

GOD HUMBLER THOSE WHO WALK IN PRIDE

Daniel 4:1-37

Tonight we have the joy of continuing our study of this incredible Book of Daniel.

Please turn your Bibles and your attention to Daniel chapter 4.

We have here an incredible chapter that is written by King Nebuchadnezzar's own hand.

It is amazing that here God uses the most powerful man in the world to write the words which He intended for His people to have for posterity!

And what we find in this chapter is **God dealing with the heart of this king.**

And we're going to see the theme of Daniel on display in an incredible way tonight.

What is the theme of Daniel? ***The absolute sovereignty and trustworthiness of the true and living God.***

This chapter is a 'tale of two kings': one, a prideful human king; the other, the perfect heavenly King.

In this chapter we will see the sovereignty of God magnified as He reveals Himself to King Nebuchadnezzar as the TRUE King of Kings.

The message of this chapter could be summarized by this phrase that is found throughout the Bible:

GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

(Prov. 3:34; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pet. 5:5).

[Dr. Zemek – on the title of the Bible being “the book of ***GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.***”]

We will walk through this incredible narrative by following **Eight Scenes**.

Eight Scenes that Recount God's Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar.

My prayer is that we will grasp the WARNING in the passage about **how** we must respond to the living God.

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S OPENING PRAISE (4:1-3)

Chapter 4 is Nebuchadnezzar writing an 'open letter' to the WORLD!

vv. 1-3:

- 1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* tongue that inhabit all the earth: "May your peace abound!
- 2 "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.
- 3 *"How great are His signs,
And how strong are His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion is from generation to generation.*

This was an official proclamation from the King that would have been circulated throughout the entire realm.

And what does he want the world to know?

Nebuchadnezzar begins with an incredible declaration of WORSHIP of the true and living God!

And we just have to pause ask, WHAT CHANGED in this man?

What happened to bring this man from the king who was consumed with self-worship in the last chapter to now worship God?

That's what this chapter is all about – the radical transformation of this king.

These opening three verses are Neb. *reflecting back* on the story (the testimony) that he is about to recount.

But I want to show you some key observations just from Neb's opening praise in these first 3 verses.

Notice in v. 2 that Nebuchadnezzar is specifically reflecting on how God had broken into his life with multiple supernatural confrontations.

He says, "*It has seemed good to me to declare **the signs and wonders** which the Most High God **has done for me.***" (v.2).

Three times God broke through to reveal Himself to Nebuchadnezzar as the true and living God with signs and wonders.

We saw it in ch. 2 as God used Daniel to reveal Neb's dream and its interpretation, which exposed the Chaldeans powerless gods.

We saw it in ch. 3. as God miraculously delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, as a direct response to Neb. who scoffed and said:

"What God is there who can save you out of my hand?"

And then here in chapter 4 we will see God's final (and most striking) confrontation of this king.

So here we see that Neb is reflecting on his encounters with God.

Which, by the way, is such a critical and beneficial practice – to meditate, reflect back, and RECOUNT how God has broken through in your life.

I want to show you a couple more insights as we zoom in now on v. 3.

Notice v. 3 again:

*"How great are His signs,
And how strong are His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion is from generation to generation."* (v. 3)

This really is a song of praise!

And as we consider the lyrics of this song, I think there are a couple of powerful observations to make.

I think it's clear in these lyrics that Neb. is now embracing the interpretation of his first dream – namely, that God's kingdom is greater than his!

Do you remember from chapter 2 that the declaration from Daniel to Neb. was that God's kingdom is EVERLASTING!

Unlike the four kingdoms that would pass away, God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

And we observed in ch. 3 that when Neb. built his statue *entirely* of gold, he was deliberately rejecting that interpretation.

But here, we find a total recognition that God's kingdom alone is indeed THE EVERLASTING kingdom!

This means that Nebuchadnezzar is recognizing that his kingdom (and all earthly kingdoms) would indeed be crushed by the Stone (Christ).

Incredible!

We also find that Nebuchadnezzar's language is clearly shaped by the Psalms.

It is specifically parallel to Psalm 145, which Daniel would have known.

But let's dive into the story. Let's walk through the next scene.

2. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S THREATENING DREAM (4:4-18)

We're going to begin reading through vv. 4-18 and I'll make observations as we go through.

Notice first v. 4:

"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace."

I want to put into your mind an important connection here.

I believe there's a strong insight into the **idolatry** that ruled Nebuchadnezzar's heart here.

Notice these key phrases: "I was at **ease in my house...I was flourishing in my palace...**"

Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the world and built an incredible city (as we will see in a moment).

We've already seen that he was a man consumed with self-worship and pride and power.

And this chapter will help us understand that there is a subtle danger when we are "at ease" and "flourishing".

That danger is **pride that forgets God.**

Here we find Nebuchadnezzar *at ease and flourishing*.

The events in this narrative take place most likely near the end Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when Babylon was at the height of its splendor.

He reigned for a total of about 43 years.

This dream and these events likely happened somewhere between his 30-35th year as king.

Daniel would've been around 45-50 years old at this point.

As so there was a long and close relationship between Daniel and Neb. at this point (we'll see some insights into that in this chapter).

At this point Nebuchadnezzar's goals and dreams of imperial might have reached their zenith.

And so we find him, as he says here, "at ease and flourishing".

And I want you to notice how that "ease and flourishing" in this life are **key ingredients** for the **idolatry** of *power, position, and pleasure*.

We might say that “ease and flourishing” in this life are the “natural habitat” where the dark weeds of **pride** most often grow.

We begin to see it in the very next verse as there is a stark contrast – he moves from “ease and flourishing” to “fear”.

Notice v. 4.

v. 4

*“I saw a dream, and it **made me fearful**; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my head kept alarming me.*

Nebuchadnezzar has this second dream that, like the first, **terrified** him.

Once again, he sensed that this dream spelled some threat – some doom – for him.

And here in Neb’s fear, I think we see his idolatry and pride revealed.

His “ease and flourishing” from the life he’d built was possibly under threat and therefore it distressed him and caused him **to fear**.

And I think this is such an illustration of what happens in our hearts as well.

Our idols are often revealed by what we fear.

We fear losing control, we fear missing out on some experience or pleasure...we fear man and what people think about us...

We love the “ease and flourishing” of this world, and we fear anything that would threaten that.

We fear things that **threaten** our earthly affections. Interests, pleasures, positions, dreams, experiences that are bound to this earth.

So, Nebuchadnezzar is not an isolated case here.

His story simply illustrates what is in our hearts too.

This dream he had on his bed planted the thought that he might lose his prestige, position, and pleasures sent this powerful man into **PANIC!**

So, he called, he called in his staff to interpret the dream. Notice vv. 6-7:

vv. 6-7

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|---|--|
| 6 | “So I gave a decree to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. |
| 7 | “Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in, and I said the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. |

This time, Neb doesn't give them an impossible challenge, instead here he tells them the dream.

But once again, the Chaldeans are unable to provide an interpretation for Neb.

And once again, God uses Daniel to reveal the meaning of this dream.

Notice vv. 8-9

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|---|---|
| 8 | “But at last Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I said the dream to him: |
| 9 | ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is difficult for you, say to <i>me</i> the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation. |

Clearly Nebuchadnezzar knows and trusts Daniel. We get some insight here into their relationship.

It was one of respect and trust.

Daniel has proven himself and more importantly, Nebuchadnezzar knows that God works through Daniel!

Now, why Nebuchadnezzar didn't call Daniel in first is not explicitly clear in the text,

But I think it may be related to his fear that the message was something he didn't want to hear.

And isn't that something we do?

When we are "seeking counsel" sometimes we avoid going to those who will tell us the truth because we don't want to hear the bad news.

We gravitate first to those whom we think will just affirm us and not put up any roadblocks.

As one of our elders often says, many people aren't seeking counsel, they're just informing you of their decisions and seeking affirmation.

But in the face of the Chaldeans inability, Nebuchadnezzar now turns to Daniel, his trusted advisor.

And He recognizes that Daniel's God is his only hope to understand the dream – it even seems like he's honoring God here.

But it's worth noting that at this part of the story, Neb. is still clearly worshipping his own false gods – notice he says in v. 8:

"At last Daniel came in, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god."

So, even though we see some lip service from Neb. honoring Daniel's God here, he still clearly only approaching God as one among many gods.

So, knowing that God, working through Daniel, can reveal the mystery of his dream, he now tells Daniel the dream.

Strap in and let's read vv. 10-18:

vv. 10-12

10 'Now *these were* the visions in my head *as I lay* on my bed: I was looking, and behold, *there was* a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height *was* great.

11 'The tree grew large and became strong,
And its height reached to the sky,
And it *was* visible to the end of the whole earth.

12 'Its foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it *was* food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,

And the birds of the sky inhabited its branches,
And all flesh fed itself from it.

In the ancient world, and this is true in the Bible, trees were frequently used to symbolize great rulers.¹

Nebuchadnezzar would've understood quite clearly that this tree symbolized him.

And at this point in the dream, the description would've been very pleasing to Nebuchadnezzar.

A tree that had grown so strong and glorious that all the world recognized its splendor and depended upon it for sustenance.

This would've been exactly the kind of perception and legacy that suited Nebuchadnezzar.

I think this is God just *exposing* the depths of Neb's idolatry – his craving for significance and glory.

Because as the dream goes on, it becomes clear that this story is twisting into a tragedy.

vv. 13-14

13 'I was looking in the visions in my head *as I lay* on my bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.
14 'He called out loudly and said thus:
"Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,
Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;
Let the beasts flee from under it
And the birds from its branches.

Nebuchadnezzar sees an angel from heaven who calls out a message which is clearly a divine command: "*Chop down the tree!*"

The tree is to be chopped down, stripped of its beauty, and those who once basked in its glory will scatter and abandon it.

¹ Dykstra notes, p. 92

This is getting right at the heart of Neb’s idolatry.

And this is the tragedy of those who live for their idols – it will all one day be *chopped down*.

But as we read on, we find that this is not a *total* tragedy – we find the first glimmer of hope in v. 15

v. 15a

15	“Yet leave the stump with its roots in the earth, But with a band of iron and bronze <i>around it</i> In the new grass of the field;
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The first command from heaven was to “chop down the tree”!

But now this second part is a command that brings hope (as we’ll see in a moment) – the command to “*leave the stump with its root in the earth*”

But now I want you to see how this dream UNDENIABLY becomes about Nebuchadnezzar as the angel from heaven continues speaking.

In particular, I want you to pay attention to the shift in **pronouns** here – no longer is the angel talking about the tree, but clearly about a MAN.

So, the tree – and now the stump – are clearly referring to a man, namely Nebuchadnezzar.

Notice the end of 15 and into v. 16.

vv. 15b-16

15	“Yet leave the stump with its roots in the earth, But with a band of iron and bronze <i>around it</i> In the new grass of the field; And let <u>him</u> be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let <u>him</u> share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.
16	“Let <u>his</u> heart be changed from <i>that of a man</i> , And let the heart of a beast be given to <u>him</u> , And let seven periods of time pass over <u>him</u> .

Here in the words of this heavenly angel, it becomes clear that this is about *a man* who is represented by this tree.

And it becomes clear that something dramatic is going to happen to this man.

We're going to get the details of it in just a moment.

But first I want you to notice how the angel declares **the purpose** for all this.

vv. 17-18

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| 17 | “This edict is by the resolution of the watchers,
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is the powerful ruler over the kingdom of mankind
And gives it to whom He wishes
And sets up over it the lowliest of men.” |
| 18 | ‘This is the dream <i>which</i> I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, say to <i>me</i> its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’ |

A pretty wild dream!

And even if we don't fully understand the dream yet, we can sense that it has a twist of **tragedy**, a glimmer of **hope**, and declaration of **purpose!**

And, listen – we need to grasp the purpose of this!

Hear it again:

“In order that the living may know That the Most High is the powerful ruler over the kingdom of mankind And gives it to whom He wishes And sets up over it the lowliest of men.”

That's what Nebuchadnezzar wanted the *living* to know!

That the true and living God is **absolutely sovereign!**

And to find out how this king got to this point of worship, let's continue the story.

We're going to turn our attention to Daniel's interpretation of the dream.

This is our 3rd heading tonight:

3. DANIEL'S RELUCTANT EXPLANATION (4:19-26)

Let's read v. 19 where we will see, that Daniel too was troubled by this dream – but for a very different reason than Nebuchadnezzar.

19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts were alarming him. The king answered and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar answered and said, ‘My lord, *if only* the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!’

Here's what I believe we see on display – Daniel's LOVE for Nebuchadnezzar!

Daniel's genuine concern for his soul!

We'll see it again in his exhortation to the King in v. 27, but it's clear that Daniel was **appalled** because he didn't want this harm to befall the king.

But Daniel, understanding the consequences of this dream for Nebuchadnezzar is reluctant to give the interpretation.

But now we find Nebuchadnezzar assuring Daniel that he is prepared to hear it – and he asks him not to be alarmed by it.

And Daniel proceeds – but he wisely prepares Nebuchadnezzar that is indeed bad news for him.

And he expresses even his loyalty to Neb., when he says, “if only this applied to your enemies..”

Daniel wanted the king to know that he was not taking any secret pleasure in delivering this bad news.

Let's read vv. 20-26.

vv. 20-22

- 20 'The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth,
21 and whose foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which *was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field inhabited, and in whose branches the birds of the sky dwelt—
22 **it is you, O king;** for you have become great and grown strong, and your greatness has become *even* greater and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

Daniel affirms what Nebuchadnezzar likely suspected – that the tree represented him.

And Daniel also affirms the greatness that Nebuchadnezzar had achieved.

But now comes the tragic twist.

vv. 23-26

- 23 'But in that the king saw a watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the earth, but with a band of iron and bronze *around it* in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,"
24 **this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the resolution of the Most High, which has reached my lord the king:**
25 that you be driven away from mankind and your *place of* habitation be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, **until you know that the Most High is the powerful ruler over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whomever He wishes.**

Daniel affirms that this dream and its interpretation come from the true and living God!

And he gives the sobering interpretation – Nebuchadnezzar would lose his glorious kingdom – the thing he held so precious as an idol.

And if that wasn't bad enough, Neb would literally lose his mind and become like a cow.

He would be driven into the fields where he would live like an animal in the wild and literally eat grass!

This condition of madness would be for “seven periods of time”, which is an expression that just means seven **years**.

And then Daniel explains the purpose for all of this in v. 25 – this KEY:

“Until you know that the Most High is the powerful ruler over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whomever He wishes!”

This purpose helps us understand WHY this was going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar.

This was not some arbitrary attack from God – this was specifically designed and purposed to TEACH Nebuchadnezzar.

And the lesson was that God, NOT Nebuchadnezzar, is the Ultimate King.

And what is clear is that in his earthly splendor, Nebuchadnezzar had no mindfulness that God was on the true throne.

In his “ease and flourishing” Nebuchadnezzar suppressed the truth that he was under obligation to bow before the true King – the living, sovereign God!

Now, God would get his attention by stripping him bare.

But that is not the final word for Nebuchadnezzar!

Daniel turns now to that glimmer of HOPE!

v. 26

26	‘And in that they said to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will endure for you after you know that <i>it is</i> Heaven <i>that</i> rules with power.
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Daniel explains that even though this dream spells out a consequence of great **pain**, if Nebuchadnezzar will humble himself before God, **he will be spared!**

Hope for deliverance depends upon **repentance!**

And Daniel hopes that this dream by itself will be sufficient wake-up call for Nebuchadnezzar to repent NOW!

That's what we find in v. 27. Which brings us to our next scene.

4. DANIEL'S EARNEST EXHORTATION (4:27)

Notice v. 27:

27 'Therefore, O king, may my advice seem good to you: **break away now from your sins** by *doing* righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.'

Here we see Daniel's care for Nebuchadnezzar's soul on full display.

Daniel doesn't want Nebuchadnezzar to have to be crushed by God into humility!

So he pleads with him to humble himself in repentance immediately!

He wants him to heed the warning NOW and thereby avoid God's hand of discipline!

This is the heart of someone who cares for others!

An earnest exhorting – and passionate pleading!

And I was helped by how Miller summarized Daniel's exhortation here:

"Of course, Daniel's counsel to the king was not a 'plan of salvation,' for neither Nebuchadnezzar nor anyone else could be saved by works. Salvation involves a personal experience with the living God with right living naturally flowing out of a changed life. However, temporal judgment may be avoided by correct living."²

The whole point that Daniel is getting at is this: *you must humble yourself before the living God!*

² Miller 1994: 139.

Stop living for yourself! Stop forgetting that God is on the throne!

Well, despite the warning of the dream and despite the earnest exhortation from Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar did not humble himself before God.

This brings us to our next scene:

5. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S UNRESTRAINED PRIDE (4:28-30)

Let's read vv. 28-30

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| 28 | "All <i>this</i> reached Nebuchadnezzar the king. |
| 29 | " At the end of twelve months he was walking on the <i>roof of</i> the royal palace of Babylon. |
| 30 | "The king answered and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal house by the strength of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' |

I think it's worth highlighting that God was patient with Nebuchadnezzar for TWELVE MONTHS!

He gave him twelve months to repent – but no repentance came.

We don't know what Neb. was doing during those 12 months, but what we do know is that after 12 months, we find him indulging in ***unrestrained pride!***

As Nebuchadnezzar considers the earthly glory of the city Babylon, he fundamentally *dethrones* God and attributes all glory to HIMSELF!

Now, just a few comments about the city Babylon here will help 'color this in'.

I've mentioned a few times in previous lessons that Babylon was unrivaled in its splendor.

And at this point, the city was the height of its glory.

Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the world and his city showed it off!

Historians and archaeologists have long marveled at the wonders of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon.

Here's a summary of some of the historical data:

- We know from his statue that he loved to bathe things in gold and the city Babylon was known for its spectacular use of gold.
- Babylon was a breathtaking capital city which was rectangular-shaped, surrounded by a water-filled moat, with double walls around the city...
- The outer wall of Babylon was 10 miles long and, according to the Greek historian Herodotus, was wide enough to enable a chariot driven by four horses to turn around on the top.³
- Babylon had three palaces, over 50 temples, and a processional street 1000 yards long and 70 feet wide that was paved with imported stones, and decorated on either side with elaborate bricks showing 120 lions and 575 dragons.⁴
- Nebuchadnezzar had constructed impressive Ziggurat towers, some of which scraped the sky at nearly 300 feet.⁵
- He built a 400 foot bridge across the Euphrates River which ran through the middle of the city.⁶
- He built for his wife (Amytis) the famous Hanging Gardens which became one of the Seven wonders of the ancient world.
- The Greek geographer Strabo, who described the gardens in the first century BC wrote, "It consists of vaulted terraces raised one above another, and resting upon cube-shaped pillars. These are hollow and filled with earth to allow trees of the largest size to be planted. The pillars, the vaults, and terraces are constructed of baked brick and asphalt. The ascent to the highest story is by stairs, and at their side are water engines, by means of which persons, appointed expressly for the purpose, are continually employed in raising water from the Euphrates into the garden.'
- Babylon was an architectural MARVEL!

And the main problem was that Nebuchadnezzar looked at ALL of this and glorified HIMSELF instead of God.

³ Dykstra course notes, p. 96.

⁴ Dykstra course notes, p. 96.

⁵ Miller 1994: 141.

⁶ Miller 1994: 141.

And this illustrates what is in each of our hearts.

Marveling at your own successes and **forgetting God**.

In Deuteronomy 8:10-18, God had warned His people that this was the prototypical manifestation of pride.

Coming to a place of ease and flourishing and **forgetting God**.

You don't need to turn to Deut. 8, but I want to point out some key parallels – these are on your handout.

- **The warning:** “Beware that you do not **forget** the Lord your God...” (Deut. 8:10a)
 - This was Nebuchadnezzar's first problem: *sinful forgetfulness of all the Lord had shown him and done for him.*
- **The temptation:** *ease, wealth, flourishing in comfortable houses* (Deut. 8:12-13)
 - This was Nebuchadnezzar's temptation as seen in Dan. 4:4
- **The sinful result:** *“then your heart will become proud, and you will forget the Lord your God”* (Deut. 8:14)
 - Clearly the same for Nebuchadnezzar. Again, **forgetfulness (which is sinful negligence)** is at the center.
- **The nasty fruit of this pride:** Saying, *“My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.”* (Deut. 8:17)
 - This is the exact thing that Nebuchadnezzar claims.
- **The solution to this pride:** *“But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth...”* (Deut. 8:18a).
 - This is THE lesson God and Daniel wanted Nebuchadnezzar to learn.

You could summarize this kind of pride with one word: *thanklessness*.

Looking at God's blessings and not thanking Him!

That's really the great sin here! **Prideful Thanklessness**.

I think that word helps drive the nail of conviction into our hearts.

Because we might shake our heads at Nebuchadnezzar when in reality, we participate in the same kind of *thanklessness* all the time.

You see it in what we complain about.

You see it in what we go into a panic about.

Romans 1 traces humanity's worthiness of God's wrath to this one sin: *thanklessness*.

18 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness....*

21 *For even though they knew God, **they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks**, but they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Rom. 1:18, 21)*

Do you hear what the Apostle Paul is saying?

We need to understand that this is the prototypical sin of HELLBOUND MAN is PRIDEFUL THANKLESSNESS!

Oh that we would take warning!

Oh that we would not have to learn this lesson the way Nebuchadnezzar did – *through the crushing pain of God's discipline.*

This brings us to our next scene:

6. GOD'S STRIKING DISCIPLINE (4:31-33)

God had been patient with Nebuchadnezzar for 12 months, but Neb. had abandoned all restraints and was fully indulging in his PRIDE.

And I want you to notice how **SWIFT** God's discipline strikes in response to this high-handed pride.

vv. 31-33

31 “While the word *was* in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, *saying*, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is said: the kingdom has been removed from you,
 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your *place of habitation 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 know that the Most High is the powerful ruler over the kingdom of mankind and gives it to whomever He wishes.’
 33 “Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was accomplished; and he 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*.”

- At the very moment Nebuchadnezzar boasted about his accomplishments, the judgment that he was warned about **came to pass**.
- While Neb’s boasting was SILENCED by a **voice from heaven!** which sentenced him with the judgement.
- And the reason for God’s judgment is stated for the third time in verse 32: *Only a humble acknowledgment that the Lord was God would restore him.*
- He took to the fields and began eating grass like a cow...
- His hair, matted and coarse, become like a bird’s feathers and his fingernails and toenails became like claws...
 - *Just imagine if this happened to Donald Trump!*
- Miller writes: *“How ironic that the king who felt himself superior to other men had now sunk to a **subhuman** level.”*⁷

This is total humiliation!

But just as God promised in the dream – there was hope for repentance and restoration.

Let’s consider how that happened now in our next scene:

7. NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S HUMBLE REPENTANCE (4:34-36)

vv. 34-36

⁷ Miller 1994: 142.

- 34 “But at the end of *those* days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes toward heaven, and my knowledge returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.
- 35 “And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can strike against His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’
- 36 “At that time my knowledge returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my high officials and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my kingdom, and extraordinary greatness was added to me.

God had promised that this judgement of madness would last for 7 periods of time (years) – and He was true to keep His Word.

At the end of 7 years, God caused the madness to subside and Nebuchadnezzar finally bowed the knee.

I want you to notice something about Neb’s immediate response.

It was not to question God, or complain about the consequences...

It was not to try and reclaim his status or splendor...

Instead, his response indicates the fruit of true repentance.

A full acceptance of the consequences!

And that is seen in his full vindication of God’s sovereignty!

Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes OFF himself and looked TO God and BLESSED Him!

Amazing!

Beloved, this is how we must respond to the discipline of God in our lives!

This is the fruit of true repentance:

- *Not complaining under the weight of consequences, but BLESSING God that He is sovereign.*
- *This is can only come from a heart that says His glory IS my good! Whatever will glorify You most, that's what I want!*

After his sanity was restored, Nebuchadnezzar's priority and reflex was to "honor and glorify Him who lives forever".

And he bursts into a song of praise!

And here -- as in his opening song of praise -- Nebuchadnezzar highlights that God is the True King! The True Sovereign!

His song lyrics reflect that he had learned the lesson!

And then, in God's gracious providence, Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his throne.

His advisors (likely under the guidance of Daniel) sought him out and restored him.

And I think one of the indications that Nebuchadnezzar's repentance was genuine was that God restored his glory and splendor (v. 36)!

The very things that were once idols and temptations for Neb are now restored to him -- I believe it's because he learned the lesson!

And we come to the final verse in this chapter.

And a final scene.

And final moment with King Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel.

8. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PARTING PRAISE (4:37)

Consider v. 37:

37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

As the curtain closes on King Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel – this is what God wants us to hear.

These are the final words of Neb’s “open letter” to “the living” in all the world!

I want you to notice several important things here.

I think there’s noticeable transformation even in the way Nebuchadnezzar talks about God here.

Before this, it was always “Daniel’s God” or “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego...”

Or God was regarded as one god among many.

But here we find Nebuchadnezzar stating that now he personally worships the King of heaven!

And there’s a sense of exclusivity now – Nebuchadnezzar is proclaiming the SUPREMACY of God to the whole world!

This is nothing short of RADICAL TRANSFORMATION!

It has led believers of every age to ask the question we’ve asked several times now – *was Nebuchadnezzar saved?*

Here’s my answer.

First, ultimately, only God knows!

But based on what we’ve seen here, I believe that these are indications of a repentant and transformed heart that is only explained by God’s salvation.

Again, I’m not going to be dogmatic about it, but I will not be surprised if we get to meet King Nebuchadnezzar in heaven!

And there's one more mention of Nebuchadnezzar in the next chapter that I think gives us very strong reason to hope that he was saved.

We'll see this next time, but when Daniel confronts Neb's grandson Belshazzar in ch.5, he uses Neb. as an example of repentance.

He contrasts Belshazzar's hardness of heart with the example of his grandfather Neb (indicating the Neb. softened his heart in humility).

And that's the point of this passage.

God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.

We need to hear Nebuchadnezzar's final words ringing in our ears:

*All His works are true and His ways just, **and He is able to humble those who walk in pride!***

Beloved young adults, please hear this warning: God humbles those who **WALK** in pride.

Neb. wrote this letter to "the living".

Are you listening?

God will humble all those who walk in pride.

For most, it will be too late.

There can be no rival to God in your heart.

You need to be busy about tearing down all the idols that your idol-factory is producing.

This narrative brings us great conviction tonight.

But it also brings us amazing HOPE!

Nebuchadnezzar's testimony brings us HOPE that God is devoted to TRANSFORMATION!

God did NOT leave Neb. to himself! Praise the Lord! (Heb. 12 discipline)

He did not let Neb. to die in his sins! *Incredible GRACE!*

Never lose sight of who someone can become in the grace of God!

And so, just some final takeaway lessons:

- Fear the deadly danger of pride (i.e., "walking in pride")
 - Beware of *prideful thanklessness*
 - Cultivate the antidote: GRATITUDE
 - You cannot be prideful and grateful at the same time
 - Gratitude is the fruit of humility
- Rest in the reassuring reality of God's sovereignty over human rulers
- Embrace the hope of God's devotion and discipline to transform us
- Humble yourself under the absolute sovereignty and trustworthiness of the true and living God!

[PRAY]