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Grace Evangelical Church
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Grace To The Humble
Daniel 4

The story is told of two ducks and a frog who lived happily together in a farm pond. The best of friends, the three would amuse themselves and play together in their waterhole. When the hot summer days came, however, the pond began to dry up, and soon it was evident they would have to move. This was no problem for the ducks, who could easily fly to another pond. But the frog was stuck. So it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck that the frog could hang onto with his mouth as they flew to another pond. The plan worked well--so well, in fact, as they were flying along a farmer looked up in admiration and mused, "Well, isn't that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it?" The frog said, "I did..."

Somewhere I have heard that pride comes before a fall. The write of Proverbs (16:18) puts it this way, "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."

Nebuchadnezzar discovered this reality in our text today in Daniel 4. In fact he found out what would happen to his pride through a dream that he had with Daniel's interpretation.

Let's look at the text in Daniel 4 and make some applications to our own lives as we come to the Lord's Table today.

Chapter 4 of Daniel is actually a public decree or state paper from Nebuchadnezzar. Some scholars feel that the king could have had this dream some 20-30 years after the event of the fiery furnace in Daniel 3. During this time Nebuchadnezzar had been enjoying peace and prosperity in his kingdom, reveling in his power and glory. Perhaps he was thinking about how great he was and the magnificence of his kingdom.

One night the dynamics of his life began to change.

I. Nebuchadnezzar became very discombobulated in his spirit (Daniel 4:1-18).

1. The king had another dream. (4:1-5).

He had another dream. The first dream was that of a statue made up of different metals, which Daniel interpreted to mean the various kingdoms of the world, starting with Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, then the Persians, then, the Greeks, and Romans, a kingdom yet to come in the world, perhaps the United Kingdom of Europe, and then the coming of Christ to put down all kingdoms and establish His kingdom on earth.

Now when Nebuchadnezzar had his first dream, he was troubled. Now when he has his second dream in our text, Daniel 4, he is fearful or terrified (vs 5). What he saw caused him great alarm.

2. The king called in his interpreters (4:6-8).

Nebuchadnezzar as he had in his first dream, called into his presence those he thought had powers to interpret dreams. This time, Nebuchadnezzar remember the dream he had, told it to those who were suppose to have some kind of powers to interpret dreams, but they could not give him any interpretation.

3. Daniel finally came before the king (4:9-18).

Recognizing that Daniel had some kind of super power, a spirit of the holy gods, more than his Babylonian interpreters, Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel, (Babylonian name, Belteshazzar), who he called the chief of the magicians, his dream. It's interesting to note that Daniel was not a part of the other so-called interpreters. Even though he was the chief of them, he was separated from them. It may have been that way due to Daniel having different responsibilities in the Babylonian kingdom. Regardless, Daniel kept himself separated from their worldly ways and ungodly living.

4. The king told Daniel his dream (4:10-18).

Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree in the midst of the earth – it was of tremendous height. It grew large and became strong, reaching to the sky. Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, so abundant that it fed all the beasts of the field, while providing shade for them. The birds of the field dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed on the tree.

Watching the dream, an angel, a holy one, descended from heaven and shouted out,

Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Strip off all its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and the birds from its branches.

Leave the stump with its roots in the ground, 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 in the grass of the earth.

Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.

This sentence is by decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men."

Finishing telling his dream, Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel (Belteshazzar) to give him the interpretation of his dream. Note what the king said in Daniel 4:18, "You are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you."

II. Daniel bravely interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (4:19-27).

1. Daniel's reaction to the king's dream (4:19a).

As God began to give Daniel the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel was stunned and appalled. Evidently, Daniel's facial perplexity caused the king to realize that this was a different kind of dream than he had before. Daniel was somewhat reluctant to tell the king the meaning of his dream. Certainly, Daniel would have had a personal concern for the king as he worked together with him in administering the affairs of the Babylonian government. Daniel would have been a consistent witness of His life in the king's presence.

2. The king's response to Daniel's reaction to his dream (4:19b).

Nebuchadnezzar was quick to tell Daniel to not be personally disturbed by the dream. It seems that he was reassuring Daniel not to fear him regardless of what the dream meant. Perhaps an indication of how much he appreciated Daniel and his friendship.

3. Daniel gave the king the interpretation of his dream (4:19c-27).

Being a friend of the king, Daniel prefaced his interpretation of the dream by saying that he wished it applied to those who hated him, his adversaries. Then Daniel gave the interpretation.

(1) The meaning of the huge tree (4:20-22).

The huge tree that grew and grew reaching toward heaven, visible to all, feeding all the beasts of the earth, providing a home for the birds, that huge tree was you, O king.

You, O king, Nebuchadnezzar, have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

(2) The meaning of the announcement of the holy angel (4:23-26).

The angel's words to chop down the tree and destroy it, leave the stump, and bind it around with a band of iron and brass in the new grass, let him be drenched with dew, and let him share the beasts of the field until seven periods are past meant:

O, king, this decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

You will be driven away from mankind and your dwelling will be among the beasts of the field, and you will eat grass like the cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass by (7 years) until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

The stump was left with its roots in the ground, for your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

(3) Daniel's once-in-a life time invitation to king Nebuchadnezzar (4:27).

O King, may my advice be pleasing 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."

These are incredible words of Daniel. He is giving Nebuchadnezzar the opportunity to respond to the true and living God, by repenting of his sin and claiming God as His Savior. The evidence would be by doing what's right and helping the less fortunate. Daniel knew that faith in God always has evidence of good works that glorify God.

This is phenomenal here. Don't miss it. It's like Paul in the full revelation before King Agrippa, he shared his testimony of accepting Christ as he showed how the Old Testament prophets and Moses foretold of Christ and his coming death and resurrection. Paul asked Agrippa, "Do you believe the prophets? I know that you do." Agrippa answered Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

Daniel gave the witness to Nebuchadnezzar that he needed to repent before the living God, turn from his sins, and do righteous deeds. God was honored in the presence of this ungodly king.

Paul gave a witness to Agrippa as well. God was honored in the present of that ungodly ruler.

III. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream came true (Daniel 4:28-37).

Some 12 months later, which tells us that God gave Nebuchadnezzar some time to think through what Daniel had to say and to repent. He did not

1. Nebuchadnezzar's thoughts (4:28-30).

One day the king was walking on the roof of his royal palace. He began to think and and evidently speak out loud. "Is this not great Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty."

Obviously, his life was filled with immense pride as he looked out over the city of Babylon and thought about his kingdom and royal palace. Why, he had done this all by himself. How great he was.

Also look at Daniel 5:19-20, where Daniel described later more in detail the power and pride of Nebuchadnezzar to the king, Belshazzar.

2. The voice from heaven (4:31-32).

Either this was the Lord speaking or his angel. The voice interrupted Nebuchadnezzar's prideful thoughts.

Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty would be removed. He would be driven from mankind and make his dwelling among the beast of the field and eat grass like cattle, for 7 periods of times – 7 years – until you recognize that the most high is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

3. Nebuchadnezzar's experience (4:33).

Immediately what was told Nebuchadnezzar happened. He was driven from mankind, began eating grass like cattle, his body was drenched with dew from heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like bird's claws.

The experience of Nebuchadnezzar is called boanthropy, which means that the king imagined himself to be an animal and acted accordingly.

A clay tablet in the British Museum (BM34113) describes Nebuchadnezzar's behaviour during his insanity: "His life appeared of no value to him... then he gives an entirely different order... he does not show love to son or daughter... family and clan does not exist.[2] There is also a notable absence of any record of acts or decrees by the king during 582 to 575 BC." taken from Wikipedia

It is felt that during this time of seven years, Daniel and the other leading officials in the Babylonian government managed the affairs of the kingdom. How much the people knew about this judgment we are told in the record. It's been suggested that the court officials kept Nebuchadnezzar in one of the royal parks during this time of insanity, although Daniel 5:21 seems to indicate he may have been out in a field somewhere, for it says that his dwelling was with the wild donkeys.

What eventually happened to Nebuchadnezzar?

4. Nebuchadnezzar's response to the sovereign God (4:34-37).

(1) He blessed the eternal living and personal God giving Him worship (4:34a).

He acknowledged the eternal God, meaning He was distinct from all of his man-made gods.

(2) He acknowledged the eternal God's sovereignty (4:34b).

(3) He recognized that man is distinct from God – a creature, and God is the ONE in control (4:35).

(4) He gave praise to the God of heaven (4:36-37).

Having been restored to his kingdom authority, with even surpassing greatness. he praised the God of heaven who humbles those who walk in pride.

Since this was a state paper of Nebuchadnezzar, we can now see why he started this paper the way he did in Daniel 4:1-3. There he acknowledged his belief in the Most High God of heaven, telling that His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. He was a witness to all the people.

What an account that Daniel recorded for us of how this proud and powerful ruler, filled with pride, was humbled by the true and living personal and eternal God, and then turned to Him acknowledging His sovereignty and giving Him praise.

IV. Application to our lives today.

1. See the bigger picture.

(1) God is sovereign over all nations.

Although Satan seeks to bring his influence in nations today, and in some nations his influence is seen more than in others, particularly where the freedom of people has been taken away and there is a dictatorship. God still has the last word, regardless of the ruler and the ethnic background of the people.

Psalms 10:16 reads that "The LORD is King forever and ever; Nations have perished from His land.

Psalms 145:13, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

As we watch the news of happenings in our country, and in the world, we need to rest in the reality that the biblical God is in control. Nothing goes by His watch unnoticed. What He has permitted to happen in this country is either the beginning of something catastrophic, or it is His way of waking up America that they need to turn to Him in repentance as Nebuchadnezzar of old.

(2) The pride of nations against God will be dealt with in His time (Psalm 2).

"Why are the nations in an uproar, and the people's devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together."

Why are they doing that? Their hearts are filled with pride, they delight in their power and might. They do not need God. They can run the country on their own wisdom. In fact, we don't need the God of the Bible. We will run our own lives.

But who are they really against? The Psalm continues, "Against the LORD and against His anointed." Who is the Anointed? It is Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

How does the LORD in heaven respond to these prideful and seemingly powerful rulers, " He who sits in the heavens laughs. In fact, the Lord scoffs at them . . . Yes, eventually he will send His Son who will break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware.

God is sovereign. In His time the LORD will put down the nations that rise up against Him in pride. You can count on it.

What's God doing now? He is sovereignly working out His plan giving all peoples an opportunity to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

2. Submit ourselves to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Why do people not want to come to God and accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior? Why do people blame God for what's happening in the world and in their lives?

If we know the Lord personally through faith in Him, why do we not want to follow at times what God tells us to do in His Word. Why do we disobey the Lord? Why do children and youth disobey the Lord?

I believe that there is one answer – pride – we have that independent spirit that wants to do its own thing – For I want to be number 1, perhaps you don't have that challenge, but I would imagine that you do at times too.

The whole issue comes down to this – who is the final authority in our personal lives?

We have seen that God is the final authority among the nations of the world.

At the same time, He also wants to be the final authority in our personal lives. Why? We can't really have a life of eternal meaning, purpose and hope without the Lord being the final authority in our lives.

Let me explain how this works.

(1) Some history.

God created the angelic world and the world itself – it was good and filled with God's holiness and glory, a place where there was complete obedience to God.

God created Adam and Eve in state of creaturely holiness, with the ability to make decisions, to obey God or to not obey God.

All was a place of paradise in the garden of Eden, as Adam and Eve fellowshiped with the Lord, and took care of the garden obeying the Lord.

One angel in heaven, called Lucifer, evidently seeing all of this, thought that he should be the one who was ruling and controlling all that was going on down on earth. So he thought that he would like to be god. Isaiah 14 tells us that he willed five times to be like the most High God. I will, I will, I will, I will, I will make myself like the Most High. Talk about pride.

Lucifer now we know as Satan, as the Devil, and the evil one, was kicked out of heaven, because there can be no sin, no pride in heaven. Some angels followed Lucifer who the Bible calls demons, Satan's helpers.

The Genesis account tells us what happened. Satan, since being ejected from heaven, wanted to get back at God, and the best place to do that was to go tempt the crown of God's creation, Adam and Eve. Knowing what God had told Adam and Eve about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – that it was off limits – that's where Satan through the serpent talked to Eve tempting her that the fruit of the tree if eaten would make her like God, knowing good and evil. We know the account. She took of the fruit, ate it, and gave it to Adam and he ate of the fruit.

What was going on in that very familiar interchange? Satan filled with pride, who tried to take over God's place of authority, wanted someone else to follow his authority. As Eve and Adam yielded to Satan's temptation, they yielded their authority to Satan, which meant that they sinned against God, the sin nature of Satan came into their lives were immediately filled with pride, because they acted independently of God, yield to Satan's authority.

That is why pride is in all of our lives today, because Adam was the human race. What happened to him happened to us, and pride is passed on from one generation to the next.

(2) The remedy.

So is there any help for our pride? Definitely. That is what the Lord's Table is all about. As Satan tried to be God and was ejected from heaven, and is strutting around today causing all kinds of havoc, while parading as the prince of the power of the air, tempting people and nations, while influencing nations in different dimensions, there is Jesus Christ, the Second Adam.

Satan knew what He was about for since Genesis 3:15, with the first prophecy of the Savior, he was out to somehow destroy the line of the Savior. Eventually, though, Christ was born, and after His birth tried to get him killed by Herod. He tried to get Christ off track of His mission at His temptation. He tried to get Peter to get him off track of His mission on earth. Finally, in the garden, Satan did his best to try and stop Christ from going to the cross. But to no avail.

Christ had to do what no other one had done, and no one else could do. He had to submit to the Father's will to die on the cross to pay with His life blood the debt of sin everyone had before God. That's why Philippians 2 is so important here as the Adult Class has been studying on Sunday morning.

As Satan's heart was filled with pride wanting to be God, Christ, on the other hand, submitted to the Father's will. He didn't consider His deity and His glory something to be clung to, but He emptied Himself, giving up the insignia of His majesty, His glory, taking upon Himself the limitations of humanity, took the form of a bond servant, was made in the likeness of men, bring found in the appearance of a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross.

In so doing Christ demonstrated that it was possible for Him to submit to the Father's will and accomplish our redemption for us. There would be no redemption, no Lord's table without first the Lord submitting to the Father to be made sin for us who knew no sin. Christ acknowledged that His Father was the final authority.

Submitting to the Father's will, He could now willingly go through denial, suffering, agony, be put on the cross and there bear your sin and mine.

Being buried and rising from the dead, He won for us His forgiveness and eternal life. Satan was also defeated.

(3) Our experience.

So how does this apply to us today?

1. There is the true Savior for us – the God man.

The Scripture says that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We need a Savior. There is only one true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the God-man. Regardless of what others may think, He is the true

Savior. As many as receive Him to them He gives the authority to become children of God. Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Believing in Christ as one's Savior, one gives up depending on one's self for salvation and puts one's trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he died, was buried and rose again. **It's submitting to Christ as one's Savior.**

2. There is the true Lord for us.- the manager of our lives.

As followers of Christ, we need direction, guidance, and direction. Yes, we need His authority in our lives for spiritual growth and development.

When we accept Christ as Savior, He gives us His very life, with a mind, emotion, and will. That mean's we have the very mind and will of the Lord within us so that we can submit to the Lord and do His will. As we submit to His will as revealed in the Word of God, we find the power through the indwelling Holy Spirit to do His will.

We still have the old Adamic nature which **wants us not** to submit to the Lord, but to do our own thing as followers of Christ.

Now though, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can choose righteousness and truth.

The question which comes to each of us as we come to the Lord's table today is this.

Whose authority am I using in my life, if I know Christ as my personal Savior?

If we use our authority, we become filled with pride and self sufficiency, giving evidence really that we would rather serve Satan who has all kinds of pride and wants us to live that way.

When we submit to the Lord's authority in our lives, He begins to encourage us on to do His will, with the right attitudes and actions. We are not serving people, but we are serving the Lord, and that makes all the difference in the world.

God also puts different people in our lives to help us to continue to learn submission to the Lord.

Children and youth, that is why God gave you parents – to learn through loving parents what authority is all about. That's why Paul wrote in Ephesians that children are to obey your parents in the Lord. As you obey your parents, you will learn that ultimately you need to submit to God's authority.

That's why in the marriage relationship there is recognition of each other's position and submission to the Lord. That's why there are employers, why there are elders and deacons in the church. God believes in structure and eventually all are responsible to the Lord, submitting to Him.

Peter had learned something about humility, not pushing his own wares, but submitting to the Lord, which is really what true humility is.

He penned in his first letter chapter 5 verses 5-6 – "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time."

In the year 320, Constantine was Emperor of the West and Licinius of the East. Licinius, under pressure from Constantine, had agreed to legalize Christianity in his territory, and the two made an alliance (cemented by the marriage of Licinius to Constantia the sister of Constantine), but now Licinius broke the alliance and made a new attempt to suppress Christianity. He ordered his soldiers to renounce their faith in Christ or suffer the punishment of a cruel death.

In the "Thundering Legion," stationed near **Sebaste** in Armenia (now Sivas in Turkey), 40 soldiers refused, and

when promises, threats, and beatings failed to shake their commitment to Christ, they were stripped naked one evening and herded onto the middle of a frozen lake, and told, "You may come ashore when you are ready to deny your faith."

To tempt them, fires were built on shore, with warm baths, blankets, clothing, and hot food and drink close by. The mother of the youngest soldier was present and encouraged her son from the bank.

These Christian warriors bravely replied, "You can have our armor and even our bodies, but our hearts' allegiance belongs to Jesus Christ." They refused to renounce their Savior, who had died for them. Instead, they huddled close together and sang a song of victory.

As night deepened, 39 men stood firm, but one broke and ran to the shore. Then a remarkable thing happened.

The officer in charge of guarding these men had secretly come to believe in Christ. He then replaced the man who had broken rank and walked out onto the ice. He threw off his clothes and confessed his faith in Christ.

At sunrise the roman soldiers found 40 frozen men who gave their all for the cause of their Lord.

We still have what some scholars believe to be an authentic eyewitness account of their martyrdom. It includes farewell messages to their family and friends written shortly before their deaths.

As we encounter life this week, may we think of these men who not only accepted Christ as their Savior, but He was their sole authority in life. They were even willing to die for Him.

May Christ be the Authority in our lives this week. Humbling, submitting, ourselves before Him, doing His will with enthusiasm to glorify Him regardless of our challenges, experiencing His grace in our daily lives. Then, He will use us for His glory.

Yes, and our Lord left the ultimate example of submission for us to follow as He submitted to His Father's will for us to make salvation for us possible.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.... He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:5-6, KJV).

No greater example of humility and grace than that!!!

God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name!

Praise the LORD!!

