

Beast Mode

Daniel 4

(preached Pine Grove 1/29/17; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Door to door salesman are a thing of the past, yet in the 1950s and 1960s door to door selling reached its peak..

One of the most popular products to sell door to door were vacuum cleaners...

One particular summer, a vacuum cleaner company released its new line of products...

Included in the line was a vacuum cleaner that cost over \$100, which was an outrageous price in the 60s..

The company did not anticipate selling many of those models, but they were going to give it their best shot..

Unfortunately, the company was right...

Sales of the top of the line model were slow, with the exception of one salesman who sold over 50 of them in one week...

The company was excited to hear such news, and invited that salesman back to headquarters to hear of his success...

They invited all the other salesman to the meeting as well, hoping to train them to sell as many models...

Anticipating that the salesman had figured out how to demonstrate the vacuum in a way to convince people to buy it, they brought in some carpet and even created a home environment...

They started the meeting with a long introduction of the quality of the vacuum and the features it had, and then turned it over to the salesman for him to give his great sales pitch...

Everyone was on the edge of their seats when the salesman simply said,...

Here's my secret...

I take two vacuums in the house...

One is our standard model, and I take it out and demonstrate it on the carpet and give my best sales pitch for it..

This other high end model...

I simply leave it in the box and never take it out...

Eventually, everyone asks what kind of vacuum is that, and I simply say...

“You wouldn’t be interested. Nobody in this neighborhood has been able to afford that one.”

And that was all it took for people to want to see it and want to buy it..

This salesman understood sales better than most...

Appeal to a person’s sense of pride, and it really doesn’t matter how well the product performs...

The people only want it as a status symbol, and because of that, he sold a lot of high end vacuums to people who would have been better off with the standard model...

Pride is a deadly disease.

It can cause a person to make abnormal decisions..

It can lead a person into dangerous places...

It can rob a person’s bank account, and strip him of all common sense...

Pride led Satan to abandon heaven and bring a third of the angels with him...

Pride led Judas to choose silver over a Savior.

Pride led Peter to say that he would never deny Jesus, yet he did.

Pride led James and John to ask for the best seats in heaven beside Jesus...

Pride is easy to spot in others but hard to detect in yourself...

But it is there lurking at every moment to put the spotlight on you and take it away from God...

The Bible has nothing good to say about pride, and nothing but good things to say about humility...

Maybe the best statement on pride and humility is found in the book of James...

“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

And while there are many examples of this verse in the Bible, there are none like the example that we will look at tonight in Daniel 4..

Nebuchadnezzar, who we met in Daniel 1,2, and 3 was a very prideful man..

He was the ruler of the Babylonian empire in the 500s BC, which essentially made him the ruler of the known world at that time...

He was a conquering king, who set out to grow his kingdom by force...

He conquered all the nations around him..

And by the time we reach Daniel 4, his kingdom is secure and complete in his mind.

No one is rebelling against him...

He is at the point where he can rest and reflect on what he has been able to accomplish...

But something happens in his life that will get his attention...

Nebuchadnezzar's pride is confronted by God in a very unusual way that we will see in chapter 4..

And Nebuchadnezzar is humbled...

I personally believe that he was humbled to the point of believing in God and actually being saved by that belief..

And what chapter 4 amount to is this...

It is Nebuchadnezzar's testimony of what God did in his life to awaken his heart to his need to swallow his pride and acknowledge God as His King...

And so, let's walk through chapter 4 tonight...

This is narrative, so there will be a lot of reading and a few comments as we move through this fairly quickly...

Let's start with verses 1-3, where we see...

I. The Testimony of a King (1-3)

4 [a]Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every [b]language that live in all the earth: “May your [c]peace abound! 2 It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

3

*“How great are His signs
And how mighty are His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom
And His dominion is from generation to generation.*

A couple things to take note of here..

This is something that Nebuchadnezzar most likely dictated to Daniel in the form of a kingdom wide decree..

This would be similar to a nation wide address that we would see from our president on a week night where he speaks to the entire country...

Nebuchadnezzar had something to say to the people, and the topic is found in verse 2...

HE wanted to declare what God had shown him...

Now, think about all that God had done for Nebuchadnezzar in the first 3 chapters of Daniel...

In chapter 1, Nebuchadnezzar saw how faithful Daniel and his friend were to their God...

In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar saw how powerful God was to give his dreams and their interpretation to Daniel...

Then in chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar saw the power of God to rescue His people from a blazing furnace...

Now in chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is going to experience the power of God once more and he wants to tell all the people of his kingdom about it...

So, he starts in these opening verses by declaring God's greatness to all the people in verse 3...

This is going to be the testimony of a king about the real King of the universe...

Now, let's move from the beginning of this testimony to the event that leads to the testimony...

And we have seen this before, but let's look at..

II. The Dream of a King (4-18)

Verse 4...

4 “[d]I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. 5 I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions [e]in my mind kept alarming me.

This king has more dreams than the average king, so here we go again with the king’s dream...

And notice that the dream made him fearful and really alarmed him..

So, we know the drill...

Verse 6...

6 So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the [f]magicians, the conjurers, the [g]Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream [h]to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. 8 But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is [i]a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream [j]to him, saying, 9 ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is

in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

The only reason there are wise men, magicians, and conjurers to call upon is because Daniel saved them all from being killed last time the king had a dream...

Unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar must have forgotten that they are all con men because he called on them first before finally turning to Daniel for an interpretation...

Once Daniel arrives, we now find what the king's dream was all about....

Verse 10...

10 'Now these were the visions [k]in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the [l]earth and its height was great.

11

***'The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,
And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.***

12

***'Its foliage was 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 sky dwelt in its branches,
And all [m]living creatures fed themselves from it.***

13 *'I was looking in the visions [n]in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.*

14

*'He shouted out and spoke as follows:
Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,
Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;
Let the beasts flee from under it
And the birds from its branches.*

15

*"Yet leave the stump [o]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 [p]him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.*

16

*"Let his [q]mind be changed from that of a man
And let a beast's [r]mind be given to him,
And let seven [s]periods of time pass over him.*

17

*"This sentence is by the 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."*

18 *This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my*

kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.'

This is a most unusual dream about a large tree being cut down, leaving a stump that is protected and preserved...

But then you have this picture of a man changing into a beast and living in the field...

Now before we get to Daniel's interpretation, I want to remind you of this...

Nebuchadnezzar was alarmed by what he saw, and why would he be alarmed?

Because I think he knew this dream was about him..

I think he saw himself in the stump and in the man who became a beast...

And he was rightfully alarmed...

But not only did the dream alarm Nebuchadnezzar, it also alarmed Daniel as we move to the 3rd part of chapter 4, which is...

III. The Challenge to the King (19-27)

Verse 19...

19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!’

The reason for Daniel’s alarm is two fold...

First, he knows the dream is about Nebuchadnezzar, and though Nebuchadnezzar is not a Jew, he is Daniel’s friend and boss...

I would think that Daniel had an affection for him and wouldn’t desire anything bad to happen him...

But then second, Daniel didn’t want to be the bearer of bad news to the most powerful king on the planet...

I am sure he was thankful that Nebuchadnezzar even told him to not be alarmed by what he saw or needed to report to him...

So now, let’s get to the interpretation...

Verse 20...

20 The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth 21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged— 22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your [t]majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23 In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump [u]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 [v]him share with the beasts of the field until seven [w]periods of time pass over him,” 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven [x]periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. 26 And in that it was commanded to leave the stump [y]with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be [z]assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

What the king feared is true...

He was the large tree that was cut down by the angel from heaven...

He was also the one who would be changed from a man to an animal for a period of 7 years...

And all of this would happen to Nebuchadnezzar until he realized that God was the one who was really the king of the earth....

And that it is God who had given Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom...

And once he realizes that, God would allow him to return to his kingdom by leaving the stump of his kingdom protected...

But then Daniel ended the interpretation with this in verse 27...

27 Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: [aa]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.'

If you ever wonder how much patience the Lord has, here is yet another example of his long suffering...

Nebuchadnezzar has seen what the future holds, but God still leaves the door open for him by asking him to repent from his pride and other sins...

This is the incredible patience of God to see an evil man and to withhold his justice to the very last instant in hopes of repentance...

So, the question comes..

What will Nebuchadnezzar do?

Will he take the interpretation of the dream seriously, see his need to repent, and then follow through?

OR will he ignore the dream, ignore the warning, and continue in his sin?

I mean this is the crossroads that every man comes to..

Will he listen to the Word of God, see his need to repent and follow through?

Or will he ignore the warning, ignore the command to repent, and take his chances that none of what the Lord says will happen...

Well, let's see what Nebuchadnezzar chose to do...

IV. The Pride of a King (28-33)

Verse 28...

***28 "All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.
29 Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of
the royal palace of Babylon.***

Please note once again the patience of God...

12 months later...

How patient is God?

How long suffering is he?

Yet, even God has a day set when his patience is over
and his judgment comes...

And this was the day for Nebuchadnezzar...

Verse 30...

***30 The king [ab]reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon
the great, which I myself have built as a royal
[ac]residence by the might of my power and for the
glory of my majesty?' 31 While the word was in the
king's mouth, a voice [ad]came from heaven, saying,***

‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: [ae]sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven [af]periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ 33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

In one of the strangest sections of Scripture, we see the power of God to change a man into a beast of the field for 7 periods of time...

Which most likely means 7 years...

God had warned Nebuchadnezzar in a dream that this was going to happen...

And in my opinion, Nebuchadnezzar knew this was coming to him with an interpretation

But then God confirms his suspicions in sending Daniel to him to assure him that he was right...

Then on top of that, God gives Nebuchadnezzar a year to repent of his pride..

Finally after all of that, judgment falls on Nebuchadnezzar when he says one of the most prideful things a man can say in verse 30, when he says that his kingdom was the work of his hands...

Pride goes before fall, and Nebuchadnezzar falls hard..

He is given the mind of the beast and he lives in the field for 7 years...

Finally, he comes to his senses in verse 34, where we see...

V. The Humbling of a King (34-37)

Verse 34...

34 “But at the end of [ag]that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my [ah]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.

35

“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 earth; And no one can [ai]ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

36 At that time my [aj]reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were [ak]restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my [al]sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are [am>true and His ways [an]just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

If it takes God turning you into a beast of the field to get your attention, He will do it...

And that is exactly what happened to Nebuchadnezzar..

He went from King to beast back to King all to break his pride and humble Him before the true God of the world...

Notice how Nebuchadnezzar's language changed...

In verse 30, he was "something"....

In verse 35, he considers himself "nothing"...

In verse 30, his kingdom is the most majestic...

In verse 35, God's kingdom is the most majestic and everlasting..

In verse 30, Nebuchadnezzar is in control of his destiny...

In verse 35, he says that God is the one who directs affairs of men...

Now, the question is this...

Was Nebuchadnezzar simply giving lip service to God to get out of the field and get back to normal life?

We truly have no way of knowing, but my thoughts are that he was sincere in his confession...

And that he truly recognized God as the true God of the universe and the God of his life...

I believe we will see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven for this simple reason found in verse 37...

Even after he had been restored to his his kingdom...

Even after his stump was uncovered and he got back to business of ruling Babylon...

Even after his majesty was restored to him...

Nebuchadnezzar still said the same thing...

God is the true God...

God's ways are right...

God's ways are just....

Even after Nebuchadnezzar had gotten back what he had lost for 7 years, his conclusion was the same...

God is still greater, and I am still less...

But even more so, Nebuchadnezzar learned the lesson that God intended him to learn....

Look at the final words of chapter 4...

God is able to humble those who walk in pride...

That phrase alone shows me that Nebuchadnezzar recognized what every man must recognize before he is able to be saved, and that is this....

He must recognize his sin...

And Nebuchadnezzar had...

HE saw his pride, and he also saw God's power and sovereignty to bring him low until he did...

That sounds like the words of a saved man in my opinion..

And that ends Daniel 4...

Conclusion

Let me leave you with a couple final thoughts...

You need a testimony about God's work in your life..

Nebuchadnezzar is our example in seeing the work of God in his life and not keeping his mouth shut..

Nebuchadnezzar has great influence and he used that influence to bring glory to God and point others to him..

Chapter 4 is the testimony of a man who had been changed by God.

And you need a similar testimony in your life...

Write it down too...

What a treasure that would be to your kids and grand kids and great grand kids even beyond your time...

A written testimony of God's goodness to you that can be passed down for generations and not only encourage others but also point others to Christ...

Nebuchadnezzar lived in the 600 BC but his testimony about the patience, kindness, and mercy of God has encouraged us 2500 years later....

You need to remember that you aren't too big to fall.

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man on the earth in his day, but God sent him to pasture..

There is nothing you have that can't be taken away should God desire to do so..

The things that we grip the tightest are often the things that God can pry out of our hands to get our attention if HE needs to...

Some of the healthiest people get sick..

Some of the richest people go into poverty...

Some of the most powerful people fall from their perch...

No one is beyond the reach of God's hand, and the minute that you think you are, that is when you are most vulnerable to lose what you have...

The moment you pat yourself on the back, God may crack you over the head...

Never get too big that you think you have made it...

If not for the constant blessing of the Lord in your life, what you have can be taken away in a flash...

Ask Job.

Ask Peter.

The more pride you show, the closer you come to something that will rob you of it...

You need to praise the mercy and patience of God.

It is easy to see Daniel 4 as a stern warning against being too confident and prideful in your own accomplishments...

And that is no doubt a clear lesson from these 37 verses...

But let's not forget to see God in these verses...

Not as the one who can break the strongest man, but as the one who is long suffering even with the hardest of hearts....

God could have simply taken Nebuchadnezzar out after he constructed the idol of a golden statue in chapter 3 and demanded others worship it...

God could have just zapped him, and history would have simply remembered him as the king of Daniel 1-3 who hated God and the people of God...

Yet, look at the patience of God..

God preserved his life, even after he tried to kill God's people, even after he called people to worship him, even after years of pride in himself and his accomplishments...

God is so full of mercy and patience...

So, God sends him a dream to warn him...

God sends his man Daniel to warn him and then give a chance to repent...

God then allows a whole year to give him time to repent...

And only then does God change him into a beast of the field...

But even that wasn't the end of Nebuchadnezzar because God restored him and gave him his kingdom back....

How Great is Our God...

Patience upon patience...

Grace upon grace...

All for the very purpose of opening ONE man's heart to belief in Him...

That is a lot of work and much patience to simply save one soul...

But that is the character of God....

To warn.

To teach.

To love.

To provide.

All designed to get man to acknowledge his weakness and God's power...

To see his sin and call on God to save Him in Christ...

And all of that brings joy to God to do and to see and to experience...

What a great God we have, who loves us while we are sinners, calling us to salvation a 1000 times if necessary to save us from what we really deserve..

Who can match the grace, patience and mercy of our God?

And the clear answer is no one...

All the other false gods know nothing of the patience of our God...

Only the God of Scriptures would bend over backward to save a soul that hates Him...

Yet, that is the truth about our God, and that is why we love Him so.

Let us pray...