

'The tower of Babel'

Recently I read a fable about a dog who loved to chase other animals. He bragged about his great running skill and said he could catch anything. Well, it wasn't long until his boastful claims were put to the test by a certain rabbit. With ease the little creature outran his barking pursuer. The other animals, watching with glee, began to laugh. The dog excused himself, however, by saying, "You forget, I was only running for fun. He was running for his life!"

And I guess the point is that we always need to be reminding ourselves why we are doing what we are doing. Because motivation is the most important factor in everything we do. Now motivation is a good thing provided we keep our motives pure.

Turn your Bibles to **Genesis 11**. Our lesson today begins with the time when everyone on earth spoke the same language. But something happened to change all of that.

Today we have many different kinds of languages in the world, at the last count there were **6,912 different languages** used throughout the world. When I was at school we got taught French and German along with English but being Scottish I struggled with most of them. **But have you ever wondered where all these different languages came from?**

Well before we find out let me give you a little background information. Noah lived 350 years after the flood and he was 950 years old when he died. Noah's sons Shem, Ham and Japheth had children of their own. Their families were the beginning of all families in the world today. As more and more people were born into the families of Shem, Ham and Japheth, the number of people on earth increased.

Genesis 10:8-12 "Ham had a son named Cush. When Cush grew up, he had a son named Nimrod. Nimrod was a very strong man and a mighty hunter. The people looked up to Nimrod because of his strength. They saw him as a leader and a hero".

Nimrod defended the people from wild beasts, but Nimrod did not obey God. But the people admired him, and they followed his example. He taught the people to worship the sun and snakes, rather than God.

Now when I was younger my grandparents used to talk to me about the war all the time because it was the biggest event in their lifetime. Now I wasn't there but I know a little about it because of all the stories they told me about it.

Maybe today we would tell our kids stories about the day the Berlin wall came down, or about the day when the Tsunami hit Japan and smashed through the Fukushima nuclear plant.

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Now if you had been a father or mother in the days of Noah, **what would you have told your children about God?** Yes, you probably would have told them about the great flood.

Whenever there was a rainbow, you would have reminded them of God's promise that the world would never again be destroyed by water. We know that many parents did hand down a knowledge of the great flood to their children. We have stories from countries in Noah's part of the world which show this.

This should have helped people in later years to know God. They should have realized someone who could bring such a great flood was a God of power. They should have feared Him and have wanted to give Him honour. But something happened that shows how easily people forget God and His way for them.

The Bible tells us in **Genesis 11:1+2 "Up until that time everyone spoke the same language. They seemed to stay together in a group; they came to a plain called Shinar and decided to build a city"**.

So here were transported back into a time where everyone spoke the same language, which would be great for communicating with each other. And this guy named Nimrod planned and organized the building of a very tall tower. He wanted to make a tower that would reach the heavens. It was a temple for the people to worship the sun, so Nimrod was rebelling against God.

But the people liked this project. They worked very hard, and it soon became the most important thing in their lives. And like I said earlier, it was easy for the people to work together because they all spoke the same language.

Genesis 11:3+4 "Since they knew how to make brick and use slime for mortar, they thought nothing could stop them. Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Now like we said at the start motivation is good when it's pure but here we can see that their motives weren't pure. The Bible does not tell us a lot about this city and tower, but we know the people wanted it for all the wrong reason. They were trying to be important in their own sight instead of trusting God for what is best.

And loved ones this is something we all need to be aware of. Pride is a very dangerous thing if it's used in the sense of thinking you can go it alone. These people wanted to make a name for themselves and **how common is that attitude today?**

I want to be the best speaker in the church today! I want everyone to know just how generous I am when it comes to giving! I want to impress people with my bible knowledge!

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I love that story about the two geese who were about to start southward on their annual autumn migration, when they were entreated by a frog to take him with them. On the geese expressing their willingness to do so if a means of conveyance could be devised, the frog produced a long stalk of grass, got the two geese to take it one by each end, while he clung to it by his mouth in the middle.

In this manner the three were making their journey when they were noticed from below by some men. The men loudly expressed their admiration for the device and wondered who had been clever enough to discover it. Whereupon the proud frog opened his mouth to say, "It was I," lost his hold, fell to the earth, and was dashed to pieces.

Loved ones when you've got a good thing going, don't go around bragging about it. **James 4:16** "But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil". You see God doesn't like pride and He certainly didn't like what was happening with His people here in **Genesis 11**. And so He decided to do something that would stop their building.

Genesis 11:5-7 "But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the people had started building. And the LORD said, "If as one people all sharing a common language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be beyond them. Come, let's go down and confuse their language so they won't be able to understand each other."

God did not want this to happen. He wanted people to obey Him but the people forgot the flood, and they forgot God. If the building of this tower continued, God knew that the people would become as evil as they were before the flood. So God caused the people to speak different languages which in turn caused them to break into separate groups.

They could no longer work together to build this tower. There was confusion and so the building stopped. And then the Bible says in **Genesis 11:8** that "God scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth". Those who spoke the same language moved in groups to different parts of the world to start over.

Genesis 11:9 "They named the city Babel, because there was such a confusion of speech there". This very tall tower built to worship other gods was called the **Tower of Babel**. The word Babel means confusion.

The City and tower that were supposed to reach up to heaven were never finished. After all, how could people work together when they were speaking different language?

They surely could not help each other if they couldn't understand what they were saying. This should be a lesson to us about deciding what we will do without God's help.

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He is always ready to help us in things that He plans for us to do. But when we strike out on our own, we will have to depend on ourselves alone. We need to plan things to fit into God's purpose for us, and then we can always trust in Him to help.

If we don't trust God to help us and think we can go it alone, we call this pride.

Proverbs 11:2 "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom". Proverbs 13:10 "With pride comes only contention, but wisdom is with the well-advised".

In the **book of Proverbs**, pride is used in **two senses**. (1) The good sense, it is admirable and necessary. It is associated with self-respect and personal dignity. However, we must always avoid self-contempt, saying "I am a nobody" is not a way to gain respect from others. **Acts 2:47** shows us that it is alright to have respect from other people. This kind of pride is acceptable.

(2) The bad sense is associated with arrogance, self-esteem, self-importance, and all such similar vices.

Loved ones let us keep pride as God wants it. The chin and head up, not our nose. The pride of life is a channel by which Satan tempts man to sin.

1 John 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever".

You see loved ones pride can be good or bad depending on the context. There's an old Chinese proverb which says, "He who stands on a pedestal has no place but to step off".

The story about the Tower of Babel is a story all about pride. Pride is when you think you're better than someone else but like we already saw the problem with this, is that God hates this kind of pride. And the danger is that when we think we are better than others we also start to think we don't need God and that we can handle things on our own.

The thing is, we **ALWAYS** need God. He made us so that we would need Him. He wants us to depend on Him and ask Him for help. If we think that we have everything figured out and that we know it all, then we're really going our own way and turning away from God.

Just think about the last time you disobeyed your parents or you weren't nice to a friend. Think about the last time you thought you are always right about everything and everyone else is wrong.

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You put your thoughts and feelings first and didn't care about how the other person felt. That is pride.

You see like we saw earlier everything was going great. Everyone in the whole world spoke the same language. Some of the people ended up living in a place called Babylonia.

Then King Nimrod decided he wanted to be famous. He wanted everyone to know him and how great he was. He convinced the people that lived in Babylonia that, they too could be great if they built a tower that went all the way to heaven.

So the people went to work making bricks for the Tower of Babel. It was hard work but the people wanted everyone to know that they made the tower that reached heaven, so they just worked that much harder.

The people also convinced themselves that by building the tower that would stay united. Since they already spoke the same language, now they would be building the tower together. Their pride had taken over and all they were thinking about was that they'd be known in all the world for building the biggest and best tower ever.

God could see what was happening all along, but decided to come down to earth and see the tower the people were building. God could tell the people's hearts were more focused on themselves and the tower than on him. He was very disappointed and angry with them.

God basically said, "I see that the people think they can do anything because they all speak the same language. They have already begun to turn away from me and soon there won't be anything good left, all they'll do is sin. I will mix up their language so they won't understand each other, this way they won't be able to work together to sin against me."

After God said this the people could no longer understand each other. It seemed like they were babbling and making funny noises. All the people suddenly spoke different languages, some spoke French, some Spanish, others Chinese, plus many other languages. They were very confused.

This was the beginning of the languages. Imagine what would've happened if the people didn't try to build the tower in the first place and they focused on God instead. Maybe we would all speak the same language today.

From there the Lord scattered the people all over the whole earth. It's interesting because when the people starting building the tower of Babel, Babel meant "gateway to God" but after God mixed up their language it meant "confusion".

Even the word babble that we use today is said to come from that day when everyone was babbling with confusion. So you can see how much God hates pride.

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The people could've done amazing things for God when they all spoke the same language, and they could've been unified that way. Instead they decided to do something silly and build a big tower just so other people would notice them and call them great.

1 Corinthians 10:12 "So let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall".

The opposite of pride is humility, or to be humble. The way you can be humble is by realizing that **EVERYONE** (poor people, people with disabilities, people of different races, etc.) are special.

Each of us might be good at some things, but you can be sure that each person is special at something that you're not. Loved ones there is no 'I' in Jesus.

If you want to be humble remember to listen to your parents and those in authority, be kind to others instead of putting them down, and read your Bible and pray. By doing these things you're not just focusing on yourself, after all pride just causes a lot of trouble!

So let me leave you with the words of the apostle Paul. **Philippians 2:4** "Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well".