

Pride Is a Family Characteristic

by Bob Utley

The sermon explores how pride is a destructive characteristic that affects both individuals and nations, leading to inevitable judgment.

Duration: 34:56

Scripture: Genesis 3:24, Exodus 28:17-20, Psalm 82:6, Isaiah 14:12, Ezekiel 28:12, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 21:19-20

Topics: "Pride"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the dangers of pride and arrogance in both individuals and nations. He emphasizes that the root problem of evil is the desire to focus everything towards oneself and to usurp God's authority. The preacher uses the example of a powerful city, Tyre, to illustrate the consequences of this pride. Despite its strength and wealth, Tyre was ultimately destroyed because it failed to trust in God. The preacher warns that nations, like individuals, must not rely on their own power and accomplishments, but rather trust in God for their security and salvation.

Transcript

I'd like to turn to Ezekiel 28. Kirk read to you Isaiah 14, which I believe is somewhat of a parallel to Ezekiel 28. This passage has caused great confusion among interpreters, and all I can do is bring you my opinion on it, which I certainly can't be dogmatic about it when so many tremendous men of God that I trust and appreciate divide over this passage.

I've entitled this message, Pride is a Family Characteristic. And I believe what we have in both Isaiah 14, which is the king of Babylon, and Ezekiel 28, which is the king of Tyre, is a good example of what pride can do to men, men as they represent a nation. And yet I believe because of the astonishing metaphors, supernatural metaphors used for the king of Babylon, the king of Tyre, that the illustration goes behind them as human representatives of the characteristics of a nation, and goes behind that to the supernatural force of evil in our world that supremely embodies these characteristics.

And so my train of thought is going to run from the evil one, fallen angel, as he influenced other angels, one as a representative of a whole. And moving from the sin in the angelic world, we're going to move to a man as he exemplifies a nation. And so we're moving from angel to angels to man to men.

Now, chapter 14 of Isaiah, I think, represents a military power. The king of Babylon was the power of his day. There was nothing could stand before him for long periods of Near Eastern history.

And he is the symbolic embodiment of military power. But as you can readily see, if you know where Tyre is, Tyre is the place the Israelis and the Lebanese are fighting over right now in the PLO. It's on the northern coast of the Mediterranean just above Israel.

It's the ancient sea-going power known as the Phoenicians. As Babylon may have represented military power, the nation of the Phoenicians, and especially Tyre, its capital, represented commercial power. They were absolutely the sea power of the day and all the commerce that went with it.

Now, I think, as I have stated this several times, we're talking about a man, a worldly leader. But very quickly, it's going to move from worldly leader to supernatural world leader. You know, the Bible, the New Testament, says that Satan is the prince and the power of the air.

It calls him even the god of this world, in strong terms. And so I want to do two things today, if I possibly can. I want to hold the mirror of the Bible up to us as an individual that is motivated primarily by egocentric needs and trends and motives, and then as a nation that has seemed to build our foundation on success and power.

And yet, behind it all is the supernatural forces of evil that have the exact same problem. So let's look, if we could, at this passage together. I believe it breaks quite naturally.

I'm going to do verses 1 through 19. It breaks quite naturally into verses 1 through 10. Many people have said 1 through 10 is a picture of the Antichrist because in verse 2 it's going to say, I am a god, and he took his seat among the gods.

And if you're familiar with 2 Thessalonians, by the way, I'm teaching tonight. I'm starting a brand new book on Sunday night, 2 Thessalonians. I'll be in chapter 1 tonight, but next week I'll be dealing with this passage on the Antichrist, which is the most explicit in all the Bible.

And in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 4, the Antichrist has these characteristics, and we're going to find that kind of identification all the way through. The Old Testament, as I have pointed out to you many times, uses current historical circumstances to foreshadow the end times. Well, what we're doing here is the exact same thing, but instead of historical events, we're using historical personages in the King of Tyre to speak about some personages that are going to come upon the stage of history later and one personage that's been on the stage for a long, long time, even before man.

The word of the Lord, the word of Yahweh, came to me saying, Son of man, this is the Old Testament use of that phrase that means human being. That's all it means here, person, mister, man. Son of man, say to the Prince of Tyre.

Now, his name was Ethbaal II. You recognize the last little name, Baal, the male fertility god? Remember that Jezebel was a daughter of the King of Tyre? Remember that she imported the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah, which is the fertility cult of the Canaanite religion? Remember that it almost took over the entire worship of Israel? Remember all that? Remember that Tyre, an earlier king, Hiram of Tyre, was the one that Solomon contracted to build the temple of God? Now, Tyre is never an enemy of the people of God, never. They are in close connection.

They do military campaigns together. They are tied economically together. And yet God has a word of judgment on this nation, not because it's an enemy of the people of God, but because of the pride and arrogance that this nation developed.

Thus says the Lord God. Now, you look at your Bible, if you would, a little side note. Do you have Lord God? You should have Lord, Lord.

The first one is that name Adon or Adonai, Master, Owner. The second one is the covenant name for God, Yahweh. But in English it comes out what? Lord, Lord, which sounds funny, so they make it Lord God.

Look at the R. The R is the way to tell every time the word Lord is used. If it's a little r, it's Adon. If it's a capital R, it's Yahweh, the covenant name for God.

You see the capital R in verse 1? You see the small r in verse 2? Now, Tyre was the capital of the Phoenician empire. It was an island about a quarter of a mile from the shore with a very deep, swift-moving channel in between. It was almost an impregnable fortress.

Everybody couldn't live on the island, so some of the town was on the mainland, and that was pretty vulnerable. But that rocky fortress was absolutely the power of sea trade. It almost did not fall to any conqueror.

Now, it failed a few, but it didn't fall to many. As a matter of fact, I'm going to mention Nebuchadnezzar in a minute and all the power of Babylon. Historically, that city never fell after a 13-year siege.

By the largest world power in that day, that rocky fortress did not fall. That's something, isn't it? This is the kind of place we're talking about. Because your heart is lifted up.

Now, I'm going to be talking about this idea of a heart lifted up all the way through this chapter. And what we're speaking about is, and I'm going to use the word, a creature desiring to be the creator. The created storming the throne of the one who has created them.

Now, whether it be Satan, who did that initially, or whether it be Adam and Eve, who did that very same thing, or whether it's you and I, pride is the central core of man's problem. That thing that directs every motive, every issue, every day, every energy, every desire, it makes everything focus around us. It makes us the hub of everything that is.

That's the problem here. It wants to remove God from His place. It wants to put ourselves in that place.

It's exactly, in Genesis 3, 5, what the serpent told Eve. God doesn't want you to eat that fruit because God knows if you eat that fruit, you will be like Him. You will be as God's daughter.

And the reason that Satan knew that was such a tempting thing, that's exactly what got him. You want to look at 1 Timothy 3, 6? That's where it says that Satan, Isaiah 14, talks about that same idea of a heart being lifted up in pride. And you have said, I am a God.

My goodness, and that's a little g there, but it's the same idea. If you're reading to the Book of Acts now by any chance on one of these yearly Bible studies, you may have read recently in Acts 12, 24 about one of the Herods who went to the city of Tyre, by the way, and he walked out on the platform dressed in a magnificent metallic-looking outfit. And the people said, It is the voice of a God and not of man.

And Herod kind of liked that. It says, The angel of the Lord struck him with worms and it ate his bowels. Yuck.

But it's the same people, the Tyrannian people. You see, the Tyrannian people believed that their king was a descendant of the gods. And it fits that way right in the Book of Acts.

I sit in the seat of the gods. Now, what that means exactly I don't know except the fact that that king thought that he had an impregnable fortress. He thought no one could take that city.

And that seems to be the idea here. In the heart of the seas. And that fits that idea of that little island.

You might want to see chapter 27, verse 4. As a matter of fact, chapter 26 and 27 and 28 in Ezekiel deal with the kingdom of Tyre. And I'm just dealing with the last little part of it. Now, yet you are a man and not a god.

Well, the reason this chapter has been so diversive among interpreters is and divisive is because obviously chapter 2 here refers to a man and not to Satan. Verse 4, verse 8, verse 9 all refer to a human being. And many have said it's obviously just a reference to a man.

And yet chapters 12 and following absolutely can't refer to a man. And then chapters 16 through 19 are kind of a mixture of a supernatural element and a human element. It's all mixed through here together.

It makes it so difficult to be dogmatic about. Verse 3. Behold, you are wiser than Daniel, and there is no secret that is a match for you. My goodness, what a statement about a human being.

Now, just a little side note. The word Daniel here looks just like the book in your Bible, doesn't it? And we know that Ezekiel was the prophet who was in exile in Babylon the exact time that Daniel was in the palace in Babylon. And so I'm sure they knew of each other.

But back in chapter Ezekiel 14, 14, it mentions a man named Daniel. It says, Noah, Daniel, and Job. The spelling of Daniel here in the Hebrew is different than the spelling of Daniel as the minor prophet.

And nowhere else in the Bible is the prophet Daniel that we know of from our Bible spell like this Daniel in Ezekiel. Now, it may be the Daniel that's in the palace, but it seems to be someone that's just noted for their wisdom that lived back with Job and Noah. That's patriarchal times.

That's way on back there. And it doesn't seem to be current. I don't know if he's talking about Daniel that we know or another Daniel.

But what he's saying is that man, whoever it was, was noted for their wisdom as Daniel was. And this man is said to be wiser than Daniel, and nothing is hid from him. No one is a match for you.

That seems awful strong to me for a human being. Now, then it says, And by your wisdom and understanding, you have acquired riches for yourself. You have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries.

And by your great wisdom, by your trade, you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches. Now, there are three things said through here about a problem that we face. Number one is this man was extremely intelligent.

He had a very sharp, rational, and this particular guy, business-oriented mind as the king of this Phoenician nation. He was a very, very wise man. Number two, he was a very wealthy, wealthy man.

And if you'll look at verse 17, he was a very beautiful man. Because of his wisdom, because of his riches, because of his beauty, he desired to be his God. Now, friends, I want to tell you, I don't know what you pride yourself in.

I don't know what you boast about. You may be a handsome or pretty person. You may be a wealthy person.

You may be a very intelligent person. The New Testament talks about us boasting in Jesus Christ for the center of our worthiness. If you're putting your foundation on any kind of thing that you're doing, I promise you, in this world and time, it can go like that.

How long does beauty last? How tenuous is riches in a world of war? How quickly does one little fall or one little brain tumor or one little stroke take away all of man's superior intellect? This man was trusting in his mind, in his wealth, in his beauty. His heart was lifted up. In verse 7, it says, "...therefore, behold, I will bring strangers against you, the most ruthless of nations." And we learn from chapter 26, verse 7, it's talking about Nebuchadnezzar coming against this.

This same little phrase is used in chapter 30, 11, 31, 12, 32, 12. Nebuchadnezzar was the cruelest military power. I think the Assyrians were crueler than the Babylonians, but this says the cruelest nation maybe in existence at that time.

You couldn't believe what they did when they swept into a city. They slaughtered it, and they took everything that city had. And that's exactly what this king of Tyre is going to have happen to him.

Notice it makes it in verse 8 that talks about going down to the pit or Sheol, or the grave. You're going to die. Notice in verse 9, it talks about a personal death as well as a national death.

I want to tell you, a nation that's exemplified in pride for their wisdom, for their wealth, and for their beauty is a nation that's on the slides to destruction. The nation that trusts in God is the nation that's secure on the foundation. Where would you put our nation? I think the purpose this whole thing is ambiguous for is it wants to speak to men, and it wants to speak to nations, and because we even have personifications in history of this attitude doesn't preclude that we're going to have further personifications, and our day is a day that's so proud of its commercial prowess, of its technological genius, and of its physical beauty, which in this package refers to the beauty and power of its cities.

What do we brag in as Americans? It continues then in verse 11. The last part of verse 10 says, For I have spoken, declares the Lord, which means it's settled. The doom of this man is sure.

The doom of these kinds of men is sure. The doom of these kinds of creatures is sure. Then in verse 11 and following, I think it is absolutely superhuman what's mentioned through here, and you just think with me.

I'm going to give you a list first before I read it. See if you can pick them up. Let's look at this personage in verses 12 and following.

He has the seal of perfection, which means he is the pattern of perfection or completeness. Number two, he has the full wisdom and beauty. Number three, he was in the Garden of Eden.

Number four, he is clothed with the royal jewels of the high priest. Epoch, the twelve stones. There are only nine mentioned here.

There are twelve in the Septuagint. Number five, he is not only the musical leader of the throne of God, he personifies music. How about that? Number six, he is the anointed cherub that covers.

Now, cherubim are pretty strong, and I'm going to talk about that. They are one of the angelic powers that God uses. And this is the anointed cherub, which seems to imply numero uno, if you please, you know.

Number seven, he is in God's presence. And number eight, he is blameless. Whoo-hoo! Let's look at it.

Son of man, take up the funeral dirge over the king of Tyre and say to him, Thus saith the Lord God, You had in yourself the pattern of perfection, the measurement of completeness. Oh, that's a strong term. Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You know what tickles me about the way we've handled the evil one. We kind of give him a red suit and horns and a tail and a pitchfork so we can laugh at him. But the Bible calls him an angel of light.

Satan is the most beautiful creation. Continues, You were in Eden, the garden of God. My goodness.

Every precious stone. You think the king of Tyre was in Eden? You think he was the pattern of perfection? Every precious stone was your covering. Now this goes back to Exodus 28, 17 through 20 where the high priest wore a gold plate around his neck.

And on that plate was the beautiful 12 stones each representing a tribe of Israel. Every one was a different color. I think here it's not so much that he had the gems all over him but the color.

Color itself was the garment of this being. Beautiful, radiant color of gems is what this creature wore. And the last part of this, verse 13, if you have a New American Standard Version, I'm going to take real, I'm going to attack it if you'll let me.

I don't know what the other ones have. Mine has, and gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets. Do you have something like that last part of verse 13? No, no, no, no.

It's the word flute and the word tambourine. Tambourines and flutes. What it was saying is you were the musician at court.

These instruments were made out of gold and you personified them. You provided the music, if you please, for the setting, whether it be Eden or Heaven. Then it continues.

The music, the setting and sockets was in you. The musical instruments were in you. On that day you were created.

I believe we're talking about not the king coming to the throne, which some try to say. The word is created here. On the day you were created.

That says to me that not only men are created, but angels are created. There is no dualism in Christianity. This is not Zoroastrian overflow from the Persian period.

In the Bible, Satan is a created being that's under the control of the one creator God. That's important. You were prepared.

Look at verse 14. There's so many translations that do a number on this. I want to show you.

If you've got one of these, you look what they're doing. If you have the New Jerusalem Bible or the Revised Standard Version or the Peshitta or the New English Bible, it's going to say something like you were provided with a cherub that covers. But man, that is not the Hebrew and that is not what American Standard Version or Revised Standard Version has.

Listen to this one. You were. Not you were provided with.

That's an interpretation to get away from this supernatural element. You were the anointed cherub who covers. Now, the word covers here is the idea of the mercy seat almost.

If you remember correctly, it was the cherubim whose wings met over the Ark of the Covenant. And on that mercy seat was where the sins of the people were dealt with once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16. These cherubs were in the presence of atonement, if you please.

They protected and covered the place of forgiveness. Not only that, the cherubim were the ones that when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, they held the sword that goes all the ways that protected the Tree of Life from fallen man. The cherubim are those creatures that carry God symbolically.

They become the chariot of the divine. The cherubim are the one that in Ezekiel chapter 1, on that strange vision of the wheels within the wheels and the eyes around it and those strange angelic beings, that's the cherubim. In Ezekiel chapter 10, we get a description and the Bible is fluid some.

Sometimes they have two wings, sometimes four, sometimes one face, sometimes four faces. But these are one of the angelic orders. The seraphim is another one that's only in Isaiah 6. In the book of the Revelation chapter 4, it's like the seraphim and the cherubim are mixed together in that passage.

But anyway, these were powerful angels that worked in the area of redemption and mission for God. And the one we're talking about is the cherub who covers. Man, that's a strong, powerful angel, I want you to know.

I don't know the difference between an archangel and a covering cherub, but I want you to know we're talking about a beautiful, fantastic, original creation of God that was in the Garden of Eden. Man, it's just, the evidence is becoming overwhelming now that we're beyond the King of Tyre a whole long way. It continues then when it says, and I placed you there, and you were on my holy mountain in the midst of the stones of fire.

What could that be? Well, we're somehow getting the idea of the Garden of Eden and almost Mount Sinai maybe. But what I think is happening even more than that is this is a way of speaking about that this personage was in the presence of God. What Old Testament book does the evil one spoken of in the presence of God? Job 1. And the sons of God came to God and Satan came with him.

Friends, I want to tell you, do you believe the King of Tyre was ever in the presence of God? I don't. Won't fit. He sure wasn't in Eden.

He was smart and powerful and a military leader, but he was not all these things. Now, in the midst of the stones of fire, I think that refers to those colors. You know, color is a beautiful thing.

We take it so for granted. I try to wear it as much as possible. I think heaven is just filled with color, and that's the idea.

The presence of God is lit up. Light in all of its spectrum surrounds the throne of God. This one walked amidst that beautiful color with God.

You are blameless, unblemished, sincere, whatever you want to say, in all your ways from the day you were created. You think a man can be said to be unblemished and sincere in all his ways? Not if the doctor of original sin has any biblical warrant, it can't. Look what it says then.

Until unrighteousness was found in you. And then it goes back in verse 16. It's almost a mixture again between supernatural and natural.

By your abundance of trade, you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned. Therefore, I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor, and I cast you to the ground. I put you before kings that they may see you.

By the multitude of your iniquities and unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore, I have brought fire from the midst of you and consumed you. I have turned you into the ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you.

All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you, and you have become a horror, and you will be no more. I want to say two things. I want you to hear what I'm saying.

Number one, the greatest tendency of the evil one in your heart is for you to focus everything toward yourself. Ego, centristic, arrogant pride is the basic problem of the creatures of God. Always wanting to usurp God's authority and power.

Always wanting to steer the ship. Always wanting to be number one. Always wanting to do what we want to do.

Always focusing everything toward our own pleasure and our own goals and our own dreams. It has been so in the angelic world. It is so in the lives of men.

It becomes exemplified in the lives of nations. Nations have a personality just as men have a personality. And you can mark a nation by the characteristics of its population.

I think we have a mark not only of a commercial power, but we almost embody both of them. We trust in our missiles and brag in our economy and it will all be pulled down to hell if we don't trust in the Redeemer. There is no power on earth can stand before God.

You can't shoot spiritual beings with nuclear-tipped warheads. But you can see behind the role of history the footprints of the evil one in a world as fouled up as ours is not just nationally or corporately, but in the individual lives of people. I see these characteristics not only in the lost, but in the redeemed.

This chapter is not only a beautiful picture of what military power and here particularly, that's Isaiah 14, here particularly commercial power can do to an individual, but this passage is one of the few glimpses of the origin of the evil one that we have anywhere in the Bible. I was amazed as I read commentator after commentator who refused to cite this passage for their theology. But sentence after sentences, the implications in this passage that is nowhere else in the Bible continue to come through.

To say Satan is a created being only comes from Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. There is no other place in the Bible that says that, except these two passages. And yet those commentators afraid to make these passages supernatural continue to refer to Satan as a created being.

Well friends, whether you cite it or not, this is a very influential passage in the life of the church. Origen and Tertullian, many of the early church fathers used this as a way for us to know something behind the scenes of history and behind the scenes of the evilness of our own heart. And friends, I want to say to you, if you haven't read Ephesians 6, 10 and following lately, you need to do that.

Because we are in a spiritual battle not only for the lives and hearts of men, but for the goals and purposes of nations. And if you don't even realize that there is a supernatural adversary, you will never be prepared to do supernatural battle for the kingdom of God. That sounds so ridiculous to modern man.

And you can poo-poo that idea if you want to, friend. But I have committed my heart and mind to the Bible as the self-revelation of the one eternal God. And He over and over and over and over and over again doesn't tell me completely, doesn't tell me even clearly, but tells me that there is forces of evil out to thwart not only my life, but my family and my church and my nation and my world.

And if we never realize that, we are blind and helpless. In Ephesians 6 it says that God has provided all the weapons for a spiritual battle. All of them are ours.

But they are not automatically put on us. We must recognize the battle. We must pick up the implements.

We must put them on our lives. And then we must stand. And friends, the reason that most of you are getting knocked over day after day is you don't realize you are in a spiritual battle.

Prayer, Bible study, moral integrity are important in a world that is moral in nature with an immoral tendency deep in the heart of every one of us and manifested through temptation on the outside of each one of us. Friends, we're in a battle. And the evil one is beautiful and powerful and pervasive beyond all of our imagination.

We don't have to fear him. As powerful as he is, greater is he that's in us than he that's in the world, 1 John 4, 4. But never take him for granted. He roams the earth seeking whom he may devour.

And God help us. Because Christians are often caught in the meat grinder of the forces of evil of our world. May we pray.

Lord, I pray for a sense of your presence. I am so thankful that I do not have to fear evil. I am so thankful it has been overcome.

And as verse 19 said, it is gone. We know that it is finished, Lord, from the cross. That the kingdom has been destroyed of the evil one and vanquished.

And yet, Lord, somehow in your purpose, there is still such great historical evidence that though he is defeated, he is still here. Lord, I do not want to be a fanatic or a wild man or someone who is incredible in what I say. But, Lord, my particular age has written spiritual things off because we can't put them in a test tube.

And yet, God, I know of your reality because of what you've done to my heart. And unfortunately, Lord, I know the reality of the evil one because of what he's done to my heart. And I pray that eyes might be opened, that we might be prepared spiritually, Lord, to face a culture that does not believe in spiritual realities and yet is penetrated by their influence and their manipulation.

I pray for wisdom and insight. I pray for a deeper and greater love for your book. And I pray for a more powerful preaching of the cross of Christ.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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