

Love over Ego 4: *Humility over Shame*

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Our egos think we are the center of the universe. Likely we've had too many times when people didn't pay attention to us as we hoped they would and we've felt indignant inside. It's a bit embarrassing to notice how much we want to be noticed and praised because the more balanced part of us knows it's not reasonable.

Here's the irony: Right now we are the center of the Lord's universe. Part of the nature of the Divine Love is that it is completely present with each of us. It's not like you take the sum total of the Lord's love and divide it by all the people in creation. Each of us receives the totality of the Lord's love every moment, and the full measure of His wisdom guiding us.

These two perspectives provide the conflict and challenge of our lives. The Lord is offering something amazing, something that we all want – to be loved and treasured, to have value and to connect with others. And our ego gets in the way of receiving that by trying to get it another way.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of an enormous tree that was cut down, and only the stump was left. Then he lived as a beast for seven years. Daniel interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, and explained that the tree was Nebuchadnezzar, who had grown great, but now was going to lose his mind. He would be cut down to size, as it were, until he had learned his place in the grand scheme of things. Daniel urged him to repent: "Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

But Nebuchadnezzar did not listen. Instead, after a few short months he walked through the royal palace of Babylon and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" And immediately on his saying this, the consequence fell on him, and he lived seven years as a wild animal.

Everyone has amazing talents, and opportunities to build amazing lives. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:14-16) The Lord's message is clear: Do great things, love extravagantly, and live with profound integrity, but give the credit to the Lord.

Sadly, ego cannot do that so we have to learn the hard way. So we experience temptation, or spiritual trials. We are allowed to see and experience what our inner motives are creating in our lives, that we are living like animals. When we can see the consequences, we can start to change, opening our hearts to the Lord.

Eventually the hard, ego-filled parts of us are softened, and we come to truly acknowledge that all life comes from the Lord. This is a humble heart, the opposite of the ego-filled heart. "Life from the Lord flows only into a humble and submissive heart, since it is fitted to receive. And it is fitted to receive because when a heart is truly humble no self-love or love of the world stands in the way." (AC 8873) Nebuchadnezzar regained his faculties and praised the Lord for His wisdom in showing Nebuchadnezzar the truth.

Lessons: Daniel 4, *Arcana Caelestia* 3318:2-3