

- ***READ Psalm 113*** Have you ever heard of the term Stolen Valor? If you are not familiar, then it is the term for what happens when someone obtains a military uniform or other type of military clothing and wears them and presents himself or herself as a member of the military...without having actually served. Every once in a while on Facebook or some other social media platform you might run across a video where someone is accused of stolen valor based upon something they have said or having assembled the uniform in the wrong manner, and in the vast majority of those videos the actual military members or veterans are pretty fiery and upset.
 - To many of us this might not seem like that big of a deal. Why would someone get so upset by someone else simply wearing a military uniform. My younger self might have thought something similar, but that type of thinking would never again cross my mind after having my brother-in-law go through the process of becoming a United States Marine. Attending his graduation at Parris Island in South Carolina was a very eye opening experience that allowed me come to have a better understanding of what it truly takes to become a Marine. Anyone who has ever gone through that process or the process of graduating any of the other branches of the military knows full well the pride that the uniform represents, and that they aren't just given...they are earned.
 - Therefore, to have someone wear the uniform without having ever sacrificed what it truly requires to earn the uniform is very disrespectful and downright infuriating. In fact, to imitate military personnel and claim to have received military commendation without having actually done such is now a crime in the United States. People obviously take this seriously, and I think we can see why that is the case.
 - Yet, the question might be...why would someone do such a thing? Why would someone wear a uniform or display commendation medals they haven't earned? I think the answer to that is simple... So that they would gain praise from others. There is honor that comes from having served in the armed forces, and some people want to undeservingly gain that praise and honor from portraying themselves as something that they have not earned at all. It really comes down to people wanting to be someone special and important without being willing to do what it actually takes to be worthy of praise and honor.
 - While stolen valor in this sense is bad enough, what is so much worse is when mere men seek to take the credit for what God has done. The Psalmist of **Psalm 113** does no such taking of the credit for God's work and glory. Instead, the Psalmist has the proper mindset towards God, but unfortunately that isn't what we see all throughout the Bible, and this isn't what we see today. This evening, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about this idea of stealing God's valor and credit, and how we can be a people who are giving God what is due His worthy name.
- I. **Things do not end well for men who seek to take credit for what God has done in their lives.**
- A. **Nebuchadnezzar's pride in himself led God to punish him severely. (Daniel 4)**
1. In **Daniel 4:10-17**, we become aware of a dream that was had by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In his dream, he sees a strong tree that reached up into the sky and its leaves were beautiful, full, and abundant. It certainly was a tree that was to be respected, and it served all of the animals that took cover in it. However, an angelic watcher came down from heaven and announced that the tree was to be cut all the way down to its stump. This was all to be done so that **"the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind."**
 2. Nebuchadnezzar did not fully comprehend what the meaning of the dream was, so he called his chief of magicians Belshazzar to interpret the dream. This chief of magicians just so happened to be Daniel a faithful servant of God, and he proceeded to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream for him, but it wasn't a very joyous interpretation. In **Daniel 4:19-26**, Daniel goes on to tell the king that he was the tree for he himself was strong and a great

provided for many peoples, and yet he was going to be removed from that position. Not only was he going to be removed, but he was going to be driven out to the field to become like a beast. He would lose his mind and each like cattle, *"until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes."*

Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would remain intact and would be restored if he chose to repent.

3. Unfortunately, twelve months later we see Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance and pride getting the best of him as he reflected upon his kingdom and failed to give God credit for what he had. **(Daniel 4:29-33)** Just then a voice comes down from heaven and declares that Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty has been removed from him. The next thing we know Nebuchadnezzar, *"was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws."* **(Daniel 4:33)** Exactly what had been prophesied by Daniel had surely come to pass.
4. Yet...Nebuchadnezzar's story has a good ending because he eventually repents and gives glory and honor to God as the one who's dominion "is an everlasting dominion." **(vv.34-35)** Because of Nebuchadnezzar's willingness to repent, God does exactly as his dream says and restores his kingdom back to him. From that point on, it seems as if the king was willing to fully exalt and honor the true King of heaven, *"for all His words are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."* **(Daniel 4:37)**

B. Herod met a similar fate when he allowed the people to revere him as a god after persecuting the followers of God.

1. In **Acts 12:1-4**, we find king Herod giving great effort to persecute the people of God because he saw that it brought pleasure to the Jews. Obviously something that keeps the subjects of your rule happy is a good thing to do, and so we see Herod ratcheting up the heat by putting *"James the brother of John to death with a sword."* He then continues his terror of the Way by finding Peter, arresting him, and intended to bring him out before the people after the Passover had taken place.
2. Luke shares that the church of God, the saints aware of what was going on continually offered prayers for Peter while in prison, and **Acts 12:5-10** details the escape from prison that the Lord orchestrated to set Peter free. An angel appeared in the jail cell and caused the chains to fall off of Peter so that he could escape with Him. They were able to go passed guards and the iron gate leading out to freedom suddenly opened by itself, and then the angel was gone before Peter truly knew what was taking place.
3. Nevertheless, Peter appreciated his newfound freedom and found his way to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark in **Acts 12:11-17**. The servant girl Rhoda was so surprised to hear Peter's voice that she forgets to open the door and runs to the rest in the house to tell of who was at the door. Unfortunately, no one believes her, and Peter has to knock until they finally allow him in. He tells them to keep quiet as he tells them of what has taken place.
4. Once Herod figures out what has happened, he conducts a search but cannot find them, so he orders the guards put to death and he continues on with his kingly duties. Apparently at this time there was a problem with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and Herod was very angry with them. They were able to gain a voice with the king, so the people used that opportunity to sweet talk Herod by showing at him as he addressed the people, *"The voice of a god and not of a man."* **(Acts 12:22)**
5. These words, along with the contents of Herod's heart, and almost certainly his prior actions led God to strike him through an angel, he was eaten by worms, and died. **(Acts 12:23)** Yet, *"the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied."* **(Acts 12:24)** Herod and the Jews had tried to snuff out the disciples, but God would not allow His people to be overcome.

II. 3 Lessons from the stories of these two kings:

A. God is responsible for the good that all people enjoy, even those who do not serve Him.

1. We know well what James says in his letter, ***"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."*** (James 1:17) I feel confident that all of us would agree and see the sense in that being the case. Of course James, writing to disciples, would acknowledge that God blesses His people in every way possible through the good things we experience in this life.
2. However, we must recognize that God isn't only at work in the lives of those who serve Him. We also saw back in **Daniel 4:17** that ***"the Most high is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and its over it the lowliest of men."*** Yes, God blesses His children, but He is also present and at work using all of His creation for His glory. Even Israel being in Babylonian captivity was a work of God's hand in order to accomplish His will. Earlier in the book of Daniel we read of another interpretation of Daniel in which he proclaims that, ***"It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding."*** (Daniel 2:21) God is surely not removed from His creation, but He is ever present in real ways, even if we might not be fully aware of exactly how it is that He is working all around us.
3. Jesus says it this way in **Matthew 5:45**, ***"He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*** The point seems pretty clear from what we see...God's goodness is upon all people, and that isn't something that happens by accident. In fact, this is the case because God wants all people to acknowledge Him.

B. God expects for men to give Him credit and is greatly angered when men fail to acknowledge Him or His goodness.

1. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Herod found out the hard way what happens when men fail to acknowledge the goodness and work of God in their lives. Both of them were punished for basically the same thing. Their arrogance and pride had caused them to become a bit too big for their britches, and God punished them. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, he was given the opportunity to repent, but such wasn't the case for Herod.
2. The lesson for us to learn is simple...We must have the same mindset as the author of **the 113th Psalm**. We must fully acknowledge everything that God is responsible for and honor Him for such. Unfortunately, the only time some people acknowledge God is when bad things happen. It is seen when people try to blame God for the bad things that happen. ***"God, how could you allow for something like this to happen??"*** We dare not lay the blame for bad things at the feet of God...especially when those same people fail to ever give God credit when things are going well!
3. God demands that all people be willing to realize their own limitations and give God credit where His credit is due. While that might not lead them to becoming like a beast of the field or being eaten to death by worms...it most certainly will prevent them from glorifying the God who is worthy of credit for the blessings of life. We dare not take credit for God's work, or His anger will most certainly be aroused against us.

C. We should be in the habit of daily giving thanks for God's goodness.

1. Paul said it simply and succinctly in **1 Thessalonians 5:18**, ***"in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*** His message is quite simple. As disciples, it is God's desire that we take time in all things to look for God's goodness towards us. It is God's desire that we take some time to stop thinking about self, to put pride and arrogance away from us, and to see what it is that God has done for us.

2. Paul says that this should be done *“in everything”* meaning that in any situation God expects for us to find an opportunity to praise Him. So I would like to challenge us to do that exact thing. It is just prior to this that Paul instructs us all to *“pray without ceasing.” (I Thessalonians 5:17)* My first challenge is for us to do this exact thing. My challenge is for each of us to take time every single day to stop everything else and make time just between us and God in prayer. Then my next challenge is for each of us to take time prior to this prayer to find something to be thankful to God for. This could be literally anything. We could express out thanks for any of the innumerable blessings that we can enjoy each day, so I simply want us to become habitual in acknowledging God and giving Him credit where He is due. Our failure to do so will only result in God’s wrath against us, and as we have seen we certainly don’t want to find ourselves in that position in any way, shape, or form.

True military personnel and veterans become very angry when an imposter seeks to gain glory and valor not earned, and surely we can understand why that is the case. Yet, we must understand that this pales in comparison to the anger that God feels when men whom He created fail to acknowledge Him and the good things that He gives each and every one of us each and every day. May we be a people who are always mindful of our good God, and may we each be in the habit of giving Him glory and honor on an everyday basis for He most assuredly is worthy of such honor and praise. May God’s glory always remain His and His alone.

PRAYER *Our awesome and mighty Father in heaven...we humbly approach Your glorious throne acknowledging that You are truly the ruler of the realm of mankind. You alone have the power to raise and bring down kings. You alone have the power to send the rain on the just and unjust. You alone are the Giver of every blessing we all enjoy in this life. Father, we ask that You would help each of us to be ever mindful of Your presence in our lives. Help us to be habitual in giving you honor and glory, and it is our hope that in doing so You would come to take a larger part within our lives. Bless us as we go through this week, and may we each look for opportunities to bless Your holy name. These things we offer up to You by the power of Your Son who gave His life for us...amen.*