

Pride Mercifully Cut Down

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Treg. Well, if you would, please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to Daniel chapter 4. Daniel chapter 4.

If you're just visiting with us, if this is your first time, second time, third time, joining us for worship, you know, the type of preaching that we do here is called biblical exposition.

And so typically how we do this is we walk through books of the Bible. And so if you're wondering why here on Mother's Day I'm preaching a sermon called Pride Mercifully Cut Down, I want you to know it doesn't have anything to do with your mom.

All right? It's because last week we were in Daniel chapter 3. And so this week we are in Daniel chapter 4. When you found that, if you would, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's word.

Daniel chapter 4. King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied to you.

[1 : 10] 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 the 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. Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation.

At last Daniel came in before me, he who was named Belshazzar after the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And I told him the dream, saying, O Belshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my head that I saw and their interpretation.

The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these. I saw and behold a tree in the midst of all the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

[2 : 33] Its leaves were 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 heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. He proclaimed aloud and said thus, Chop down the tree, and lop off its branches.

Strip off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field.

Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.

The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.

[3 : 46] This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw, and you, O Belshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.

Then Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, Belshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.

Belshazzar answered and said, My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies. The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and whose branches the birds of the heavens lived.

It is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth.

And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him.

[5 : 08] This is the interpretation, O king. It is a decree of the Most High God, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you, from the time that you know that heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you.

Break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may be perhaps a lengthening of your prosperity. All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of twelve months, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power, as a royal residence for the glory of my majesty?

[6 : 21] While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven. O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

Immediately, the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men, and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair grew as long as eagle's feathers, and his nails were like bird's claws.

At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason 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. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the hosts of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can stay his hand or say to him, What have you done? At the same time, my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me.

[7 : 44] My counselors and my Lord sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven.

For all his works are right, and his ways are just, and those who walk in pride, he is able to humble. This is God's holy, perfect word.

Would you pray with me once more? Lord, we pray now as we open your word, would you speak to us through it? Would you show us what truth you would have us to learn from it this morning?

Would you teach us? Would you humble us this morning? Would you lead us to Christ in honor and praise? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

Well, one of my favorite parts about being a pastor, and being your pastor, is that I get to hear all of your testimonies of how you came to faith in the Lord.

[8 : 55] I get to share my own testimony fairly often, and as a part of becoming a member of our local church here, I get to hear all of your testimonies. And for many of us, there's a common theme.

Our story begins with us observing the work of God in someone else's life. We see, by our nearness to them, the work that God's doing in them.

We observe something incredible that God's done in their life, but then all of a sudden, something starts to happen, and the Lord begins to work in us. And now all of a sudden, we begin to trust the Lord.

And now all of a sudden, it's not just what God's doing for them, it's what God is doing to us. Our heart is changed. We begin to thank the Lord. We begin to praise the Lord.

We begin to love the Lord. It moves from what God is doing for them to what God is now doing for me. As we come this morning to Daniel chapter 4, it seems to me that that is what's happening here with Nebuchadnezzar.

[10 : 00] Now, through three chapters of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar has seen the Lord work. He's been impressed with the way that Daniel has trusted God for wisdom. He's witnessed secondhand.

He's witnessed the Lord save three men through the fire. But now, here in chapter 4, I think that a shift has taken place. In chapter 3, it ended with Nebuchadnezzar making a decree that no peoples, nations, and languages should ever speak a negative word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

But now, here in chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar, he speaks to all peoples, nations, and languages again. But now, it's not in response to what God has done for someone else.

Verse 2, it says that it has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. Something has changed in Nebuchadnezzar.

What we see here in chapter 4, I believe, is Nebuchadnezzar's personal testimony of God's work in his life. This is his personal testimony.

[11 : 10] It's not a pretty story. We're going to see that here in just a moment. But it is a beautiful story of God's mercy towards prideful sinners. This is a story of God's mercy towards prideful sinners like Nebuchadnezzar, prideful sinners like me, and prideful sinners like you.

It's a story of pride mercifully cut down to the praise and glory of God. The big idea for us this morning here in Daniel chapter 4 is that God is merciful to save prideful sinners like us.

That's the big idea. So we're going to see three acts of God's mercy towards the proud this morning. Daniel chapter 4. If you're a note taker, if that helps you to follow along, we try to make it easy for you.

So we're going to have three acts of God's mercy towards the proud this morning. First, first act of God's mercy towards the proud is that God mercifully reveals his sovereignty to the proud.

God mercifully reveals his sovereignty. Look there to verse 4 with me. Here we find Nebuchadnezzar dreaming again.

[12 : 27] If you're getting deja vu, if you've been with us throughout the book of Daniel, this might sound familiar to you because we've been here before, haven't we? We're on familiar ground. Do you remember from Daniel chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar had this terrifying dream.

He called in all the wise men of Babylon, all the sorcerers and the magicians and the Chaldeans, and the wisdom of Babylon. Was it successful? No, it failed.

They were unable to tell him both the dream and its interpretation. That was Daniel chapter 2. And so he calls in Daniel, and Daniel was able by the wisdom of his God to reveal both the dream and its interpretation.

Well, we don't know exactly how much time has passed between chapter 2 and here in chapter 4, but here we are again. And Nebuchadnezzar, again, is having a nightmare, a bad dream, and he wants to understand what he's seeing as he sleeps in his bed at night, and apparently this one caught him off guard.

It came when he was least expecting it. He said that he was at ease in his house. He's prospering in his palace. He falls asleep, no doubt, his belly full and happy, and he's terrified by a vision and a dream.

[13 : 42] And so once again, he calls for the wise men of Babylon to come, and once again they fail. And so verse 8, he calls in Daniel, who he's renamed Belt-Shazar after the name of his God.

Nebuchadnezzar tells him his dream, and he says in verse 10, the visions of my head as I lay in bed were these. He sees a great tree in the midst of all the earth.

Its height was great. This tree grew and became strong. Its top reached up to the heavens. It was visible to the end of the whole earth. The leaves of the tree were beautiful.

Its fruit was abundant, and it was food for all. The beasts of the field, they all came and found shade under the tree. And the birds of the heavens, they lived in its branches. All flesh was fed from this tree.

This tree was an incredible, beautiful, life-giving, strong, fruitful tree. And you see, it kept growing and growing and growing, which of course, that seems like a good thing, doesn't it?

[14 : 44] That would mean more beauty, more provision, more life, more strength, more glory. That sounds like a good thing for this tree to grow. But then verse 13, he sees something else.

He says, Behold, a watcher, a holy one, and we can understand this to be an angel, came and said, Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves, scatter its fruit, let the beast flee out from under it, let the birds fly away from its branches.

Why in the world would anybody do this to this great tree? All the environmentalists are quaking in their boots right now, right? Why in the world would we chop down this beautiful, strong, life-giving, fruitful tree?

We'll see why in just a moment. But the watcher goes on with more to the vision. He says, But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, leave it there amid the tender grass of the field, let him be wet with the dew of heaven, let his portion be with the beast in the grass of the earth, and let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.

Now it's clear at this point that we're not talking about a tree, right? This beautiful, strong, abundant, life-giving tree is really one person, him, who's going to be cut down.

[16 : 21] The tree is cut down in the vision, but that tree is symbolic of a person who will be cut down to the stump. Why? Well, here's the point of the dream. To the end, that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.

You hear that? That's the point of this dream. Well, Daniel hears this dream and he's dismayed. It says he's alarmed and he tells Nebuchadnezzar that this tree in the dream is you, Nebuchadnezzar.

Your greatness has grown. You've become strong, but Nebuchadnezzar, you are about to be chopped down to the stump. Again, verse 25, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

All this is going to happen to you until you know, Nebuchadnezzar, that heaven rules. Now, we'll see the fulfillment of this dream in just a moment. But for now, we need to understand this big picture purpose of the vision.

We need to understand the big picture message of the dream. This is God mercifully revealing his sovereignty to a prideful sinner.

[17 : 45] Do you see that? This is God mercifully revealing his sovereignty. Now, I realize that we've said that word, sovereignty. I haven't defined it yet for you. So, it's a Christian, theological, biblical word, but it's very simple in its meaning.

Sovereignty simply means control. Sovereignty means God rules. If you're sovereign, you're the one in charge. If you're sovereign, you are in control.

If you're sovereign, then you're the one that's ruling. So, to say that God is sovereign means God is in control. It means God is ruling. Kings of the earth, they have a limited geographical territory with a limited number of people under their charge, and their reign is for a limited amount of time.

But God has total, complete, absolute sovereignty over everyone, everywhere, at all times, in all places.

In fact, that's a lot of the point of the book of Daniel. It's to teach us that God is sovereign over all of human history. He raises up kings, and He sets them down.

[19 : 01] As kingdoms come, and as kingdoms go, the Lord is working out all things to usher in His perfect kingdom. And it works opposite as the way that the kingdoms of this world work, doesn't it?

The kingdoms of this world, they grow big and strong, and eventually, they're cut down to the root. But the kingdom of God, what happens? It starts as small as a mustard seed, and it grows, and grows, and grows, and grows, until it's the greatest tree that covers the whole earth.

To say that God is sovereign is to say that all peoples, all places, all kings, all nations, every minute of every day of your life and mine is under God's sovereign control, which means, Nebuchadnezzar, God is in charge, not you.

Which means, you and me, God is in charge, not us. Here's what we need to understand. Understanding that God is totally sovereign, absolutely in control, is crucial to killing our pride.

We have to get to that point of attributing absolute sovereignty to Him. Our pride, it wants to hold on to some level of control, to hold on to some sphere of influence, but God, He's merciful to strip everything away so that we see that we are not in control, but He is.

[20 : 33] Now, I wonder, how much sovereignty do you attribute to the Lord? Listen to what the Scriptures have to say.

I just want to point you to just a few places. This is all over the Bible. I just want to show you just a few places that talk about God's sovereignty. Psalm 115, verse 3.

It says, Our God is in the heavens. He does all that He pleases. You hear that? That's sovereignty. If you get to do whatever you want to do, you are sovereign.

Now, we want to act like that, don't we? When we try to do all that we please, is that good or bad? Normally, that doesn't work out so well for us. That's sinful for us, but that's sovereignty for God.

Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He wants. Isaiah 46, verses 9 and 10. We've already seen in Daniel, God has planned out all of human history from beginning to end.

[21 : 33] Isaiah 46, verses 9 and 10. He says, I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.

You know, there's only one way that you can declare the end from the beginning, is if you know what the end's going to be, but He says, He doesn't just leave it at that. He says, I'm going to accomplish everything I want to do in the meantime.

He's not just looking to see how the end's going to play out. He doesn't just write the last page of the book, read the last page of the book. God writes all of human history to accomplish all His purposes.

And then in the pages of Scripture, He tells us how it's going to play out. He's sovereign over all of human history. Revelation chapter 4, it tells us, You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created.

He's sovereign in creation. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11, He works all things according to the counsel of His will. All things. Which means He's sovereign in providence and the working out of our daily lives within His own sphere of creation.

[22 : 50] He's sovereign in creation. He's sovereign in providence. He's sovereign in salvation. 2 Timothy 1 verse 9, God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Jesus Christ when, when, before the ages began.

He's sovereign in creation and providence and salvation. He's sovereign over every roll of the dice in every board game you play with your kids, Mom. Proverbs 16 verse 33, The lot is cast into the lap, but as every decision is from the Lord.

The point is, God is totally, completely, absolutely, without limit, universally sovereign.

Which means He's sovereign over you. He's sovereign over me. He's sovereign over your family. He's sovereign over your struggle, whatever that may be this morning.

He's sovereign over your job. He's sovereign over your sickness. He's sovereign over your, your prosperity and your wellness. He's sovereign over everything. We have to get this message.

[24 : 15] And it's an easy one, it's an easy one for prideful people to just shut out of our minds. Because again, prideful people want control.

We want to contribute in some way to our salvation. We want to control and be in charge of our life. We want to manage our own little sphere of influence.

And this is my kingdom. This is my life. This is what I have control of right here. Church, listen to me. Until we realize that God is in control, not you, you will be proud when things go well and you will be devastated when things fall apart.

The message of God's sovereignty is good news for us because ultimately it means it's not about us. Has he shown you that you are not sovereign?

That he is. God reveals this to Nebuchadnezzar here as an act of divine mercy. God is merciful to show us that prideful sinners like us are not in control.

[25 : 28] He is. Not only this, second, second act of God's mercy towards prideful people like us is that God mercifully rebukes our sin. God mercifully rebukes our sin.

In light of God's revealed plan here through this dream, Daniel's counsel to Nebuchadnezzar was pretty clear, wasn't it? Pretty bold, too, to say this to the king.

Verse 27 says, Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you. Break off your sins by practicing righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.

In other words, king, repent. Repent of your pride. Humble yourself. Stop basking in your greatness. Be merciful to others.

Give some of your greatness away to the oppressed. Give to the poor. Break off your sins and practice righteousness. Why? Because you're not as great as you think you are.

[26 : 36] Yeah, the meaning of the dream was clear. I think Daniel's counsel was clear. But apparently, the message didn't stick.

And the fact is, our pride is not easily killed, is it? It runs deep within us. You would have thought that by this point, after seeing all that he's seen, Nebuchadnezzar might have gotten the message by now, but it's clear that he didn't.

It's not a problem with the clarity of the message. It's a problem with the hardness of Nebuchadnezzar's heart. I read a story this week from Sinclair Ferguson.

He told a story about the Welsh evangelist John Elias. And he said that there was a time when the local blacksmith bought a new dog. And shortly afterwards, when Elias visited the blacksmith's shop, the dog could be heard just barking and barking and barking fiercely as the blacksmith's hammer beat down on the metal.

As often as he whacked that hammer down to the anvil, that dog would be barking. Well, as time went on, the hammering continued, but the barking got quieter and quieter, less frequent, less often until one day Elias looked inside the shop.

[27 : 47] He saw the blacksmith hammering away at the anvil and there was the dog by his side asleep by the fire. He had grown numb to the hammering on the anvil.

In a similar way here, Nebuchadnezzar, he's heard the banging of this truth before, hasn't he? He's come face to face with God's power and God's might and God's sovereignty and God's goodness over and over and over and over again, but he's grown numb to it.

He's asleep by the fire, so to speak. He says he's at ease in his palace, he's comfortable in his prosperity, but all of that is about to change because as you probably know, if God wants to get your attention, he's going to do it.

The easy way or the hard way? Nebuchadnezzar chooses the hard way here. So verse 28, it says, all this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of 12 months, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon and it says that he said, is not this great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence for the glory of my majesty.

[29 : 07] You hear how humble he is? This is after the dream. Can you believe this? He looks out and admires his kingdom which no doubt was very impressive, right, by all accounts, historical accounts of the ancient city of Babylon.

It was very impressive. Nebuchadnezzar, he did play a large role in the building and the greatness of this city. The records show that he rebuilt 12 temples he finished the construction of the great city wall.

He built this royal palace that he was walking on the roof of and attached to the royal palace was the hanging gardens of Babylon, right, which if you've heard of that, that's one of the seven wonders, great wonders of the ancient world.

He was incredibly accomplished and he knew it. And I want to say, too, that there's nothing wrong whatsoever with accomplishing great things.

There's nothing wrong with putting your skill and your mind and your labor to work and accomplishing great things and achieving great goals, but it makes all the difference in the world who it's for and who gets the credit.

[30 : 15] Listen again to what Nebuchadnezzar said. He said, I built this by my power for my glory. You hear that?

Verse 31, it says that while these words were still in his mouth, he heard a voice. King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom has departed from you. You shall be driven from among men.

Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall eat grass like an ox and seven periods of time shall pass over you until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

Immediately, it says, the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. Can you imagine? One minute, he's standing on his palace and he's looking out over his kingdom.

He's boasting in all this great accomplishment, great achievements, patting himself on the back, thinking about all that he's done and the next moment he's an animal out in the field eating grass like an ox.

[31 : 18] His body's wet with the water and the dew. His hair grows out as long as eagle's feathers. His nails are like bird's claws and Ferguson, again, he says, he becomes externally what he's proven himself to be internally.

A beast. For seven periods of time, all of it was stripped away. And we don't know how long those seven periods of time are.

Days, minutes, weeks, months, years. We're not told how to measure those seven periods of time. I think it's more likely than not that Daniel's showing us with seven being the number of perfection and completion that whatever the actual amount of time was, it was just the right amount of time prescribed by a sovereign God until this king got it.

Until he knew that the Most High rules the kingdom of men. Now just think about how humiliating this must have been for King Nebuchadnezzar. The king has been reduced to an animal.

Today, doctors would diagnose this as clinical lycanthropy. Have you ever heard of this? It's an actual, I'm not joking, it's a medical condition. You can look it up.

[32 : 33] It's a mental illness where an individual, he genuinely believes that they have transformed into an animal. Sometimes it's long lasting, sometimes it's short periods of just mental illness.

There are all sorts of medical cases. You can go home and read. They understand it to be an extremely rare form of psychosis and it is fascinating. But you just imagine the king.

You would never imagine the king to be reduced to that level of sickness and weakness and humility. One who's mentally and physically impressive, who's accomplished all sorts of incredible feats during his reign.

All of a sudden he's stripped down to nothing. driven out in the fields to go eat grass like an animal. If I didn't know any better, I would say that this looks like judgment, doesn't it?

How in the world can this be merciful? We say this is the Lord mercifully rebuking Nebuchadnezzar's sin. How in the world is this an act of God's mercy? Well, there's one word there that gives us hope.

[33 : 43] You see it? That word until. All this will come upon you. All this will happen until you know that God is king.

That God rules. This may look on the surface like judgment, but if the end purpose, if the purpose of this condition is redemptive, then it is mercy, even if it hurts.

Of course, God does judge pride. We're going to see this more clearly next week with the story of Belshazzar. He's well within his rights to judge pride. God does not owe anybody an until.

Do you understand me? God does not owe anybody one more minute to repent of their pride. God does not owe anybody patience. He doesn't owe anybody seven periods of time until they get it.

God does not owe anyone tomorrow to repent of your sin. God doesn't owe anyone warning after warning after warning after warning. He doesn't have to give us an until, but here, in his heart of mercy, he does.

[34 : 56] As sovereign king of the universe, he chooses to show mercy to Nebuchadnezzar by rebuking his pride until he humbles himself and honors the Lord.

Now, I wonder if this seems like mercy to you. to be driven away from your comforts, to be cut down to the stump, right?

That might seem harsh to you, but I want you to listen because we need to understand that our pride is like a cancerous growth in our heart.

If we keep it, it will kill you. it may be today, it may be tomorrow, it may be ten years from now, I don't know when, but if we are harboring this sickness of pride in our heart, it will kill you.

God is merciful to serve as a surgeon and cut us open and cut that out of our hearts. As painful as that might be, it's mercy for the Lord to remove it from us now, while there's still time to repent, than for us to wait and be prideful until the return of the Lord when we will be humbled, without the opportunity to repent.

[36 : 18] Church, I would rather the Lord cut away every temporary comfort, every temporary pleasure, every temporary accomplishment, every source of pride in my life right now, that I might humble myself before Him now, than for Him to enact judgment by letting us sleep by the fire.

And be temporarily comfortable, temporarily happy, temporarily rich, temporarily proud on our way to eternal judgment. Friend, which would you prefer?

We're called to humble ourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you. Maybe in this life, but certainly at the return of our Lord. God is merciful to show us His sovereignty, to teach us that He's in control, not us, and God is merciful to strip us of our pride, cut away our sin.

And third, finally, ultimately, God is merciful to redeem our soul. It's the third act of God's mercy here with Nebuchadnezzar.

God mercifully redeems His soul. Look here to verse 34. Nebuchadnezzar, we see he endures this discipline. Everything is taken out from him.

[37 : 44] But verse 34 says, at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. And I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.

Now, you might be surprised to hear there is disagreement here, right, with Christian scholars and those who interpret this passage over whether or not Nebuchadnezzar was actually truly converted.

And I guess on the one hand, right, it's probably impossible to know for sure. He's given some lip service to the Lord before. But in my opinion, I think something just seems different here, don't you?

And again, this whole chapter is Nebuchadnezzar taking the initiative to share with the whole world what God has done for him. And look what he says here.

He personally praises the Lord. He realizes that finally, finally he sees that his reign is limited, but for the Lord, his dominion is an everlasting dominion.

[38 : 47] He recognizes that Nebuchadnezzar, his reign will come to an end, but for the Lord, his kingdom endures from all generations to all generations. He realizes that for all his greatness, for all his accomplishments, even the greatest, most accomplished on the earth are nothing compared to the Lord.

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, he says in verse 35. He praises the Lord for his unstoppable sovereign will. He does according to his will among the host of heaven.

And among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say to him, what have you done? He says in verse 36 that at the same time when he finally got it, when he looked up and lifted his eyes to heaven to honor the Lord and to give glory to the God of heaven, he says my reason returned to me.

And for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and my splendor returned to me. My counselors, my lords returned to me. They sought me. I was established in my kingdom and still more greatness was added to me.

The tree began to grow again. But there was one difference. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven.

[40 : 06] For all his works are right and all his ways are just. And take it from me, those who walk in pride, he is able to humble.

Church, I could be wrong, but I've heard a lot of testimonies. This sounds like the testimony of a believer to me.

And I wonder as we read these words, friend, do you have a testimony like this? Maybe not so dramatic, maybe you've never risen so high or fallen so low, but I wonder as we read this chapter and consider the work of God.

Has the Lord worked in your life to humble your pride? Has the Lord worked in your heart to strip away every ounce of me, me, me, me, my control, my life, my work, my effort, my achievement, my accomplishment.

Has he stripped that away from you yet? So that you look to him as your only hope? It may be that you don't have a testimony of God's work in your life at all.

[41 : 20] You may still be proud, you may still be clinging on to something that you think you have to offer God. Maybe you still think you have something to contribute to your salvation in some way, your works, your effort, your riches, your upbringing, whatever it may be.

If that's you, I want you to hear the voice of Daniel again. Break off your sins. Repent of your pride.

Or better yet, hear the words of Jesus, friend. Repent and believe the gospel. The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that we have absolutely nothing to bring to the table.

It doesn't sound like good news, does it? It starts with the bad news that all we have to offer the Lord is our sin that requires salvation.

All we have to bring to the table is our darkness and our debt and our rebellion. You got nothing good to offer him. But the true king, the only one who truly can boast in how perfect and how glorious and how great he is, the true king who created all things, who built the world and reigns and rules over everyone and everything and now all places everywhere.

[42 : 40] The true king took the form of a servant and humbled himself to die in our place. So that prideful sinners like us might receive salvation.

Not because of anything you've done. Not because of anything you've built in your life. Not because of anything you've accomplished or accumulated. You receive what he has done by God's grace through simple faith in the true king, Jesus Christ.

Have you come to the place where you've repented of your pride and cast yourself wholly on the work of Jesus Christ alone? Have you done that?

Has God done that in you? And we sing a song. Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. My sin, my sin has left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow. Friend, what do we have to boast in? What have we received? What have we earned that we have not received? Friend, repent and believe the gospel.

[43 : 48] And Christian, Christian, don't be fooled to think that that repentance ends the moment you come to Christ. That lingering sickness of pride is alive and well in every one of our hearts.

Beware of the temptation to pride in your life right now. Where do we need to repent? Where do we need to humble ourselves?

A prideful Christian is an oxymoron. Those two things don't belong together. If we understand the grace of God, if we understand the work of Christ, why should we be proud?

It may be true of us that we have nothing to boast in but what Christ Jesus has done for us and what he does in us and through us, not for our sake but for his glory.

And the testimony of every Christian in the room is this. I was dead in my trespasses and sins in which I once walked. Spiritually dead. Totally dead.

[44 : 51] All I could do was be dead. But God, by his mercy, by his grace, made me alive with Christ.

That's your story, Christian. I wonder, when's the last time you stopped and reflected on how God saved you? If you're a believer in the room, when's the last time that you stopped and just really gave time to think about your testimony?

And I would challenge you just by way of application this week, as you leave from this place, as you reflect on what God's done here in Daniel chapter 4, as you reflect on what God's done in your life, I would challenge you, even just write it down.

Put pen to paper this week. Write down the story of how God saved you. And I'm not talking about something cool God's done in your life. It's something interesting you see God doing in somebody else.

I'm talking specifically about the testimony of how God has humbled your pride and given you faith in Jesus Christ. Would you think on that this week?

[45 : 59] And then application number two, as you reflect on what God's done for you, would you share it? These things aren't meant to be kept close to the chest, church.

If God has done a work in your life to save your soul, that's meant to be shouted from the rooftops, to be shared with our family, to be shared with our friends, to be shared with our neighbors, to be shared with our coworkers, to be shared with that random person in line with you at the checkout aisle.

Let's be like King Nebuchadnezzar and say, it seemed good to me, all nations, peoples, and languages, to share with you what God has done for me.

We're going to conclude our time this morning as we always do, singing a song of response. And as we do, again, I want you to consider the words that we're going to sing. And I want you to ask yourself again, is this true of me?

And if it's not, as you sing, would you pray and ask the Lord, would you make it true of me? When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

[47 : 23] Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God. All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

Were the whole realm of nature mine, if I owned it all, if I had everything I needed, everything I wanted, were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. Is that true of you? Let's pray.

Father, make it true of us. Make it true of us. For those who have not yet bowed the knee to King Jesus, would you work your grace in our heart now this moment to humble us, that we might trust fully, cast ourselves fully on the finished work of Jesus.

And for those who you've done that work in our lives, Lord, we pray that we would rejoice in what you've done, that you would continue to kill the pride in our heart, that we would boast in the cross of Christ, that we would share the good news of the gospel with those around us.

[48 : 39] To the praise of your glorious name, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.