability to build a great city. The purpose was to use those gifts for God's glory, but Nebuchadnezzar used those gifts for his glory and for his good. That is exactly the temptation that is going to come to you. The temptation for pride is to distort glory in your life. You see, God has blessed you with some amazing things. Some of you He has given a brilliant mind. How are you using your brilliant mind? For your good, for your glory, or for the Kingdom of God and for the glory of God. Some of you have been blessed to be teachers. Why are you teaching? Are you teaching so that everyone will say he, or she, is the greatest teacher? Or, are you teaching for the glory of God and for the good of those you're teaching? Carpenters--why are you building houses? Are you building just for your glory and your name, or for the glory of God and His ultimate fame? Parents—why are you raising your children? Is it for self-centered glory, or is it to reflect glory to the one who deserves it? You see, what pride does at its core is it distorts glory. It takes the gifts that God has given us, and here's what God wants us to do with them, to steward them, to use them as gifts to do great things for the kingdom and give God glory for the things He has done through us. What pride does is to take those gifts and say this talent is mine. This idea is mine, so I'm going to run with it, make my name great, and make my fame great so that everyone will look at me. Pride distorts glory.

Here's what James says. James said this very bluntly. He says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." This distorted glory, God takes very seriously. God finds this offensive, so much so that He actually opposes the proud. I want you to get this picture. If you're walking in pride today, God is actually on the other team. He has crossed the line of scrimmage and He is on the other side. He is coming at you with

everything He has. I don't know about you, but I do not want God to be my opposition. I don't want to go against God. I will lose. But He says, "To the humble, God gives grace." If you're walking in pride with those gifts and talents that God has given you, God is opposing you at every moment. If you use those talents and gifts for God's glory, you're actually going to receive grace and empowerment to let those gifts flourish. Why? So His name can be made great. God opposes the proud because the proud get glory distorted. Instead of giving glory, they take glory. But God gives grace to the humble.

### **Pride Comes Before the Fall**

We all know this, right. Here's what it says in verse 31, "While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you..." We see here that because of his pride, because he wouldn't repent, now comes the fall. As we read on, now he is cast out, he's getting wet by the dew, he's eating grass like a cow, his hair grows out, and his fingernails grow where he almost appears as some crazy bird. Just imagine this. Here's Nebuchadnezzar, you've got little kids who are walking to market, and they say, 'Hey Mom, who's that crazy guy who's eating grass like a cow? He kind of looks like a bird! What's this dude?' 'Oh, um, that's King Nebuchadnezzar. He built all of this.' 'Really? He looks kind of weird.' Here is this guy in all of his greatness, but because his greatness filled him with pride and arrogance, and he distorted glory, took it for himself instead of giving it to God, he is the laughingstock of the community because he has taken a great fall. Here's the warning. If you walk in pride, you're only one step away from a fall. Just write it down. If I walk in pride, fall is coming. I'm going to stumble. I'm going to fall. That's the warning. If you walk in pride, you're only one step away from a fall. It's coming if you walk in pride.

So what do we do if we are walking in pride? Maybe this morning, some of you are thinking this is my life. I'm taking glory, I'm receiving glory, I don't serve people; instead, I want people to serve me. I don't live for the glory of God because I really believe it's all about the glory of me, my kingdom, my success, and I want everyone to look at me. I want all eyes on me; I

want the applause, I want the acceptance. I really feel like I'm kind of above everything else, so it's leading me to a lot of sin. If that's you, what do you do? You do the exact same thing that King Nebuchadnezzar did. You don't try harder to not be prideful, because that will lead to more pride. Because the moment you stop being prideful, pride will well up because you're beating pride. It's a vicious cycle. So you don't try harder to be humble. You don't try harder to not be a person of pride. Instead, here's the key. You repent and seek the grace of Jesus. That's what you do. You repent. Here is what King Nebuchadnezzar does in verse 34, "At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven." That phrase, 'he lifted his eyes to heaven,' is saying I am agreeing with God now. I understand that I'm not the ruler of the universe; God is. I'm acknowledging this. I'm looking at God. I'm seeing it Your way, God. I am nothing; You are everything. I don't deserve glory; You deserve glory. This look to heaven is repentance. That's what he's doing. He's agreeing with God, and that's what repentance is. You see, repentance kills pride and gives life to humility. It's repentance that is the only thing that kills our pride, and repentance is the only thing that grows a life of humility.

You see, he repents, and in his repentance and in this great story, we see Nebuchadnezzar learning two very important lessons. The first lesson is that God is the most high; I am not. That's a lesson that we should know. God is the most high; we are not. The second lesson before his repentance that King Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way is those who walk in pride, God is able to humble. I wonder this morning if you have learned those two lessons. Or, are you walking in pride this morning? My prayer is that if you are walking in pride, you have learned from the example of Nebuchadnezzar. You've seen his fall, and now you're going to heed the warning. Instead of falling, you are going to repent. Nebuchadnezzar is saying you don't have to go down the path I did. Instead, you can have life. You can have joy through repentance, not taking applause, but giving applause.

I can still remember the looks on those boys faces as I picked up my bike, blood everywhere, walking back to the truck in complete shame. But, do you know what? I learned a couple of things through that situation. The

first thing I learned was that if I point people to Kory, I fail and they are often disappointed. The second thing I learned is if I point people to Christ, He never fails, and they are always satisfied. So I leave you with this question. Who are you pointing people to? Are you walking in pride pointing people to yourself? Or, are you humbly walking before your God pointing people to the one who really deserves all glory, all honor, and all of the applause?