

Against the Tide: The End of Pride
(Daniel 4:1-37)

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Pastor Fred Tow

Although the king denies God's sovereignty, God gives him a second chance by sending a messenger to warn him and to urge him to repent. But his pride causes him to ignore the warning. As a result, God has to punish him by humbling him. When he finally acknowledges God's sovereignty, the king is restored.

INTRODUCTION

Last weekend, I went to the Father/Son Retreat, where I led discussion with the dads. It was a precious time that the fathers had with their sons engaging in numerous bonding activities. One of the games we played was captured the flag, which involved a lot of running around. I accelerated too quickly & pull a calf muscle. It was a warning to me to call it a day. However, because of my competitive spirit and my big ego, I could not let myself waste an opportunity to compete in the rock wall climbing. Most of the middle schoolers climbed up the wall. I wanted to show that I could do it also. In that process, I strand my calf more. That was another warning that I should stop. However, when asked if I would do zip lining, I did not hesitate to say yes. My calf was in pain as I climbed up the four stories of steep stairs. I zipped line across the lake. It was a lot of fun, but I had to walk all the way back around the lake. Now, I have a notable limb. That evening, I drove home to make final preparation for Sunday school. On my drive home, there was an accident, which delayed my arrival. After driving with my cramped calf on my right leg for 2 ½ hours, I finally arrived home. When I got out of the car, I could not put any weight on my right foot. When I do, there was a lot of pain. I just could not walk because I did not uphold to warnings throughout the day. Have you ever had warnings and you decided to ignore it? The result was probably not very pretty. There was a king that was given a stern warning, but he ignored it, which resulted in terrible consequence.

This king that I am referring to is King Nebuchadnezzar. Before our preaching series on the 5 Solas, we were going through the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the power of God as the Lord saved Daniel three friends from the fiery furnace for upholding their commitment to their God and not bowing down to an idol. Here in chapter 4 of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar testified of God's awesome power.

A. The King Testifies of God's Awesome Power (Dan. 4:1-3)

Dan. 4:2-3, "It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation."

How often do we brag about God? Do we acknowledge God's power and authority? Various times, we forget all that God has done for us. May we remember that God sovereign and He is powerful. He is always available for us. He is able to deliver those who place their trust in Him. May we make it a practice to show God's off. I want to encourage you to share with someone this week how God has worked in your life.

B. The King is Terrified by His Dream (Dan. 4:4-27)

1. Wise men could not interpret the dream

Nebuchadnezzar has dream. But this dream terrified the king. He was so anxious that he went to his wise men, who were the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. All of their smart guys. But with all of their abilities, they could not interpret the dream. God reminds us that the wisdom of this world is inadequate and that only He can give true understanding of the future. Daniel came into the scene to interpret the dream. Note how Daniel was described in v.8-9, Two times, the king said, "The spirit of the holy gods is in him." In v.9, it said, "No mystery is too difficult for you."

APPLICATION: If someone was to describe you, how would you be described? You are a responsible and faithful person. You are a hot temper person and have a control issue. You say one thing, but do another. Or “I could see God in you.” We see King Nebuchadnezzar complemented Daniel because the king sees God being an integral part of Daniel’s life. He is one who trust and depend on God.

ILLUSTRATION: The Ministerial Staff attended a conference together this week in Dallas. It was a wonderful opportunity of learning as well as a great time of bonding between the staff members. I had a chance to tell Pastor Jason how much I respect him because he has led well. I challenge you to complement someone by giving them an encouraging word. Tell him or her why you respect that person.

2. Daniel interprets the dream

King Nebuchadnezzar went on to explain the dream that he saw. It started out looking good, but as it progressed, it turned bad to worst. There were three parts to this dream about the tree. 1) There is a great description of this tree, which was large, strong, and beautiful and it bears abundant fruit. 2) There was a messenger, a holy one, called to cut down the tree and trim off its branches. But let the stump and roots remain. 3) The tree turns into a pronoun describing someone. This person will live with the animals. His mind will change from that of a man to the mind of an animal. This whole dream terrified the king.

At the end of the dream, the holy messengers made a proclamation explaining the purpose of the prediction. Let us read v. 17, “The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowest of men.” The purpose of this proclamation is to show everyone that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He is the one that give them power to rule. God is acknowledged as being sovereign. He is in charge over all the kingdoms on earth as well as all the rulers. The only reason that the leader of each kingdom has authority is because God has giving it to them.

Daniel in v.19 was hesitant initially to tell the bad news to the king because this dream speaks of judgment on the king. But he was willing to speak the truth in love. It is difficult to give bad news or correction to someone. But if we really love another person, we would be willing to do so.

APPLICATION: Do we have to correct someone? We might not want to upset the other person or make them feel bad. However, if we really love him/her, then we will be willing to confront. Do we care enough to confront?

Daniel explains in v. 22 that the tree was describing King Nebuchadnezzar, who has become a mighty ruler. However, he will be judged. God saw the pride in Nebuchadnezzar’s heart and was ready to discipline him. Let us read vv.24-26, “This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.”

Daniel tells the king that the cutting down and trimming of the tree symbolized Nebuchadnezzar’s disgrace and removal from his throne, but the stump remains shows

that he will one day be restored back to his throne. In discipline, the king will live like a beast, eating grass and living among wild animals for seven years. The big lesson that the king needs to learn is that God alone is sovereign and will not permit human rulers to usurp His authority or take credit for God's mighty work. We are only subjects, but God is the King of Kings. When we refuse to submit to God's authority, then we will face God's judgment. It might not take place right away. God is a just God, but a patient God. Various times, He might give us a warning. When we are successful, let us remember to thank the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: When we are promoted at work or when we done well at school, may we remember that God gave us the ability to do what we do. Remember to give credit to God instead of bragging about yourself. Deut. 8:17-19, "You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. If you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed."

3. Daniel urges the king to repent.

Upon such terrifying judgment, Daniel urges the king to repent. Let us read Dan. 4:27, "Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

Although the king deserved to be judged, God gave him a second chance. Daniel urged the king to turn from his sinful ways and to humble himself before the Lord. Upon hearing the Word of God, it is critical to respond in a proper matter. God gave the king an opportunity to right his wrong. King Nebuchadnezzar has not shown any concern over the poor or show mercy to those in need. God in scripture has mentioned many times that He is the protector and defender of the poor, the aliens, and the oppressed. In Prov. 29:14, "If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure."

Daniel was calling the king to repent. The repent means the changing of the mind. This involves admitting our sins, being remorse over it, and turning away from it. It is not enough to verbalize an apology, but does not mean it. True repentance requires remorse, which is feeling bad about what he is done. Ironically, the king did not respond. The words went in one ear and out the other ear. Unfortunately, he did not repent. Since he was not willing to humble himself before the Lord, we see that God has to humble him so that he will recognize that God is sovereign and is in charge. Well, what did King Nebuchadnezzar do? God gave him more grace by not fulfilling the prophecy right away to give the king more opportunity to repent, but it did not take place.

APPLICATION: Is there sin that you need to confess before the Lord? Do it now. God promised in 1 Jn. 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." If you do not know the Lord personally, you can be a child of God simply confessing our sin and putting our trust in Christ, who died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin and he resurrected from the dead. Then we are saved.

C. The King Testifies of His Awesome Power (Dan. 4:28-33)

1. God judges the king for his pride.

We know that in the beginning of the chapter, the king testifies of God's awesome power. There is a big turnaround as we read from vs 29-31, "Twelve months later, as the

king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty? The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.” God graciously gave the king an entire year to accept God’s warning and repent of his sins, but the king refused to yield. Not only did he not repent, but the king testifies of his awesome power. Because of the king’s pride, he received judgment. Pride is one of the sins that God hates (Prov. 6:16). Pride leads to self-sufficiency. As a result, one does not feel that he needs the Lord. [Let’s find out what happened to the king. Let us read vv.33 “Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.”]

2. God punishes the king as he goes insane and lives with wild animals.

The king had a chance to repent, but instead of repenting, he bragged and boasted of all of his accomplishment without acknowledging God. Therefore, he needed to learn a difficult lesson and be disciplined. God punished the king as he went insane and lives with wild animals. Indeed, he lost his throne. But worse as promise, he lived with the wild animals and ate grass like cattle. His mind and heart, and even his body, became like the wild animals. It lasted for 7 years.

God could have destroyed both the king and his kingdom, but God still had plans for the king. God wanted the king to tell the whole world what happened to him so that God’s name will be glorified. What happened at the end of the seven years?

- D. The King Acknowledges God’s Sovereignty and Praises Him (Dan. 4:34-37)

Let us read vv.34a, “At the end of that time, I, Neuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.” V.36-37, “At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”

When we are not willing to humble ourselves before the Lord, then God will humble us. It is not worth challenging God because He is sovereign and powerful. It only makes sense for us to submit to Him. God is gracious and many times give us warning, may we heed to it and remember that God is sovereign and powerful. He deserves all of our praise.