

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Proud Interaction of Peter with Christ John 13:36-38**

I am sure most of us are familiar with the words of King Nebuchadnezzar that he spoke to himself while walking on the roof of his royal palace in Babylon. But if are not let me read those words for you. I will be reading from **Daniel 4:30** which says "**The king** [while walking on the roof of his royal palace] **reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’**"

Now think about those words for a moment. Do you see anything wrong with them? Hopefully your answer would be yes. So, what was so wrong about his words? The words of Nebuchadnezzar were proudful.

What is pride? Pride is simply thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. Was Nebuchadnezzar, based on his words, thinking of himself more highly than he should have been? Absolutely! Whatever he had, had been given him by God, and he would have had none of it if God had not willed it so.

Is this something that we need to keep in mind as we look over our lives and what the Lord has blessed us with? Absolutely! What a terrible thing it would be to look at our good family or our comfortable home or our accomplishments and somehow come to the conclusion that all of this was accomplished simply by the power of our might and exists for our glory.

Pride is certainly a terrible thing and it will have its consequences. Let me read for you **Proverbs 11:2. "When pride comes, then comes dishonor."** Is this really true? Of course it's true! Certainly Nebuchadnezzar discovered this.

Do you remember what happened to him after he spoke those words to himself on the rooftop of his royal palace? Let me refresh your memory. Let me read for you **Daniel 4:31-32. "While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, (32) and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'"** Did all this happen just as God said it would happen? Yes!

Pride is a terrible thing. It is something that God hates and when we allow it to come into our lives, dishonor will most likely not be far behind.

This weekend as we continue our study of the Gospel of John this lesson will again be re-emphasized to us, not through the life experience of Nebuchadnezzar, but rather through the life experience of the Apostle Peter as we again pick up our study of the Gospel of John.

We are in the thirteenth chapter and we have just begun to examine a section of Scripture that is commonly referred to as Christ's farewell discourse. It begins in **John 13:31** and will continue all the way to **John 17:26**. So, how did this discourse begin?

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It began with an introduction in **John 13:31-35**, which we have now just completed.

Jesus' introduction to the farewell discourse contained three fundamental factors that would be important in shaping the course of His disciples' immediate future. So, what were these three fundamental factors that we have already considered?

The first factor that would be fundamental in shaping the course of their immediate future was a new glory (John 13:31-32). Let me read those verses for you. "**When therefore he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; (32) if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.'**" So, what was the first fundamental factor? A new glory! So, what is the second fundamental factor in shaping their immediate future?

The second factor that would be fundamental in shaping the course of their immediate future was a new situation (John 13:33). Let me read this verse for you. "**Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'**"

So, what was the first fundamental factor? A new glory! And what was the second fundamental factor? A new situation! This brings us the third and final fundamental factor that we considered.

The third factor that would be fundamental in shaping the course of their immediate future was a new commandment (John 13:34-35). Let me read these verses for you. "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (35) By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.**"

So, how did the disciples respond to Christ's instruction in **John 13:31-35**? Or perhaps better said, "How did Peter respond to Christ's instruction in **John 13:31-35**?" His response was recorded in the passage that we will be examining this weekend. Unfortunately, I believe that we will discover that Peter's response to Christ's instruction was not one of humble submission but rather of prideful opposition.

I would hope that as we consider Peter's prideful response to the instruction of Christ and consider its painful consequence in respect to the life of Peter that we might be more aware of how our response to the teachings of Christ will either expose our humility or our pride.

So with this in mind, let us now begin to examine **John 13:36-38** looking specifically at the pride of Simon Peter. So, what is the first thing that we see?

The first thing that we see is the Pride of Peter displayed (John 13:36).

So, how was the pride of Peter displayed? Peter's pride was displayed in the question he asked Christ in John 13:36. Let me read this verse for you. "**Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are you going?'**"

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Now I know that this question does not on the surface appear particularly prideful but I believe that as we go deeper into our text that this will in fact become very clear.

First of all, let us once again go back a few verses to those three fundamental factors that Jesus attempted to communicate to His disciples in **John 13:31-35**. What were those three fundamental factors? The three fundamental factors that Jesus attempted to share with His disciples in order to prepare them for His departure was a new glory, a new situation, and a new commandment! So, which one of these three caught the fancy of the disciples or at least the fancy of Peter?

In light of Peter's question, "Lord, where are you going?" I would think that we would have to conclude that it was the new situation that had caught his fancy.

But why would the prospect of this new situation have caught the fancy of Peter rather than the new glory or the new commandment? I believe that it caught his fancy because he was not prepared to receive it or to humbly submit himself to it.

Jesus had told His disciples in **John 13:33** that He was only going to be with them a little while and then He would be gone. And even though they would seek Him, they would not be able to find Him nor would they be able to come to Him. Peter was not ready, I believe, to receive these words or submit himself to these words. This is why I believe Peter, in responding to the instruction of Christ, chose to focus on the new situation rather than the new glory or the new commandment.

At this point, all that I have shared with you is simply based on supposition. But as we go further in the verse this will change.

Let us continue to read **John 13:36**. "**Lord, where are you going?**" Jesus answered, **'Where I go, you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow later'**" Now isn't this an interesting response?

Notice that Jesus did not answer his question. In other words, Jesus did not tell Peter where He was going. Why?

Jesus did not respond to Peter's specific question because the reason for the question was of greater importance to Christ than the question itself.

And what was the reason for Peter's question? Based on Jesus' response in John 13:36, we would have to conclude that Peter's question was not motivated by curiosity but by a desire to follow Christ in spite of what Christ shared in John 13:33.

If we understand Peter's question in this way, then Christ's response makes perfect sense. In other words, Jesus was in essence, in light of Peter's purposed plan to follow Him, telling Peter, "**where I am going you cannot come now.**"

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Was Peter struggling to humbly accept the instruction of Christ? Absolutely! Was there any excuse for this? No! There was no excuse. Sure it is true that Peter didn't understand the reason why Jesus had to leave him and the other disciples. Sure it is true that Peter didn't understand that Christ in a very few short hours would be completing His redemptive work and would have to return back to His Father. But this was no excuse for Peter not to humbly accept the fact that Jesus knew better than himself what indeed was best for him and the other disciples. And we need to understand this as well when it comes to responding to the teachings of God's Word.

So, how was Peter's pride displayed in his question? Peter's pride was displayed in his question because his question was motivated by his desire to join Jesus on a journey that Jesus had made very clear to him would not happen.

But before we go on to the next point and **John 13:37**, there is something else that we need to note. Jesus did not simply, in responding to Peter's prideful question, reiterate what He had said in **John 13:33**. He actually added something, something that certainly appears to be added as a means of encouragement. Let us once again look at the verse. "**Lord, where are you going?**" **Jesus answered, 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow later.'**"

These words of Jesus about Peter following later, though perhaps not fully understood by Peter, can be easily understood by us in retrospect. When Jesus spoke of Peter following Him later, Jesus was speaking about a future time when Peter, after faithfully fulfilling his earthly mission, would join Christ in glory. Hopefully Jesus would be able to say the same thing to each of us this weekend.

So, how will Peter respond to these words of Christ? Will he now accept the words of Christ and humbly bow before Him? No! This leads us to the next thing we see in respect to the pride of Peter: The pride of Peter flaunted (John 13:37).

Let me read for you **John 13:37**. "**Lord, why can I now follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.**"

Now isn't this great! This is so Peter! He is telling Christ, "Why can't I follow you? I'll lay down my life for you." So, in effect, he has gone from quietly opposing Christ's plan in **John 13:36** to him dramatically opposing Christ's plan in **John 13:37**. In other words, he has gone from quietly displaying his pride to flaunting his pride in a matter of just one verse.

Now I now that we can be rightfully critical of Peter and this prideful outpouring of passion but we need to temper this criticism with the knowledge that it is much easier to temper the passion of a fanatic, even a prideful fanatic, than to animate a corpse. Peter was no corpse!

So, let me ask you this question. Did Peter mean what he said? I believe he did. He was not a flippant braggart. In fact, how did Peter respond in the garden of Gethsemane when the enemies of Christ sought to seize Him? You remember! Peter, according to **John 18:10**, drew his sword and struck off the ear of man named Malchus, a slave of the Jewish high priest.

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Did Peter mean what he said to Christ in John 13 when he spoke about his willingness to lay down his life? Yes! He was not simply blowing air. He meant it.

The only problem was that Peter did not fully appreciate or understand the events of the next few hours and his own personal limitations in light of those changing events. He was prepared to lay down his life when Christ was a figure of strength, but He was not prepared to lay down his life for Christ, as we know, when he became a figure of weakness.

Can we learn from Peter? Yes! No matter how much confidence we might have in our abilities and personal strength of character to follow Christ, we must remember the biblical admonition in **I Corinthians 10:12**: "Let Him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall."

So, how else do we see the pride of Peter in **John 13:36-38**? Not only do we see the pride of Peter displayed in **John 13:36** and flaunted in **John 13:38**, but we also see the pride of Peter challenged (John 13:38). Let me read for you **John 13:38**. "**Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.'**"

Peter felt that he knew a better way. Peter felt that the better way was for him to follow Christ wherever Christ was planning to go even though Christ had made it very clear that it was not His plan. Peter felt not only that he knew a better way, but he even felt that he had the wherewithal within himself to pursue this better way.

But Jesus was not going to allow this prideful display of Peter to go unchallenged. What does the Scriptures teach us that comes when pride comes into our lives? The Scriptures teach us that dishonor will follow and this is exactly what Christ now tells Peter will happen to him.

Rather than laying down his life for Christ, Christ predicts that he will deny Him three times before he hears the crow of a rooster. Was this prophecy fulfilled? The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded for us in John 18:27.

When Christ speaks through His word, He expects us to listen! He does not expect us to think we have a better plan. He does not expect us to think we have sufficient resources in ourselves to go about doing our own thing!

If we fail to understand this and begin to display our prideful ways, or even being to flaunt our prideful ways, the Lord certainly will challenge us. What comes invariably comes after pride? Dishonor.

Was Nebuchadnezzar dishonored? Yes! And was Peter dishonored? Yes! And so will we if we display or flaunt the same kind of pride.

Rather than being indifferent or even resistant to the instructions of Christ, displaying or even flaunting our pride, we need to humble ourselves before Christ and His word. Will this lead to a better outcome! Absolutely!

What does **James 4:6** tell us? "**God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**"