

God Graciously Warns

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[0 : 0 0] Turn in your Bible to Daniel chapter 4, and we're going to read just a small portion of the! that we will study together this morning. Let me begin there in Daniel chapter 4 verse 1.

! King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied to you. It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs! How mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures from generation to generation. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. I saw a dream that made me afraid, as I lay in bed, the fancies and visions of my head alarmed me. So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Let's pray.

Our Father God, this morning, we are thankful for the Word of God, settled in the heavens, sufficient, sufficient, the means whereby you have chosen to reveal to us your wisdom and your heart, the goodness of your nature, and the means of salvation.

We are thankful this morning also for the ministry of the Holy Spirit, both in the lives of those that may be here today and do not know Christ. And may this morning, the Spirit of God work to bring to them conviction and realize that apart from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their life here on earth presently is miserable, and their life in eternity a terror and a heartache.

And this morning, Father, we are thankful together for the benefit of prayer that as we pray together, the Word of God would do a work among us that would bring glory to the Lord Jesus.

[2 : 3 0] And we ask this in His precious name. Amen. So before we take up the text, actually, let me leave you with just a little succinct statement.

That you can hold on to, you can probably write it down so that if at some point you become distracted by messages on your phone or you want to check your Facebook feed or you're thinking about what is going to be lunch, you can hold on to this and let the rest go and you're still in reasonably good shape so when you're driving home and your husband says to you, what was the sermon about? You can put it on the table, okay? Here it is.

Humble yourself or God will humble you. Humble yourself or God will humble you. Several months ago in ministry at Marion where God has had me for the interim, I was interviewing a pastor, and I asked him an interesting question.

I said, so how are you working at humbling yourself? That's a fair question, isn't it? The Bible makes it clear that we have the responsibility of humbling ourself.

And I asked him, I said, how are you working at humbling yourself? He said, well, God is bringing a lot of circumstances into my life that are humbling me. I said, you didn't answer my question.

[3 : 5 1] Humble yourself is a direct instruction from God to me and to you. And this morning, the passage that we are looking at is going to make this matter clear.

Humble yourself or God will humble you. Well, let's begin by marking the opening note that Nebuchadnezzar has. And our pastor has broken the passage down into two different portions here in Daniel chapter 12.

And the first part is going to deal with a warning that God gives. And then the consequences of not paying attention, which is appropriate to keep in mind. And as you look at Daniel chapter 4, verse 1 through 3, you see that this chapter is actually part of a larger account of the life of Nebuchadnezzar.

And we know that these things are written not just to record history, but so that we can learn from them. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, it says these things are written for your sakes.

They're written so that you might learn and gain knowledge and insight from them. I put it this way. A wise man can learn from what other people have to say. An intelligent man can learn from his own experiences.

[5 : 15] A fool doesn't learn from either. And so here we are this morning looking at an account that God has chosen to give to us of a sequence in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar where God gave him a warning in relationship to his ongoing struggle with pride.

And I want you to understand that this was not the first instance where God stepped into Nebuchadnezzar's life and addressed this problem. I'm confident to say this.

There's not a one of us here, there's not a one of us here that does not continue to struggle with pride. Now some of us are a little better at making that problem masked.

We're quiet. We're reserved. We're cautious. But oh, how the heart struggles with the matter. And I know there's no consolation in the fact, but pride has an ancient root in Bible history.

Go back to the life of Adam and Eve and you'll find that when Eve was tempted, in particular, the linchpin, the significant portion, the most significant part, was when Satan came to her and said, hey, listen, if you'll eat this fruit, guess what?

[6 : 35] The good news is you're going to be like God. I don't remember offhand who should receive the credit for it, but there is one author who said, only two choices on the shelf, pleasing God or pleasing self.

You could probably Google it and correct me later with a text, but I'd put it a little bit differently. I'd say only two choices on the shelf, worship God or worship self. And this morning, we're looking at an opening part in this account into the life of King Nebuchadnezzar, where we see a very interesting introduction.

And you'll find out later that this introductory statement that we're looking at first also is made at the end of the chapter. It's a little bit like bookends. The first and last part say fundamentally the same thing.

They are a testament to the supremacy and the glory of God. And as you look at this passage, you are struck by the fact that here is King Nebuchadnezzar, who, by the way, previously, you remember, he built this great big statue to enjoy the worship of his people.

And when three guys decided not to worship, he decided he would burn them up. And it ended up he was pretty well convinced that there was somebody else on the throne besides him.

[8 : 05] Now, you would think that having had that revelation and that experience, he would have learned his lesson, right? How many of you wish you'd learned the lesson the first or second or third or fourth or... Do you follow me?

Nebuchadnezzar, chapter 4, he starts out by making a pretty significant theological statement. Let me read it to you here. It says here, It seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God, not one of the many different gods that they were worshiping then, he said, look what he's done for me.

How great are his signs! How mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom! His dominion endures from generation to generation!

You would think that with that kind of an introduction, that the rest of the story would be pretty uplifting and encouraging, wouldn't you? It's like, yeah, I got it.

And probably some of you sitting here, if you were to go back and read your spiritual journal or some of the notes that you've taken in services at different points, you'd think, man, I got it then.

[9 : 21] What happened to me now? Well, here is the king, and he is giving a statement that depends on which author you read or Bible scholar you read, but the indication is that he is certainly making a testimony to his idea of who God is and what His significance is.

Some would say that the passage hints at the fact that Nebuchadnezzar came to faith. I don't know the answer to that, and I will tell you when I get to heaven, it's not on my short list of what I'm going to do.

I will be enjoying the presence of Jesus and not all caught up with asking some kind of little inane question about, is Nebuchadnezzar here? You know, it's like, it's all right. But what we're coming face to face with here is that we do see in this passage that Nebuchadnezzar knew who was in charge and who was on the throne.

And it's worth remembering that every one of us are without excuse in relationship to this business of there's only two choices, worship God or worship self.

God makes Himself known. God makes His presence evident. And as the Scriptures make undeniably clear, in Romans chapter 1 verse 19 it says this, For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

[11 : 01] It's popular today to be dismissive about God, but the truth of the matter is, is that the conscience of every man bears testimony to the reality of the fact that God is here and He pays attention to what's going on in our lives.

I want you to think secondly with me about Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. And the next portion of the text that we're going to look at just gives us a little snapshot of the king at the moment in which this dream comes into being.

Let me read the passage there in verse 4. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. I think it's appropriate for us when we stop and pick up on the detail that the Spirit of God has brought to our attention to recognize that we're being told something about the history of the king that should play over into our lives individually.

The testimony is that here was Nebuchadnezzar at a pretty positive moment in his life when things were going just his way.

To put it this way, we are more prone to spiritual temptation and difficulty in times of ease than in times of adversity.

[12 : 25] Now, the fact of the matter is, is that when things are going well, you know, zippity-doo-dah, zippity-day, you know, that kind of thing, we're kind of caught up with just how wonderful it is, and we like that.

None of us wake up in the morning and say, all right, Lord, bring it on. I really know I need difficulty today, and just bring it to me. How many of you do that? None of you. It's like, oh, Lord, I want to have a good day, you know.

And here's Nebuchadnezzar. Things are going well. I do want to remind you that the Bible is full of instances of individuals who, in times of prosperity, struggled more spiritually.

I'll give you one that you want to track. Over in 2 Samuel 11, verse 1, here's what it says. It says, In the spring of the year, in the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab.

How many of you know the eventual outcome to that sordid story? Instead of going out and doing what he should have done, here was David at a time of prosperity indulging himself, and he ended up in spiritual difficulty and heartache because of his luxurious moment.

[13 : 48] The inclinations to indulgence and seasons of ease that were granted by our gracious God are often far greater tests to our spiritual well-being than the storms of life that force us to our knees and drive us to his word.

I want you to think with me of a passage in Proverbs chapter 30 just for a moment and ask yourself the question, do I pray this way very often? That's a fair question to ask yourself, either yes or no.

Do I pray this way very often? Let me read the passage. Proverbs chapter 30, verse 7 through 9. And you may even have it underlined in your Bible, which is not a bad idea. Proverbs 30, You were praying this morning.

I am assuming most of you were praying. Lord, whatever your prayer was. Was this on the list? Two things I ask of you. Deny them not to me before I die.

Remove far from me falsehood and lying. None of you here struggle with lying, so you probably wouldn't have to pray that part, right? Remove far from me falsehood and lying.

[15 : 02] Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me. Don't you love the fact that the Spirit of God gives us understanding by explaining why to pray this way?

Look at the rest. Lest I be full and deny you and say, Who is God? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of the Lord my God.

We go back to the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Give us this day our daily bread. How many of you here, in reality, are dependent on bread delivered today?

Today, I'm guessing none of you. Your pantry has food in it. Your refrigerator has things that in the back you don't even remember.

The nation of Israel learned, Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

[16 : 16] And God fed them every morning only what they needed for one day. God does that.

And here is the passage in Proverbs where the author says, Listen, don't give me so much that I forget. I need you. And then he goes on and says this, Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Now, as we look at the passage and we remind ourselves that Nebuchadnezzar was in a time of prosperity and ease, I don't mean to suggest that we ought to go about afflicting ourselves unduly.

There is a time for a Sabbath principle, and it's appropriate. But the underlying point that we see here is that we need to recognize that when we are in times that are relatively easy, we need to be cautious to realize spiritual temptation is present.

Now, in verse 5, we read that the king had a dream that made him rather uncomfortable. Okay? As I lay in bed, the fancies and the visions of my head alarm me.

[17 : 34] And as I was doing some research after pastor asked me if I would be willing to preach, and I said, Of course, I'd be glad to. I found out that we all dream all the time.

Most of us don't remember many of the dreams we have. In fact, some of the research indicated that we remember maybe less than 5% of the dreams we have. So on those rare occasions when you wake up and say to your wife or to your husband or your friend, I had the weirdest dream.

It really represents like one out of... You got it? And the dreams that we really hold on to are very, very rare. In this case, Nebuchadnezzar had the dream, and the way in which the dream played out became something that plagued his thinking.

How many of you have actually, on occasion, had a dream and decided that it would be a wise thing to go ahead and awaken yourself because you really didn't like the dream?

Anybody ever done that? It's like, I don't need any more of this. I'm stopping it now. Well, Nebuchadnezzar didn't do that. He's chewing on this dream, trying to figure out what's going on and not making sense.

[18 : 47] And so, as we find in the text, what follows, he says here, I decided that I would have all the wise men of Babylon, this is in verse 6, brought to me that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

This is the second time he had a dream, and he had relied upon some other people to help him with. The interesting correlation or connection is, in the first case, he brought them in, and he said, I want you to tell me what the dream is, and I want you to tell me what it means, and I'm not going to tell you what the dream is.

This time, at least, he gives them the little hint of what the dream was. He says, you just interpret it. Well, in they come, and once again, they can't do the job.

So, he falls back on relying upon Daniel. I think it's interesting that he relies upon Daniel, because, as you will remember, Daniel had already displayed his ability.

And later on, if you'll skip down further in the text, let me get down there to you. In chapter 4 of Daniel, chapter 4, verse 18, This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw, and you, O Belshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of the kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation.

[20 : 14] Now, follow what comes next. Next. For the spirit of the holy gods is in you.

Why did King Nebuchadnezzar attribute Daniel's ability to someone other than Daniel? Because Daniel had been consistent in making it clear that he was not the hero in the story.

All of you, every day, are in interaction with other people who observe your life, and because you are the children of the living God, and designed by His calling to be examples of His character, people should appropriately ask you, Why are you the way you are?

And you ought not to pat yourself on the back and say, Well, I happen to be the sharpest knife in the drawer. Or you ought not to say, Well, I went to such and such a college, and I had really good parents.

You know, they were ready to be beatified even before I left home. No. If you look back in the text, you'll find that when this business of interpreting the first dream, which was a pretty serious event, came up, Daniel, there is a God, and He's the one who makes these things plain.

[21 : 48] And by the way, friends, you pray for me while I get out and interpret this dream. And he walks out, and he makes it very clear, I'm not, nobody can interpret this dream, but there is a God, and He's the one we're going to rely upon.

Now, here's my point. Every day, in the situations and circumstances that God has placed you in, either you bring glory to Him because you make it clear, the way you act, and the testimony you have flows from the character of your Father, or you take a portion of the glory that belongs to Him, and you rob Him.

I like the fact that this king, when he finally couldn't get an answer from anybody else, he decided to call in Daniel, and he said, I know you have the ability, and the reason is because of who you worship.

I like the way the dream starts, anyway, if I was the king. Daniel listens to the king explain, and pick up there, if you will, in verse 10, the visions of my head, as I lay in bed were these, I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great.

It goes on, and here we find that the tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its leaves were beautiful, and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all.

[23 : 28] The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heaven lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. Can I suggest, and I realize we've got to be cautious when the Bible doesn't tell us something, when we kind of assume, but I would imagine if this had been the end of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar would not have laid in bed and kind of struggled with how the dream really should be understood.

Am I right? None of us have done this, but there are those occasions where, carnality, you listen to a person talking, and you hope he's actually talking about you.

A compliment begins to flow out, and that must be me. And I'm guessing, I admit, I admit, that I'm guessing that Nebuchadnezzar, when he picked up on the first part of the dream, he thought, yeah, you know, it wasn't such a bad idea to make that big statue.

I mean, after all, high, lifted up, everybody, it's wonderful. And things would have been pretty hunky-dory in Nebuchadnezzar's dream if the rest of it hadn't played out.

Let's get the second part. I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in the bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven.

[24 : 58] Do you follow this? It's suddenly like, uh-oh, you're watching a movie, and the music is pretty nice, and then suddenly it gets pretty somber, and, you know, how many of you figured out what's coming next, right?

It's a giveaway. The introduction that we find here gives us a hint that something is changing. He proclaimed aloud and said, thus, chop down the tree, lop off its branches, strip off its leaves, scatter its fruit.

You get the picture? And as the king chewed on what he had dreamt, there must have been a sobering sense of impending doom running through his heart.

Oh. We understand that it wasn't just the king who struggled with the intent of this dream, because later when Daniel came in, you remember when he said, you know, I would rather that this dream and its interpretation be for somebody else, for your enemies.

I don't want it for you. The dream makes it clear that the message was to a person.

[26 : 25] Now, the text changes, as you work your way through it, from referring to a tree to using the words, let him and let his, and the person who was high and lifted up is going to end up in the dream, in joining the animals and having the mind of an animal, and then spending seven years in this terrifying, terrible predicament.

Why? Why? As you work your way through, and you'll find out later, it was because God meant for the individual to learn humility.

Remember what I said at the beginning? Humble yourself, or you will be humbled. That truth, we find appearing over and over again in Scripture.

Over and over again in Scripture. And it's a matter that appears not only in Scripture of divine revelation, but it is something that humanity recognizes as being pretty important.

I'll give you a couple of illustrations of that. There is a saying that, whom the gods will curse, they first bless. That was a statement from Greek mythology.

[27 : 49] The idea being that what the gods would do, the pagan gods, is they'd give a man a certain amount of accomplishments, and after that, his pride would get the best of him, he'd be destroyed.

And by the way, in the arena of politics, and I don't want to bring it into the message unnecessarily, but how many of you heard the word hubris? It has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

Hubris. The idea of hubris is that you're just stinking in your pride, right? And in politics, people are very good at identifying hubris in other people, but never in themselves, right?

Well, he has hubris. Seldom have I ever heard it said, I am struggling with hubris. Have any of you heard that? God cares about humility.

And so here he is, giving this warning to the king, and I think it's important for us to recognize that that's what this portion is about. God gives warnings to all mankind about the nature and the consequences of sin.

[29 : 06] And we do well to listen carefully to them. God warned Adam and Eve about what sin would do, and they didn't listen.

God warned Cain about what sin would do, and he didn't listen. God used Noah to build this.

Can you imagine seeing a boat being built for the first time in the pre-flood generation? I mean, here is one guy and his family cutting down timbers and putting up a boat, and you're thinking, what in the world is that for?

And along with his construction project, how many of you like to drive by construction sites? well, look at that. It must have been an entertaining thing to watch Noah build the boat. But along with the boat building, Noah was doing preaching.

That's what it tells us in the Scriptures. He was preaching. He was warning people for 120 years to repent. God warned Egypt. Over in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we find that warnings come even for the church of the living God.

[30 : 24] It says that when we take the Lord's table, we should examine ourselves before we take it. Why? Because if we do not engage in self-examination, we will receive the discipline of the Father.

Now, I want to tell you something. There's a difference between the way a father disciplines his children and God deals with the unbeliever in eternity. One of the nice things about being the child of God is that He will not let me get away with sin.

Can I say that slowly? He will not let me get away with sin. An advantage of being my age is that I've tried long enough that I really know it doesn't work, and so I'm quicker to repent and go the other way.

When God gives you warnings that there's something in your life that needs to be changed, I've got to tell you, it's appropriate to respond with repentance and humility.

One theologian named Platinga made the statement that sin is an opportunistic virus that always destroys its host. And so here we sit today, listening to this account of a king who struggled with pride, and I want to tell you that the reason that it's recorded here is not merely to give us some history lesson, but so that we who are the children of God may remember that pride must be dealt with in our own life quickly rather than slowly.

[32 : 17] Remember the lesson? Humble yourself, or God will humble you. So let's take the portion that we see here and bring it into practical application to our life.

Because I want you to understand that the lesson that we're looking at as we walk out of here is a lesson that has value and application to every person who is here.

Whether you know Christ as your Savior or you do not, you have an ongoing battle with pride. And pride has its greatest remedy in the work of Christ in salvation.

The benefit I have as a believer in dealing with my ongoing struggle with pride is that I enjoy the indwelling Holy Spirit that can help me.

I have the blessing of the Word of God that gives me understanding. And I have the counsel and the encouragement of godly companionship that have teeth.

[33 : 32] in our home, when I am struggling with pride, my wife doesn't say to me, honey, do you need a nap?

She says, why are you being proud? I don't like that, but it's necessary very rarely. When I'm being sarcastic, I don't attribute that to my love language.

My wife says, why are you being proud? When I get caught up and I'm easily offended, the problem's my pride.

And I want to tell you, the greatest remedy for the natural struggle that I have with pride and you have with pride is the blessing of salvation that changes the broken and dark heart of a sinner.

You cannot deal with pride apart from faith. You can put a band-aid on it and you may fool the natives, but you don't fool God. And so if you're here today and do not know Jesus as your Savior and you are convicted that your pride is this ugly cancer to your soul, the only remedy is to repent and believe in Jesus Christ alone.

[35 : 06] If you're a believer, I have great news for you. First of all, you have the blessing of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to help you with pride.

It's a great thing to have the Holy Spirit, isn't it? It's a great thing to have the Holy Spirit ministering to you and prompting you and I appreciate a couple weeks ago I was listening to Pastor here and he referred to the passage in Philippians chapter 2 where it gave us the illustration of Jesus, right?

And the Holy Spirit takes that and says, quit being such a jerk, Tim. Be like Jesus. And you have the help of the Holy Spirit to do that. Not only do we have the Holy Spirit helping us, but we also have the enabling of His Word.

We have the enabling of His Word of God. And I've got to tell you that this business of attending to the Word of God, I plead with you, do not make it kind of like a grabbing, can I ask you a question, Pastor?

I'm going to ask Pastor a question. I have permission. He smiled. Do you have copies of the, what is it called, Bread of Life or what, a little devotional out here?

[36 : 24] You don't? Okay. Well, I'm going to say this anyway even though Pastor has them out here. I would prefer that you not rely upon those, okay? You need a little bit more than just, you know, yeah, I have an app on my phone that pops up two Bible verses and that's what I do for Scripture, right?

Don't do that and think you're going to cut it. bear your heart in the Word of God. Plead with the Spirit of God to bring it into value in your life and let it make a difference in who you are.

seek companionship with the body of Christ in lasting relationships that nurture godly humility.

Tim Kenoyer is an advocate for lasting relationships. Not because I think it's a good idea but because God's Word makes it clear that it's part of this business of growing in grace.

Relationships are one of the means that God uses to help me help you grow in humility.

[37 : 52] And so, the takeaway this morning as we look at this passage is we ask ourselves practically this question, so, am I working at humility or am I sitting waiting for God to go get the stick and help me?

Amen. Let's close in prayer. not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord.

Amen. Amen.