

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-11 Temptation – Pride of Life

Nakul was known for wanting everything to be perfect. He was the demanding owner of the most famous stone carving company in the country. For 40 years he had delivered statues and idols to rich clients for their homes, for temples, and government buildings. His company employed over 100 artists. The younger stone carvers worked in soft stones such as alabaster and serpentine. Only his most experienced carvers worked in the hardest of stones such as marble, onyx, and granite. Vihaan and Aditya were Nakul's premier artists. Each had developed a reputation as one of the greatest stone carvers of their generation. Both took great pride in their work. Each had been assigned to carve one of the statues for the entry of the new courthouse in the capital city. Nakul needed these two statues to be perfect.

As the day drew near for the completion of the statues and their delivery, Nakul traveled from his office to his factory to view the progress of Vihaan and Aditya. Nakul carefully examined Vihaan's statue. Vihaan stood along side of his work with a smile upon his lips. He had taken great care to follow Nakul's drawings and design. Nakul suddenly stopped and pointed at a small flaw in the statue. Vihaan looked closely at the spot. The confident smile dropped from his face to be replaced with one of sadness. He had tried so hard to please Nakul. To have failed him in even the smallest way hurt him. He immediately picked up his tools and began to work on the statue to remove the flaw.

Aditya had watched all of this. He was a proud man and knew that his work was flawless. As Nakul inspected his work, he sneered at Vihaan. Suddenly Nakul reached out and pointed at a small spot on Aditya's statue. Most people would never have noticed the small flaw in the carving. But Nakul had. Aditya began to argue with Nakul. He said his work was flawless and Nakul was mistaken. It was obvious that his pride was hurt and that he was embarrassed. But Nakul insisted that the flaw be corrected. Aditya picked up his hammer in great anger and began to pound it against the perceived flaw. Suddenly there was a massive cracking sound and a large piece of the statue broke off and fell to the floor.

Each of these men had pride. Vihaan had pride in doing great work to please Nakul. When faced with a failure, no matter that it was small, he felt remorse. He immediately set about to fix the problem. This kind of pride is healthy. Aditya also had pride. But his pride was not focused on pleasing his employer, but rather in himself. When confronted with the flaw in his workmanship, his pride was wounded and he experience great embarrassment. This led to anger and rash behavior. Pride in oneself is not healthy and can lead to destructive behavior.

King David's son, Solomon, is said to have been the wisest man who ever lived. He recorded his wisdom in a book of the Bible called Proverbs. In the 16th chapter he recorded a proverb that is as true today as it was then. King Solomon wrote this: "Pride goes before destruction" (Prov 16:18). Human pride is one of the most powerful temptations to resist. Everyone wants to feel important and appreciated. Pride in doing good work is a positive thing. Pride in oneself will always lead to arrogance and destructive behavior. There is a story in the Bible in the book of Daniel, which is an excellent example.

Daniel was among thousands of Jews who were carried away to Babylon, when the land of Israel was conquered. Daniel became one of Israel's greatest prophets while in captivity. He was a humble man, whose only pride was in serving God and the people of Israel. This contrasted sharply with Nebuchadnezzar, who was the king of Babylon. He had great pride in himself and the empire he had created. One day the king had a dream that disturbed him greatly. He called all of his prophets and seers together and told them the dream. None of them could interpret it. Finally, King Nebuchadnezzar called for Daniel and told him his dream.

"These are the visions I saw while lying in bed," he began. "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. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

"I looked, and there before me was an angel. He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. 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 years pass by for him'" (Dan 4:10-16).

The king looked at Daniel and said, "What does this mean?"

Now Daniel was very upset at what he had heard. He answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies! Your Majesty, you are that tree! This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree that God 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 years will pass by for you until you acknowledge that God 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 4:19-26).

All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 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 years will pass by for you until you acknowledge that God 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 seven years, Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward heaven, and his sanity was restored. Then he praised God Most High. Humbled by God, King Nebuchadnezzar honored and glorified the God who lives forever (Dan 4:28-34).

This lesson is **important** because it explores the destructive nature of human pride in oneself and one's own accomplishments. As leaders, we dare not take personal credit for the things God has helped us to do.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that pride in doing good work to please God can be healthy, but pride in oneself and the seeking of personal glory or acclaim will lead to sin and destruction.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. There are two types of pride. What are they? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, "Pride in doing good work to please God, and pride in yourself," you are correct.

2. What kind of pride did King Nebuchadnezzar have? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that King Nebuchadnezzar had pride in himself and his accomplishments, you are right.

3. What did King Solomon say about pride in his book of Proverbs? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered, "Pride goes before destruction," you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least two more times until you are familiar with the story of Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar. You should also memorize Proverbs 16:18 which states, "Pride goes before destruction." Finally, find a few friends and have a discussion about pride, exploring the differences between taking pride in one's work to please God, as opposed to having pride in oneself and one's accomplishments.