

The Pride of Man

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, thank you very much for that. It would be great if you have that passage open in front of you. As has already been mentioned, my name is Alistair. The privilege of being the assistant here at Brunsfield and the privilege of taking us through this wonderful passage of Scripture.
- And this morning we come to a topic that runs deep in every single human heart. But I wonder if you can guess what it is by listening to these three quotes that I'm just about to put on the screen.
- So the first one is, My greatest pain in life is that I will never be able to see myself perform live. The second quote, I am so credible, so influential and so relevant that I will change things.
- Or the last quote, I feel like I'm too busy writing history to read it. Now what do all of those quotes have in common?
- Shout out a few answers. Pride. There you go. No more answers. That's it. That is exactly what we come to this morning. Pride.
- [1 : 1 4] Now I doubt any of us are going to say these kinds of things about ourselves. But we all, to different degrees, suffer with the issue of pride, don't we?
- We like the thrill of being recognized. We like to be seen, to be acknowledged, applauded and praised. We might wear a particular brand of clothing to stand out in the crowd.
- We might buy the flashiest car or the biggest house so that people notice us. And these are the material outworkings of pride, but it runs much deeper than that, doesn't it?
- We might be annoyed if someone gets the credit for the work that we do. Because we wanted the attention. Or maybe it's in a prayer point that we share at small group or in the prayer meeting that focuses more on our apparent holiness than the work of God.
- Or maybe it's thinking that we don't need God's help. And we only go to Him once we've exhausted our own resources and energy. All of these different things are different appearances of the same issue.
- [2 : 2 8] Pride. It's the idea that the whole world revolves around you, that you are the most important person in the world. And the root of it all is that the natural state of every single human heart is full of pride.
- Because we naturally say, no God, I don't want you. I want to be you. That's what we're going to see this morning as we turn to Genesis chapter 11.
- The pride of man. And we're going to see the downward spiral of humanity. And the depths of depravity that we're capable of reaching. But most importantly, we're going to see that despite human failings, despite our rebellion, despite humanity proudly walking away from God and deviating more and more from His plan, despite all of that, and despite God having every reason to, He does not cast us off.
- But He shows us amazing faithfulness. An abundant grace to a sinful world. So the first thing that we see in this passage is the pride of man.

Verses 1 to 9, the pride of man. Now we get our first indication that things are not going well in verse 2. Look with me. It says, As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

[4 : 00] Now anytime we've heard the language of east in Genesis or people moving east, we're to understand that they are moving away from God's plan and God's good design for the world.

Remember how in Genesis chapter 3, Adam and Eve, when sin entered into the world and they rebelled against God, they were cast out of the garden to the east.

And when Cain, in Genesis 4, when it says that he went out from the Lord's presence, he went east of Eden. The language of going east should draw our attention to the fact that something is not right in this picture.

Something is about to go horribly wrong. And we see exactly what that is in verses 3 and 4. Read with me. They said to each other, Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.

They used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar. Then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves.

[5 : 08] Otherwise we'll be scattered over the face of the earth. Now this is the prime example of the pride of man. They are disobeying God's commands to go out into the world and fill it by congregating in one place and they're trying to make a name for themselves.

Do you see similar language that we've seen before in verse 3? Humanity is saying, Come, let us make. People are using their God-given ability and gift of being creative.

But they're not using it for good. This is the same language, isn't it, that we heard in Genesis chapter 1. As God says, Come, let us make man in our image.

And here we see those image bearers of God. We see a corrupt, broken, sinful humanity using their identity and God-given gift to create for evil and sin.

And do you see that repetition in verse 4? How five times in that very short verse, the people's attention is always on themselves. They are the center of their own universe.

[6 : 25] In their pride, they're puffing themselves up, gladly bearing their sin on their chest for everyone to see, parading it to show how great they are.

They want to be noticed. They want to stand out. They want to make a name for themselves. And when people make a name for themselves, it means that they've stopped making God's name great.

They've turned from God and are focusing on themselves. Now, I doubt that any of us are going to go away this morning and build a tower or a city from our pride so that people can see how great we are.

But isn't it just as easy to build a social media empire where we strive to have thousands of friends on Facebook or the most likes on Twitter and Instagram we possibly can?

We create this perfect life on the surface. But is that really the case or are we just building our own tower? What about when we came into church this morning?

[7 : 37] How many of us were honest and open when we were asked, how are you? It's so easy to put on a mask, to pretend that we're okay and we have it all together even though we don't.

That's pride. That's us focusing more on how others view us than how we're really doing and being open and honest with our brothers and sisters.

Friends, this same spirit of Babel, this same pride lives in each and every one of us. We all want some form of recognition.

We all want to be seen, to be liked. We live in a world where sin is paraded around and celebrated as something good. But the reality is that we live in a world that is seeking glory instead of seeking God.

By trying to make our name for ourselves, we're forgetting the one whose name should be lifted above every other name. Humanity is doing the same thing Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3, saying, no God, I don't want you.

[8 : 53] I want to be you. And so humanity, in all of its depravity, tries to reach the heights of God. They want to enter into His domain and become like Him.

But as Proverbs 16, verse 18 says, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. All of this is motivated by pride.

They want to make a name for themselves to be seen and they don't want to be scattered. But do you see the irony in verse 5? So these people are wanting to build a statement of their own fame and glory to show off their ability.

But verse 5 says, The Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. Even man's greatest attempts to reach God will always, always fail.

Man's attempt to achieve glory, honour, praise, recognition, which belongs only to God, will always fall pitifully short.

[10 : 06] God comes down to inspect the result of human pride. And this teaches us something about God's judgment, which is just about to come, and God's judgment in general.

God's judgment is never erratic. He doesn't just fly off the handle, He doesn't lose it at the people, but God's judgment is always according to truth.

God sees all things, God knows all things, and He will judge accordingly. And so God says in verse 6, If as one people speaking the same language they've begun to do this, then nothing they plan will be impossible for them.

Now we aren't to take this literally, and I think that we're capable of doing everything we set our minds to. This isn't the kind of message that's being pushed in schools and society that you can do and be whatever you want.

But this means that the depravity of man is so far gone that nothing will stop the act of evil when left unchecked.

[11 : 24] We saw this, didn't we, in Genesis 6, how the thoughts of the hearts of mankind are described as evil all the time.

And then add into that mix the whole community of sinful people whose desire is to rebel against God. The outcome is not a good one. Their pride, their rejection of God means that God must judge because he is holy and he is a just God.

And so God intervenes in verses 7 to 9 and in his mercy disperses the people of Babel, confuses their language and scatters them over the face of the whole earth.

The people of Babel wanted significance, but they got alienation. But do you see how gracious God is in all of this? He could have delivered the final judgment because yet again in just 11 chapters the people have, humanity have rebelled against God and said, we don't want you.

We want to be you. We want to be king of our lives. But God doesn't destroy them. Instead, he shows grace by dispersing them.

[12 : 46] And by dispersing them, God is doing two things. One, he is preventing any further large-scale evil acts. And two, he is fulfilling his own repeated command for humanity to multiply and fill the earth.

So God is being faithful to his promises even in judgment. Now we might look at this text and think how foolish the people of Babel are. They're trying to become like God and reaching for his heights of glory and honor.

But the reality is that this same spirit of Babel, that this same pride, the same ideas and desires live within every single one of us.

We live in a world that's proud of sin. A world that glory's in it. We neglect to submit to the Bible because it maybe makes us feel uncomfortable or we think that it will spoil our fun.

But the problem and the reality is that our continuous pride, in it, we are neglecting God. We're taking God off the throne of our hearts and putting ourselves in his place.

[14 : 06] We're rejecting him as King and Lord and running our own way, building our own idols, building our own cities, our own towers of Babel, all in defiance of God.

But the wonderful news that we cling to is that despite our pride, despite our sinfulness and despite the fact that humanity is naturally deserving of judgment, God is gracious and that he is faithful to his promises.

And that is the second thing that we see in this passage, is the promise of God in verses 10 to 32. The promise of God. Now if you remember back to Genesis 3 verse 15, God promised that he would send the serpent crusher, the one who would put an end to sin, who would defeat the work of Satan and who would make it possible for a sinful humanity to be made right with God.

God. And as we've journeyed through this short series on the beginning of Genesis, we've seen glimmers of hope. Could this be the serpent crusher? Could this be our rescuer?

But each one has failed. Each of them have proved that sin dwells in the depths of the human heart and that no one born in the cycle of man can break it.

[15 : 31] And so why do I say in these verses we see the promise of God? Well as you've probably already noticed, this is the repetition of the family line of Shem.

So the list of Shem's descendants come first in Genesis chapter 10 verses 21 to 31 and then it's repeated here in Genesis 11 verses 10 to 26.

Why? Well it's the author's way of drawing our attention to this particular line. If you've ever looked at a family tree they can be often be very extensive with lines and names everywhere.

So the genealogy of chapter 10 is kind of like that. It's big picture stuff. All of the descendants of Noah's sons. The genealogy in chapter 11 is very specific.

It is all focusing in on the line of Shem and it's the author's way of telling us to keep an eye on this particular line. Something is going to happen through this family that we should be waiting for.

[16 : 37] The author is saying this is the line of the serpent crusher. And we see that as we jump into the beginning of chapter 12. We're in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans a pagan land.

We're introduced to a man named Abram who would later become Abraham. A pagan man who's had no previous interactions with God and suddenly Genesis chapter 12 verse 1 the Lord said to Abram.

God in his abundant grace and kindness chooses to reveal himself to Abram. He spoke to him and commanded him to leave his home and family to go to a distant land that God would show him.

He wasn't given a clue where he was going. He wasn't given a postcode that he could put in his sat-nav to see how long it would take. He was just told to go. But he was given amazing promises on the way.

Genesis 12 verses 2 and 3 say this I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.

[17 : 48] I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. God is promising Abram a land a people and that he will be a blessing to the world.

The pride of mankind the spirit of Babel tells us to make a name for ourselves do more work harder be better but God says don't listen to that nonsense trust in my promises trust in me I alone am the one who can make your name great and it is for my glory not yours.

Do you see that contrast? God is the one who elevates people and gives them his glory any attempt to do it on our own will fail. Listen to and put your trust in the promise of God because it doesn't stop here in Genesis 11 with the descendants of Shem because that whole line is just full of more people who are just as sinful and full of just as much pride but there is one descendant that this whole book is pointing towards there is one serpent crusher who dealt with the problems of the spirit of Babel and who appears on the scene thousands of years after the events mentioned in this chapter Matthew chapter one we read Jesus is a descendant of Abraham not born of a man not born into that cycle of sin and pride but he is conceived of the Holy Spirit born to a virgin he is God in the flesh come down into a broken sinful humanity and his message was not that of a personal trainer to do more to be better to make a name for ourselves or to attempt to reach some heights of glory but his message was repent and believe the good news for the kingdom of God is at hand

Jesus is this promised descendant of Abraham through whom the whole world will be blessed he is the fulfillment of these promises in Genesis and he is the one who came to deal with the spirit of Babel that is alive and well in our hearts today Jesus said repent recognize your sin and rebellion against God recognize your pride that is being an obstacle for you turning to God and turn from it turn the other way and come and follow me Jesus says don't try make a name for yourself but Jesus says instead take my name and become a son and daughter of the living God Jesus teaches us to take our eyes off the spirit and tower of Babel and to focus our minds on an even greater goal on an even greater home and an even greater dwelling place in Matthew chapter 5 verse 3

Jesus says blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is not a tower of Babel but is the kingdom of God pride the spirit of Babel says do more be better build your own tower play God Jesus says the promise of God says humble yourself that's what it means to be poor in spirit humble yourself and you will inherit far more than a failed attempt at a tower humble yourself and yours is the kingdom of God humble yourself and submit to Jesus and the promise is not a comfortable life where you're loved and recognized by everyone but you're promised eternal life with the God who made you with the

[22 : 07] God who knows you and with the God who died so you can be there friends the fulfillment of this promise of God in the book of Genesis is Jesus Christ he is the perfect example of humility as he took on flesh and became one of us living the perfect life without sin without pride that we never could dying the death that we all deserve and rising triumphant from the grave defeating sin conquering death and making the way for a proud sinful humanity like you and me to be forgiven and made right with God that is what we're here to celebrate this morning the elements on this table are not just reminders of a fairy tale they're not reminders of a good guy who died a tragic death these are elements that get to the very heart of the

Christian message that each of us is sinful suffering the effects of the fallen living out a babel lifestyle in pride and rejection of God but through Jesus Christ through his broken body through his shed blood we are being taken from being children of pride and deserving of judgment to being sons and daughters of the living God who is faithful to his promises and sent his son to die if you're here this morning and you are a Christian do not be tricked do not fall back into the spirit of babel but trust fully and live out your faith in Jesus Christ in all humility live not making a name for yourself but making his name great because the reality is that if we're full of ourselves there is no more room for

God our goal should be to see him glorified and to see his name lifted above every other name and if you're not a Christian this morning I want you to consider where you stand before this holy God the day is approaching when God will come down and in his final act of judgment those who've trusted in Jesus he will take to be with him in his presence forever and those who continue in their pride and rebellion he will cast off into eternal judgment please don't let pride be the thing that stops you turning to God but listen to the words of Jesus as he calls you to repent believe in and follow him would you humble yourself and see the brokenness of your own heart and humbly come before Jesus the servant king who died so that you may live this passage is summarized wonderfully by the lyrics we're just about to sing how people can go from living in their sin glorying in pride and rejecting

God to being brought into his family being made right with him because of the promised one Jesus Christ and with these words I'll end I once was lost in darkest night yet thought I knew the way the sin that promised joy and life had led me to the grave I had no hope that you would own a rebel to your will and if you had not loved me first I would refuse you still hallelujah all I have is Christ hallelujah Jesus is my life let's pray together and just in the quietness of our hearts let's spend a moment reflecting on how we stand before a holy God and give him thanks for what he has done for us how deep the father's love for us that he would send his only son to make a wretch his treasure father we thank you that you have come that you have sent your son that you have been faithful to your promise and you have rescued a people you've brought us and taken us out of pride you've taken us out of the path that we were on to destruction and you have stopped us from making a name for ourselves but you have given us an even greater name that you have given us your name and that we can now say that we are sons and daughters of the living

God Jesus we thank you amen amen and we amen amen amen amen