



Unshakable Faith

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Week 4

Theme: Heart Condition (Chapter 4)

Weekly Memory Verse

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."

– Daniel 4:37

Day 1: Examination

Prayer of Illumination

Father God, King Jesus, Holy Spirit; Your word tells us that we must be filled with Your Spirit in order to know You and experience true heart change. Would You fill us, would we be willing to be filled. Would You change our hearts, would we be willing to be changed. Would You sanctify us with Your Spirit, would we be willing to be sanctified. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 4 entirely, then focus on Daniel 4:1-8.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 4:1-8?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

Daniel Chapter 4 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar declaring the goodness, the signs, and the wonders of the "Most High God." He has just witnessed the miraculous rescue of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and is on, what seems to be, a spiritual "high." Who wouldn't be after witnessing something like that? It caused even the vainest of kings to humble himself and declare the glory of God.

We've seen him impressed with God before, in Chapter 2 when Daniel interpreted the king's first dream. But, by the time Chapter 3 starts, King Nebuchadnezzar has constructed a giant image of himself and is demanding everyone bow down to it with the consequence of immediate death if they don't comply.

These kinds of patterns are worth looking for within our own hearts. Often, we'll experience moves of God in our lives, praise Him for all He's doing, and we're better for that. We may not find ourselves constructing large gold images of ourselves and threatening death at the resistance of worship, but how often do we construct idols that cause us to forget what God has done in even the most recent chapter of our lives? As followers of Christ how influential do we allow circumstances, ones that breed either disappointment or celebration, to shape how we view God?

Reflection

What has God done in a past chapter of your life that you need to reflect on?

What circumstances are in your life that may be distracting you from remembering the goodness of God?

Are you allowing something in your current season of life to distract you from what God might be trying to show you?

Take some time to reflect on the current season of your life and ask God to illuminate your heart and mind to what the Spirit is doing in your life.

Day 2: Receive

Prayer of Illumination

God, open our eyes to see Your revelations all around us today. Help us to grow to be more like Daniel, to speak Your Truth and to fully operate in the gifts You give us to serve others. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 4 entirely, then focus on Daniel 4:9-18.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 4:9-18?

What do these verses say about the human condition?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

What struck me the most in today's reading was not how odd the dream appeared to be but rather, the last sentence that King Nebuchadnezzar said: "For none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you [Daniel] can, because the Spirit of the Holy God is in you." Because the Spirit is in you... Clearly, he knew something was different about Daniel at this point. He knew Daniel served the Most High God only. So Nebuchadnezzar referenced the Most High, but in his own limited understanding – a Babylonian polytheistic lens. He knew who to go to, to get to the Source, for his dream.

One thing Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar had in common was that they both believed God could reveal hidden mysteries. Do you believe that today? That amidst the unusual dreams or circumstances in your life that God has the power to reveal to you an interpretation that would speak to you, or do you think that's just something of the past? Pastor Mark says, "If we do what they did in the Bible, God's going to do what He did." God is still on the Throne revealing mysteries to us. These verses remind us today that it's not a question of IF God is revealing things. King Nebuchadnezzar knew he had a dream that needed a spiritual interpretation. The question is rather, "Are you ready to RECEIVE the interpretation?"

Reflection

What is something God has revealed to you? Share with someone what you think God has been speaking to you and ask them to pray for you.

Spend some extra time today in the Word asking for God to speak to you.

Ask God for a Daniel. Someone who will partner with you to speak words from God and words of life into you. We all need a Daniel who can prophesy into our lives.

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Day 3: Heart

Prayer of Illumination

Father God, as we sit in Your Word, examine our hearts. Search me and as You have known us, help us understand the condition of our hearts. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 4 entirely, then focus on Daniel 4:19-27.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 4:19-27?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

King Nebuchadnezzar is describing a dream he's had. He then asks Daniel to interpret the dream. Daniel is troubled. We can imagine what went through his mind as the revealing comes. Even asking in his head, "How in the world am I going to relay the message to the king?" Yet, because of Daniel's pre-decisions, the king comes to implicitly trust Daniel to give the truth: that his view of himself has become one of entitlement leading to unrighteousness. King Nebuchadnezzar's heart leaned toward sin and lacked mercy toward the poor. The pronouncement is one of judgement.

We have to wonder, what have we cheated ourselves out of because of the condition of our hearts? Sin separates us from God. It inhibits our ability to become *all* that God meant for us to be. We then wonder what potential has gone untapped? Not to mention a separation that interrupts a communion with Yahweh.

Reflection

Sit with Your Father God, journaling as you honestly answer these questions:

- What have I cheated myself out of because of my heart condition?
- What potential has gone untapped?

Pray a prayer of repentance.

- What do I feel entitled to?
- What is one thing can I change today? (Just one. Start there.)

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Day 4: Pride

Prayer of Illumination

Lord God, help us to humble ourselves and make You the center of our affections rather than seeking our own glory. We glorify and honor You as our true King. Your ways are true and just, and You are able to humble the proud. May we live lives full of humility in heart and in our deeds. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 4 entirely, then focus on Daniel 4:28-37.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 4:28-37?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

King Nebuchadnezzar looks out over his rooftop and, I imagine, begins to smile. A smile filled with pride. As he's surveying the scene, he sees this beautiful city filled with gold, a beautiful botanical garden, and so many other wonderful things we can only imagine. He sees himself in this city. The city that **he** built. He doesn't see arrogance, pride, or vanity in any of his thoughts. He only sees himself. He fails to give credit to the skilled craftsmen and laborers who worked really hard to build this beautiful city. Sadly, he also leaves God completely out of the picture.

God does something unique with this king. He warns him before passing judgement on him and gives him a year to get himself in line. I had so much hope that he would do the right thing by falling on his knees before the Lord in humility and repent. Yes, I was rooting for old King Nebs! After all, he had witnessed God's power on a couple of occasions which proved that God does what He says He will do.

In the end, God had to humble this king precisely because he was full of pride. He failed to listen to the warning Daniel had given him a year before. But this wasn't the end of the story. The Lord is gracious and kind to him and after seven years restores him to the throne. All he had to do was look up and acknowledge that our God is the one true King who rules over the kingdoms of this world! May we remember to choose to live our lives in humility before God and acknowledge Him in all of our ways.

Reflection

In what ways have you glorified yourself above God and failed to acknowledge Him?

Has there ever been a time in your life where God had to humble you because of your pride?

Reflect on today's reading and resolve to make Jesus the object of your affections, to make serving others a priority, and humble yourselves by thinking of yourself less.

Day 5: Pause & Reflect

Ask the Lord, journal, and pray through the following questions ...

God, what are some of the takeaways from Chapter 4 that you want to highlight in my life?

Spend time today posturing yourself to listen and reflect on each day's theme:

- Examination
- Receive
- Heart
- Pride

What is one thing you are going to do in response to this week's message and reading plan, and who is going to hold you accountable?

Write down one takeaway and one action step in a journal to commit to it.

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