

GOING WITH GOD

Sermon Four

BE HUMBLE OR BE HUMBLLED

Daniel 4

Last week we saw as Shadrach Meshack and Abednego go through the fire trial of the furnace that as we go with God we need to go in faith and that faith in God is therefore an indispensable part of our journey with God. Without faith and trust in God we cannot go with Him to the places He longs to take us. This morning as we continue on this exciting journey in the book of Daniel, we will discover that humility is also an indispensable part of going with God as faith is. The wise writer of the proverbs tells us in Provs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall”. We will discover humility to be one of the keys to experiencing God’s blessing in our lives and pride the pathway to destruction. As we go with

God we must be humble or be humbled by God in the process. In the drama that unfolds in chapter four there are five “acts” in this drama that we must consider together this morning.

1. THE KING’S PRIDE vs’s 4-18

In these first view verses we are painted a picture of the King’s unparalleled pride and arrogance that would again get him into much trouble. About 20 to 30 years had now passed since the furnace experience and the King is experiencing a time of peace and security. He had defeated his enemies and had completed several impressive building projects. In verse four the King describes himself as contented and prosperous. In verse 2 we get the first indication of his pride when he notes, “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God HAS PERFORMED FOR ME”. What

arrogance to think that God was performing for this lowly king simply to please him! It is often at the point in our arrogance that we think we are strong that we are at our weakest. God is offended by the King's arrogance and pride and sends a dream which terrifies the King. In verse 17 God gives the key to the dream by announcing in verse 17 "that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets them over the lowliest of men". The King in his arrogance had issued many decrees over the land but God would show that his decrees from the throne of heaven ruled the events of earth. The psalmist tells us in 103:19, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all". Pride is undoubtedly a sin that is common to all of us even though many of us deny it. It was pride that caused Lucifer to rebel against God and fall from heaven. Pride manifests itself in many different ways, some which

even seem acceptable, but at the end of the day pride is a huge obstacle God working in our lives.

2. THE KING'S PERIL vs's 19-26

The scary thing is that the King is in great peril and he does not even know it. As Daniel interprets the dream surely he would realise the danger and take the necessary action to avoid it. The interpretation of the dream is essentially that the king is going to be punished by being reduced to an animal until such time he can put aside his pride and acknowledge God for who he really is. In verse 25 Daniel notes, "Seven times (years) will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" and in verse 26, "...your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules". The picture could not have been more clearly spelt out for the

king. God however is such a gracious God that notwithstanding this prophecy of destruction, God still gives the King an opportunity to avoid the humiliation that is awaiting Him. We love and serve a gracious God. Notice Daniel's invitation in verse 27, "Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue". Our God is a jealous God and he shares his glory with no man. When we are so arrogant and prideful we exclude God from our lives we become nothing more than animals without the spirit of God within us and this is precisely what the king would become. Perhaps you're at peril because of your pride and do not even realise it?

3. THE KING'S PERSISTENT REBELLION vs's 27-30

God in His grace gives the king an opportunity to repent and avoid the punishment that is about to come upon Him. So gracious is God that he waits for a full year before taking action against the king. The king's response however is to persist with his arrogance and rebellion. At the beginning of the chapter before the dream he is still prepared to acknowledge that God has done many great things for him but now he takes all the credit for himself. Note verse 30. "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Not only does he take credit for what God has done but he makes no bones about the fact that it is for HIS glory and not for God's glory. His arrogance is unbelievable!

4. THE KING'S PUNISHMENT vs's 31-33

God was patient for a whole year but when the king spoke these arrogant rebellious words in verse 30 and took the glory for himself, God acts swiftly to meet out his punishment. We are told “The words were still on his lips...” and God speaks out his punishment upon him fulfilling the prophetic dream that he had given to him a year earlier. Note the punishment. “Your royal authority has been taken from you” demonstrating very graphically that it is God who gives authority as well as taking it away. God gives the king over to his sin which reduces him to nothing but an animal. God waited for 120 years in the time of Noah for the people to repent before he took action. He gave the city of Jerusalem 40 years after they crucified the Messiah to repent before the city and temple were destroyed. God detests the sin of pride and will always deal with it. The wise writer of proverbs notes, “When

pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom” and in 3:34, “He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble”.

The amazing thing about God's discipline and punishment is that its intention is always for our own good and the intention is to restore us back to the place that God intended us to be. Verse 32 makes it clear that the intention of the discipline was to enable the king to recognise the Lordship of God and therefore experience His blessing in his life.

We love and serve a gracious God but there comes a time when in his grace he needs to discipline us in order that we might experience His grace in future.

5. THE KING'S PURPOSE vs's 34-37

After seven years of discipline the king notes in verse 34, “raised my eyes towards heaven and my sanity was

restored”. The act of looking to heaven was an act of humility acknowledging the Lordship of God and is immediately met with God’s restoration. When we rebel and are disciplined, God longs for us to lift our eyes up to Him in order that he might restore us. Notice what the king does immediately after his restoration which gives us an indication of God’s purpose for both him and us.

5.1 He praises and worships God. God’s primary purpose for our creation was that we might worship Him.

5.2 Secondly, he honours and glorifies God. Again one of our main purposes is that we might bring glory to God by reflecting His glory to others.

5.3 He recognises the sovereignty and power of God. In verse 35 he notes of God, “ He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth” and then concludes in verse 37, “Now I Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven, because everything

he does is right and all his ways are just”. What a transformation in the king’s life from arrogance and pride to humility and the worship of God. God always has a purpose for us and he disciplines us to realise that purpose. He did so in the king’s life and he can do so in our lives. The fruits of his repentance are found in verse 36 where he notes of himself, “ I became even greater than before”. God’s purpose is for us to become greater but we must humble ourselves to him and become less before He can make us greater.

CONCLUSION

The key theme of this whole chapter is to be found in the last line. The king notes speaking of God, “those who walk in pride he is able to humble”. We need to either be humble in our relationship to God, or be humbled by God.

The sin of pride in our lives can take many forms. I want to highlight two this morning.

1. We can just openly rebel against God and his commands in our lives and in our pride remove him as Lord of our lives.
2. Secondly and more subtly, we can resist God's work in our lives and prescribe to Him the ways in which we desire him to work in our lives. There is no openness and trust to allow God to work as He chooses.

The irony about not humbling ourselves before God is the fact that God's Word indicates that in the end all peoples will be humbled before Him. Paul tells us in Phil 2:10 that at the end of the age, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".