



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 14th May 2017

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Daniel 4:18-37

Subject: Chapter 4, Part 15 - How the mighty have fallen

I have entitled this part of the fourth chapter, "How are the mighty fallen".

We all know the saying – '*Pride comes before a fall*'. Pride is behind the majority of the most destructive actions in the world. Pride places Self above God and others. Pride damned Satan and one third of the angels. Pride has damned men throughout human history. It breaks that first and great command that we ought to have no other gods before God Himself. God is the only one to be worshiped, praised and served. Pride asserts that man or angel can take a place of superiority over God. Remember no matter if you are proud or not, His will is absolutely supreme. In the Scripture, through the prophets, God said, "***My glory will I not give to another***". He laid down a basic premise, that He will not tolerate an usurper elevating himself above God. Listen to what God said about pride in the following verses from Proverbs:

"A proud heart is sin." Proverbs 21:4

"These things doth the Lord hate, a proud look." Proverbs 6:16,17

"Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Proverbs 16:5

"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13

"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18

"A man's pride shall bring him low." Proverbs 29:23

"When pride comes, then comes shame." Proverbs 11:2



It is a serious and severe sin and condemned repeatedly throughout the Scripture. It leads to abomination because it desecrates the name of God and the rightful place that He has. It brings about destruction, for the end of pride is judgment and it leads to a fall and to shame.

In Jeremiah 49, there's a very interesting verse where the Lord gives a prophesy against Edam which you can read for yourself. Edam were a very proud people because of its location. Edam was South East of Jerusalem, in the wilderness and had many natural fortresses, and particularly the city of Petra which I'm sure you know of. Its great capital city was fortified naturally by great high cliffs. There is only entrance, wide enough for a single individual to pass. So it was very easy for that city to be guarded by one soldier and almost invulnerable.

In Jeremiah 49:16, Jeremiah gives a prophesy against Edam.

"Thy terribleness has deceived thee and the pride of thine heart, o thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that hold us the heights of the hills, though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle,"

watch this line,

"I will bring thee down from there," saith the Lord. 'Also, Edam shall be a desolation and everyone that goes by it shall be appalled and hiss at its plagues.'"

We go there today we only can visit its ruins, prophecy fulfilled! God fulfilled his word by cutting off the water supply which came into the city in little troughs flowing down the sides of the cliffs. Now are only traces of these troughs.

James 4:16 summed it up.

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

This leads us to one of the many lessons of Daniel 4. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. If you ever were looking for an illustration for James 4:16, you'd find it in Daniel 4. It is an apt and graphic illustration of that very basic truth. When you are proud, God moves against you. When you are humbled, God gives you grace.

Nebuchadnezzar was a man in trouble, big time. God removed all excuses from before him. When the Lord wasn't working signs, He had His servants moving around him. They were the lights shining into and unto his darkness. This is relevant for you and me because while God



may not work obvious miracles or signs most of the time, you in fact are the light that God chooses to use to shine into the darkness around you. This is a miracle although not an obvious one.

Matthew 5:15 - *“Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”*

1 Peter 2:12 – *“having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”*

John 15:8 – *“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*

An account is told about one of the first great missionary David Livingston to Africa in the 1800s. A reporter from America named Stanley was sent out to find out what happen to him. When this self-professed sceptic Stanley found David Livingston, he stayed with him for six months. Yet, when he left David Livingston after the six months, Stanley was a Christian. Someone asked what Livingston said that converted him, to which Stanley replied,

“It was not what Livingston said, it was what Livingston was that brought me to Christ.”

Let us go back to our text with is about the interpretation of the dream.

Verse 18 -

“This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since 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 God is in you.”

Isn't it wonderful how Daniel stood out in the middle of his society all because of a spirit controlled and spirit filled life, if we can use New Testament terminology. Imagine if we all allowed to be controlled and used by the Holy Spirit, if we continually allowed the Holy Spirit to guide us in our lives not just our 'walk of faith'. Oh for that divine infiltration and Spirit filled life!

Verse 19,

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!”



Daniel was speechless for a time at what God revealed to him. It wasn't because he didn't know the answer, for God showed him exactly what it meant and what was going to take place. It wasn't the silence of perplexity. It was the silence of compassion. Christ gives us hearts of compassion so no doubt Daniel's heart was a heart of compassion for Nebuchadnezzar especially knowing what was to befall him.

What a compassionate man. He didn't just tell him the way it was going to be and for him to just deal with it. He obviously was thoughtful in how he was going to deliver the interpretation which shows that he was sensitive to Nebuchadnezzar's feeling, regardless of who he was.

There's a great lesson here. We know the message of the Gospel. We know the future for those who reject Christ, there is judgment, and doom, and hell. Now how do we go about sharing the great message of Salvation? Is it with a vindictive heart? Is it in a harsh, damning, unloving and judgmental way? I hope not and I hope couldn't either talk to anybody about the loss of their eternal soul, about the judgment of God, without a sense of sadness and compassion.

We should have the kind of compassion. The evangelist J. Allen Blair retold a story which happened in London many years ago at a private party. Amongst the invited guests there was a famous preacher, Caesar Malan. After a young lady played and sang charmingly much to the delight of everyone, the preacher went up to her and very graciously, tactfully, and yet boldly said, "I thought as I listened to you tonight, young lady, how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefited if your talents were dedicated to Him. You know, young lady, you are a sinner in the sight of God but I am glad to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanses you from all sin."

Well, the young lady was shocked and she snapped at him to which he replied, "Lady, I mean no offense. I pray God's spirit will convict you." Blair said they all went to their homes. The young woman retired that night but couldn't sleep. The face of the preacher appeared before her and his words rang through her mind. At 2am she sprang from her bed and grabbed a pencil and a piece of paper. With tears running down her face, this young lady, Charlotte Elliot, wrote these words. "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me. And that thou bids me come to thee, oh, Lamb of God, I come."



One preacher was compassionate enough to confront this woman. The balance of compassion with love and truth.

Verse 20 and 21,

“The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home—”

Here it comes, underline it.

Verse 22,

“it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.”

Most preachers back down in the crisis like that. Daniel didn't and he had to confirm to Nebuchadnezzar - You're it!

Then came the second part, verse 23 and 24.

“And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him’;

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

Here it comes *verse 25*

“They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

Now listen. Just summing up. It's clear. Nebuchadnezzar was going to be humiliated. He was going to lose his mind. He was going to become a beast, insane for seven full years. Now you can't perceive this in the drama that occurred because you cannot perceive Nebuchadnezzar at the height of his glory. If you can imagine, for example, the president of the whatever nation becoming a raving maniac stuck out on the lawn and enclosed in a little fence where



everybody could see him crawling around eating grass for seven years, you might begin to conceive of what was going on. What an incredible, unbelievable, humiliation.

Verse 26,

“And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.”

There is a ray of hope. The reason the stump was left was because Nebuchadnezzar wasn't going to die or have everything he had built up disappear. After seven years, he would get his throne back again. After he learned his lesson he would be restored fully.

The lesson he needed to learn was this. Every kingdom is God's. God rules everything. If he sets up some base man, as verse 17 says, it's only because God has done it, not because that man has done it.

Having said that, Daniel makes an appeal in verse 27.

“Wherefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

Daniel give Nebuchadnezzar the last plea to turn from his pride and acknowledge his sin. However, we know from the rest of the chapter that Nebuchadnezzar stops speaking in the first person from verse 28 to verse 33. Why? Nebuchadnezzar was no longer able to speak for himself because he lost his mind just as prophesied. He did not take heed to Daniel's plea. No, his pride got in the way.

Isaiah 55:7 puts it this way.

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy on him and to our God and He will abundantly pardon.”

He called for Nebuchadnezzar to repent, turn from his sin, turn to the Lord, accept the righteous standard, and begin to be merciful. There was much to change. Yet after this dream which troubled him greatly and its interpretation, knowing that what Daniel interpreted was true, Nebuchadnezzar still refused to repent.



Like Felix who said to Paul in Acts 24:25,

"When I have a convenient season, I'll call for you. I can't be bothered right now."

He refused to repent. If Nebuchadnezzar repented as Daniel plead with him, I believe God would never have allowed this to happen but remember, God knows the heart! You may say, "Well, what makes you think that?" Well, God said he was going to destroy Nineveh but Nineveh repented and He didn't do it, right? God speaks judgment, but when men repent, God turns from His judgment. This is mercy - that we don't get what we deserve. We know this in our lives because of the Cross.

Verses 28 & 29 the prophetic dream comes to pass –

"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar." At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon."

'SO WHAT?' may have been his attitude. A couple of months have passed, nothing seemed to have happened, did he put it to the very back of his mind because of this? But God had a very specific time line – 12 months. It is always in God's time! Remember it is God who is in control. God's mercy, grace and long suffering was vast running out as it were like the sands of time. Remember this was a letter to the Gentile nations and later on we will see a similar prophecy to the Gentile nations being made. What was, is, will the Gentile nations reaction to the warning of God? Much the same. 'Then will come sudden destruction' the bible tells us. Repentance is a free gift of God. It's not from us but the Spirit of God prompting us to turn from sin and trust in God. **'Mercy there was great and grace was free'**, remember the hymn?

You think about the days of Noah and the account of the flood. God said, "I will destroy the world by water." It was 100 years from the time God said it, to when he flooded the earth. Now that's patience, isn't it? God waited, while Noah made the ark and while he was busy building he was preacher of righteousness to the people, warning them.

There are many more examples we could draw upon from the Bible of how patient God is with all people. Not only patient, but graciously pleading, giving chance after chance for



people to get right with him, showing them the way, making the way... how gracious is our God!

Verse 30 – *“The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?””*

From this verse, King Nebuchadnezzar obviously was not troubled by the divine dream any longer. He was at the top of palace, the top of his game and of his world, looking down, heart full of pride checking out how great he was and everything he had because he made it happen. “I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?”

Humanly speaking, if we were in his shoes would we be any different? Babylon was the largest and most powerful city of antiquity. The city was a perfect square, a 15-mile square. There were wide streets, strong fortifications, numerous public buildings, sufficient land for farming and pasture. The population was approximately 1,200,000. It was renowned for its beauty, its temples and seat of learning. It was known for its promiscuous live style and having plenty of whatever you wanted. The city was surrounded by a deep, wide moat filled with water and the wall was 87 feet wide and 350 feet high. Now that's a wall, folks. The city was literally fortified. By the way, on the wall, they could drive chariots four abreast. The streets were intersecting through the city and running to 12 different gates. The Euphrates River ran through the city. There were tremendous levees in the city. There were many incredible palaces. Most famously, the Hanging Gardens were the first of its type that we know of in ancient times. Unbelievable how he did it. With all the greenery at the top and the water tripping through and it air-conditioned the whole thing. He built it to please his wife. Men have done stranger things to please their wives. They also a form of air-conditioned buildings, imagine that, coming in from the hot sun to the cool rooms... pure luxury. There was gold and brass everywhere with the most amazing coloured tiles on the walls, inside and out, surely it was a city to behold. So Nebuchadnezzar stood on top of his palace and looked at it all and basically said to himself, "You're the hottest thing since sliced bread. You might as well admit it."



Verse 31,

“While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!”

The time God had allotted him had come to pass.

Verse 32 – “And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

Verse 33 - That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

Stop right there.

Pretty awesome event, wouldn't you say? There he is, outside. Everybody can see him. Somehow within one hour he was driven away in, crawling around like an animal on the ground eating grass. His hair like the feathers of an eagle. His fingers like bird's claws with their nails thick, crusted, curved. A mind was gone for seven years.

Now I'll tell you something. In a kingdom like that, I would be surprised if there were what we call these days opportunists, the power seeking individuals who would like to step in and help their country out and help to shape it in the way they want the future to go. If you go later on in the history and you find after Nebuchadnezzar's death, you find an incredible milieu of political intrigue as they try to take over that throne. But for seven years, while the man was a raving maniac, nobody lays a hand on that throne. Remember God never let anyone lay a hand on that throne because God is true to his word and he had said that Nebuchadnezzar would get it back.

But my goodness, how the mighty had fallen! Right in the middle of Nebuchadnezzar’s prideful speech God showed up, in His time as He is in control even of what happens to shape world leaders lives.

It’s very easy to sit in apparent judgement of someone else’s life. We are looking at a true account of a King who had a might fall right after a very pride filled speech and all because he would not acknowledge God is God over all men and all things; but what of our own heart



and lives? Is God speaking into some area of your life perhaps, an attitude you feel justified in holding? Maybe a hurt you won't let go of? A sin that you will not give up? Or maybe it's just indifference to the things of God? You simply want to control your own life, you want to do what you want, and chose your own way, happy to be self-made. Not too much room for God really.

Ephesians 2 tells us that we were in the same position, the same as everyone else. We forget that (because its nicer for us to do so that) we were not our own as we would like to believe, look at verse 2 of Ephesians 2 –

“in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,”

Whatever our past, we should not even be close to that position as believers. We have been given a tremendous gift of life. It's a new life, a second chance this time with Divine assistance. We don't need sinful 'pride' in our lives. It is a poison which once we allow it to creep in, it will infiltrate to most of other parts of our lives. What room does that leave for God? We need help, the help of the Holy spirit. We need to leave space for God to work in his way and in his time so that not only will we bring glory to His name but that we will be a blessing to others as well as knowing a blessing from God for ourselves.

God gives us a new life, a new love, a new direction before we had our own plans, now we have God's purpose and life with meaning and hope, no matter what happens to us. We are after all now the children of God. And God is our everything. No not by might nor even power but by His Spirit.

Amen.