

“THE CONVERSION OF A PAGAN”

DANIEL 4:28-37

Theme: The grace of God confronts sinners with their need for mercy.

I. The Heart of God Shows Patience with Sinners – 4:28-30

A. THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF A CALLOUSED HEART – vv. 28,30

1. In a transitional verse, Nebuchadnezzar (who is the author of this section) relates that *“All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.”*
2. The significance of this is that he is acknowledging that he had indeed received the warning, as well as the appeal for him to repent, but failed to heed the gracious word of God concerning his sin.
3. In addition, he reveals the degree of haughtiness that he possessed prior to God’s intervention that shows a callousness to God’s Sovereignty: *“The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself has built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’”*
4. Indeed, Babylon was a great city – unparalleled in its day.
 - a) The city was at the height of its glory - surrounded by a system of double walls the outer one of which was seventeen miles long and wide enough for chariots to pass on its top!
 - b) It was thought to be impregnable by enemy armies.
 - c) It possessed the famous Ishtar Gate which gave access to the sacred processional way, leading to grand temples. This street was about 1,000 yards long, decorated on either side by enameled bricks, showing 120 lions and 575 dragons and bulls.
 - d) There were the famous hanging gardens – which the Greeks later identified as one of the 7 ancient “Wonders of the World.”
 - e) Nebuchadnezzar had completely hardened his heart to the appeals of Daniel to “break away from your sins by doing righteousness” - **v. 26**; and acknowledge that “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.” - **v. 25b**.

B. THE ALLOWANCE OF A CHANCE TO REPENT – v. 29

1. Nebuchadnezzar was *“walking on the roof to the royal palace of Babylon”* gloating in his self-ascribed glory, *“twelve months later”* after Daniel’s interpretation of the dream and appeal for humility.
2. Throughout this year wait, God had given Nebuchadnezzar plenty of opportunity to respond to His Word as delivered through Daniel.
3. However, Nebuchadnezzar’s heart was hardened, and he failed to take advantage of the mercy and grace of God.
4. God has stated that He will not always strive with men, but that the time comes when He unleashes the wrath of His holiness against the boastful and arrogant claims of man’s self-governing spirit - cp. **Genesis 6:3**.

II. The Hand of God Shows Power against Sinners – **4:31-33**

A. *SIN PROVOKES CONFRONTATION BY GOD’S SPIRIT* – **v. 31**

1. *“While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven . . .”* - lit. this is “fell from heaven” - indicating a heavy load dropping upon the king *“from heaven.”*
2. This indicates that when God’s wrath is filled up, He takes action against the sin of men.
3. In this specific situation, it was decided by God that the best action by which to respond to Nebuchadnezzar’s sin would be stated directly: *“King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you.”*
4. The very thing that was causing the arrogance and pride was the *“might of my power and . . . the glory of my majesty”* - **v. 30**.
5. God does not allow any man to get away with sin - to those upon whom He will be gracious and merciful, confrontation occurs prior to judgment; to those He will despise, confrontation awaits judgment - cp. **Romans 2:5-8**.
6. Under either circumstance, every man’s sin will be confronted by God – cp. **Numbers 32:23**.

B. *SIN POSSESSES CONSEQUENCES THROUGH GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY* – **vv. 31b-33**

1. In specific situation, *“sovereignty has been removed from you.”*
2. In addition to being removed from his powerful and majestic position, he was *“driven away from mankind, and you dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field.”*
3. This referred to a total humiliation wherein he was not even fit to cohabitate with other human beings.

4. The characteristics of his condition fit either “Lycanthropy” - a condition where the plagued believes himself to be a wolf.
5. The more likely case is “Boanthropy” - a condition where, in the king’s case, he thought he was an ox.
 - a) *“You will be given grass to eat like cattle”* – v. 32.
 - b) In addition, *“his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like bird’s claws.”*
6. He was in this condition for *“seven periods of time”* until he would be willing to *“recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.”*
7. With many sins (most), God has built in natural consequences in that you *“sow whatsoever you reap;”* however, there are times when He individually intervenes and imposes consequences that may not be natural at all.

III. The Heart of God Shows Pardon toward Sinners – 4:34-37

A. THE GRACE OF GOD EXTENDS TO THE SINNER – vv. 34-35

1. When the predicted seven years had elapsed, Nebuchadnezzar recalls, *“I raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me.”*
2. As I look at this, it was not until God determined that the time had come was Nebuchadnezzar able to look toward heaven.
3. This is illustrative of grace wherein God worked in his heart from a completely incapable state and allowed the heart of the king to be finally turned toward heaven for deliverance.
4. In turning, it is evident that he was confessing the superiority of God over himself - so that he learned that *“the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.”*
5. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar confesses that he *“blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.”*
6. He then provides a summary of the insights he gleaned by the grace of God:
 - a) God’s rule cannot be compared with the temporal power of mankind - *“For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.”*
 - b) Man is totally inept and cannot thwart anything that God determines: *“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of*

heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.”

- c) Finally, God determines what is right and wrong based on Himself alone, not one can even question Him: *“And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have you done?’”*

B. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE SINNER – v. 36

1. God’s goodness is seen in a host of ways, all expressed through the one who had been the recipient of His judgment.
 - a) *“At that time my reason returned to me”* – this was only the beginning of the goodness of God expressed to him.
 - b) *“My majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom”* - God know was able to trust the King to properly handle what had previously intoxicated him in pride.
 - c) *“My counselors and my nobles began seeking me out”* - Nebuchadnezzar did not have to seek out the ability to regain his throne again through political maneuvering or actual fighting - they sought him out probably under the leadership of Daniel.
 - d) *“I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.”* - his regained power and greatness was beyond any that he had enjoyed prior to his humiliation.
2. Although the goodness of God is expressed toward all men, it is especially reserved for those who fear God - cp. **Psalm 31:19**.

C. THE GLORY OF GOD IS EXTOLLED BY THE SINNER – v. 37

1. Having learned the lesson of his place before the Most High God, Nebuchadnezzar gives an expression of sincere worship to the Lord.
2. He said: *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”*
3. The interesting point in this verse is that the terms for *“praise, exalt and honor”* are all active participles, indicating continuation of action.
4. Having profited from the work of God *“to humble those who walk in pride,”* the king indicates that it is a motivation to worship Him, indicating that the intention of God was accomplished in bringing Nebuchadnezzar to a place where he would honor the Lord.

The grace of God confronts sinners with their need for mercy.