

You Have Not Humbled Your Heart

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[0 : 0 0] Daniel chapter 5, and Emily, please come and read for us. Emily's going to read down through verse number 12. Daniel chapter 5, 1 down through 12.

King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought in the golden vessels that they had taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace opposite the lampstand.

And the king saw the hand as it wrote. Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him. His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, whoever reads this writing and shows me its interpretation shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed. The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, O king, live forever. Let not your thoughts alarm you, or your color change.

There is a man in your kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar.

Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. If you want a comprehensive and a chronological record of this time in world history, you will need to look to sources other than the book of Daniel. Daniel's purpose is not to record a complete world history. Rather, Daniel writes about specific events that are significant to the kingdom of God, the promises of God, and the people of God. He is not primarily interested in recording history, because Daniel is captivated by theology. He's more concerned about answering the question, what is God doing in the world right now, than he is about answering the question, what is happening right now in the world?

[3 : 19] So Daniel chooses each story in order to remind the exiles, those who are living in a foreign land, that God's purposes have not been thwarted. He wants to encourage them to remain faithful, even when they are living in a foreign land. I hope this little bit of perspective helps explain the way, the abrupt way, King Belshazzar appears in chapter 5. Daniel gives him no bio, there is no introduction, there is no explanation of his place in the line of succession. It doesn't record, he doesn't record for us how did King Belshazzar come to be in power. Those things aren't as important to Daniel. What seems important to Daniel is recording another illustration of God's sovereign power to bring down those who appear to be mighty, to resist those who are proud, to give grace to the humble.

What is the largest party that you have ever been to? Largest party. What do you think? That's okay, we can talk. A wedding party, how many people? Give or take. A couple hundred people.

That's probably similar for most of us. Anybody been to a wedding party bigger than 500 people in the room? That would be like a ridiculously large wedding party, right? I think. Okay.

Belshazzar throws a party for a thousand of the most important people in Babylon. This is a big party. The biggest party you have ever seen. And then he places himself in the center of this party, like being in the middle ring in the circus, so that everyone can see him.

And what everyone sees is Belshazzar drinking way too much alcohol. And then making a shockingly foolish choice to call for golden vessels that were stolen from the temple in Jerusalem, taken from God's people, supposed to be used to worship God. Bring those golden vessels here, and let's drink more alcohol out of them, and then let's worship our idols.

[6 : 00] Belshazzar and his guests desecrate these sacred objects by drinking alcohol and then worshipping their idols.

Look again at verse number one. King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, be brought that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Belshazzar is shamelessly sinful. No shame at all.

His sins are arrogance, blasphemy, and idolatry. Kids, do you know what those things are? Arrogance, blasphemy, idolatry? Is there one of those that maybe you don't know? Yep, Sophia? Oh, you know them? Okay, is there one that you don't know?

Arrogance, blasphemy, idolatry? Oh, interesting. I'll bet the adults all don't know what blasphemy is, so I'll explain it to the adults. Is that fair? I thought maybe some of the kids wouldn't know what blasphemy was, but maybe we all know. Blasphemy, blasphemy is when you take something sacred, something that is holy, something that is set apart to God, and you bring it down, you profane it, you make it common, you treat it as though it is not special.

Blasphemy is disrespecting God or disrespecting sacred people, sacred ideas, sacred objects, those things that have been set apart for God. Blasphemy, an example of blasphemy would be taking the Lord's name in vain. When you use God's name as a swear word, or you get angry, or you see someone on TV, or maybe one of your friends at school or at the playground does it, and they say the Lord's name, one of the names that are God's names, and they use it as a word when they're upset. That's blasphemy.

[8 : 43] Belshazzar's sin is particularly insulting to God. He's a drunk, and he calls, bring out the golden goblets from the gods, right? And bring them in here so that we can drink some more alcohol.

The party is all about this and goes wild right up until verse 5. Immediately, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace opposite the lampstand, and the king saw the hand as it wrote.

He is terrified.

Very afraid. You would be too. If you saw a hand writing words on a wall after you had desecrated and blasphemed God by drinking alcohol out of golden vessels that were reserved for his worship.

Belshazzar calls for his wise men. He is desperate for answers because he knows that he is guilty. He knows exactly what he has done.

[10 : 22] He knows that he has blasphemed God. And he offers his wise men status and wealth and political power. I'll give you anything you want.

Just tell me what those words mean. Imagine coming into your house, hot and sweaty, and needing a cold drink of water.

And as you are making your way to the kitchen, someone comes toward you and said, would you like a warm, extra salty pretzel and some nacho cheese?

You would say, no thank you. I am hot and sweaty. I don't want to be more thirsty. I wish to be less thirsty. This is what happens when he goes to these, quote, wise men to get wisdom.

They offer him nothing. He becomes even more afraid. Look at your Bible, verse 8. All of the king's wise men come in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation.

[11 : 32] Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

Now, about 20 years have passed between the end of chapter 4 and the beginning here of chapter 5. That's why I say Daniel's not interested in recording a complete comprehensive history of God's people during this time.

20 years have gone by. But the queen, who may be Nebuchadnezzar's wife, has not forgotten about Daniel.

Look at verse 11. Verse 13.

Then Daniel was brought in before the king, and the king answered and said to Daniel, You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king, my father, brought from Judah?

[12 : 55] Verse 16. But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now, if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Before we look at Daniel's response, I want to draw your attention to an insight in the original Aramaic. Remember, this portion of Daniel is written in Aramaic.

It's not written in English. It's not written in Hebrew. It's written in Aramaic. I want to draw your attention to an insight in this that I learned this week, and I think it's something that gets lost in our English translations.

Remember, what is Daniel's purpose in choosing which stories he's going to record? His purpose is encouraging the exiles to remain faithful.

Faithful to what? Faithful to God. Why is this so important? Because they are surrounded, surrounded by idols. Idolatry is everywhere in Babylon.

[14 : 15] And so these people need to be reminded to remain faithful to God because the temptation to give in and to just start worshiping these idols and go along with everybody else is so great.

We learned this together last week that all sin is insanity. Sin makes you foolish.

And one way that the first readers of Daniel, those who are reading Daniel in the original language in which it was written, one way that they would be encouraged to remain faithful to God is by a bit of humor that comes at the expense of King Belshazzar.

Are you ready? Kids, this is going to be funny and it's okay if you laugh. All right? But I'm also going to say some words that you should only say if you're talking about Belshazzar.

Is that clear? Don't use these words to talk about anybody else. But if you want to use them to remember the story of Belshazzar, that seems right. Because that's how the scripture gives us this story.

[15 : 22] Look back at verse 6. Chapter 5, verse 6. Then the king's color changed and his thoughts alarmed him. His limbs gave way and his knees knocked together.

Now, when we read this, we understand in our English translation that the king is very terrified. But if we were to read this in the original Aramaic, we would also laugh at King Belshazzar.

Literally, the phrase is, the knots of his loins were loosened. Belshazzar is so spooked by the handwriting on the wall that he may have messed his pants.

The knots of his loins were loosened. Can you imagine? Now he is not just terrified, but now he is also humiliated at the center stage of a thousand of the most important people in Babylon.

George Schwab wrote a book called Hope in the Midst of a Hostile Word. He says it like this, He who sought power over God's bowls could not control his own bowels.

[16 : 47] Now, when the queen appears, notice what she says in verse 12. An excellent spirit, knowledge and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in Daniel.

So the queen mother, probably Belshazzar's grandmother, looks at sloppy drunk Belshazzar who may need a diaper change.

She looks right at him and she says, Daniel can solve your problems. Literally, Daniel can untie the knots. Uses the same words that the scripture gives us.

He can untie your knots. You've got problems, Daniel can solve them. And when Daniel appears before the king one final time, those who are reading in the Aramaic will hear King Belshazzar, King Poopypants, say to Daniel in his own words, I have heard that you can solve problems.

You can untie knots. How embarrassing. Do you know what sin does? Sin makes you foolish.

[18 : 13] Sin makes you foolish. Psalm 2 and verse 4 says this. The kids and I looked at this this morning.

The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord ridicules them.

You think you can mock God and get away with it? You think you can sin with impunity and get away with it? You think that no one sees when you sin? You think God doesn't take notice?

When you blaspheme Him, God takes notice. Sin makes you foolish. And the God of heaven laughs at the foolishness of people who engage in sin.

Daniel has endured 66 years of exile. He is probably by now in his 80s. And though he seems perhaps to have fallen out of favor with King Belshazzar, he remains faithful faithful in a foreign land.

[19 : 21] And Daniel's boldness is stunning. Look at verse 17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another.

Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, kingship and greatness and glory and majesty.

And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed and whom he would, he kept alive.

Whom he would, he raised up and whom he would, he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne and his glory was taken from him.

He was driven from among the children of mankind and his mind was made like that of a beast and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will and you, his son, Belshazzar, have not, have not humbled your heart though you knew all of this.

[20 : 58] But you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven and the vessels of his house have been brought in before you and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them and you have praised the gods of silver and gold of bronze, iron, wood and stone which do not see or hear or know but the God in whose hand is your breath and whose are all your ways you have not honored.

Daniel doesn't talk to Belshazzar about his little white lies, his little blunders, his little oopsies. Daniel confronts the king concerning his sin, arrogance, blasphemy and idolatry.

You should know better. You haven't honored God. You've insulted him, the God who holds your breath in his hand.

How dare you? How dare you insult this God? The God who holds your breath in his hand? Verse 24.

Then from his presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed. And this is the writing that was inscribed.

[22 : 37] Meany, Meany, Tickle, Parson. And this is the interpretation of the matter. Meany, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.

Tickle, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Perez, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

Daniel essentially looks at this terrified king and says, do you want to know what those words right there on the wall mean? They mean you are going to die.

You are going to die. You are going to die. How dare you insult this God? that's what those words mean.

You foolish, wicked king. Friend, isn't it true that each of us could have these words written on the walls of our hearts as well?

[23 : 47] You are numbered. You are counted and you don't have enough to pay your debt. You are weighed. You are measured and you don't measure up.

You're going to die. Judgment is coming. When God numbers, when God weighs, what is the standard that God uses?

inches. It's not inches. It's not pounds or dollars. It's not checklists of good things that you have done or have failed to do.

This is not the standard by which God measures and by which God weighs. Here's the standard. Romans chapter 3 and verse 23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

God doesn't compare you to your spouse or your neighbor or your co-worker or a felon in prison or the president of the United States.

[25 : 03] God doesn't compare you to any of those other people and you shouldn't make that comparison either. What good is it to consider yourself better than someone else when you are still falling short of the perfect glorious perfection of Jesus Christ?

Who cares if you are not as bad as that other person? Who cares? Who cares when you are still falling short of the glory of God?

But don't abandon hope sinners. don't abandon hope sinner. Jesus suffered and died for people like you and people like me who cannot pay their debt to God.

I wonder will you humbly accept? Will you humbly admit that you don't measure up? Will you humbly admit that you don't have what it takes to attain to the glory of God on your own?

God and if you will humbly admit that then come to Jesus. Come to Jesus and receive God's gracious forgiveness in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 21] You can be saved today but you cannot be saved today by getting your act together. you cannot be saved today by cleaning up your life. You can't be saved today by doing more than others are doing or trying harder than others are trying.

Those things will never save you. If you wish to be saved today you may be saved because despite your sin and your weakness and your failure in Christ you can be weighed and not found wanting.

but worthy but not because of yourself but because Jesus is worthy. Verse 29 Then Belshazzar gave the command and Daniel was clothed with purple a chain of gold was put around his neck and a proclamation was made about him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed and Darius the Mede received the kingdom being about 62 years old.

Chloe told me that William Henry Harrison had the shortest presidency of any president of the United States.

[27 : 56] He lasted 32 days. 32 days. Daniel has the shortest term of any third ruler in the whole kingdom of Babylon.

He only made it just a few short hours as third ruler in the kingdom. the kingdom of Babylon falls. As God said he would, he topples the head of gold.

And God raises up another king and another kingdom. And where are we now? In God's plan of redemption. We are one king and one kingdom closer to that little stone that will appear and will come down and pulverize all of the other kingdoms and then grow itself until it becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth.

We're one kingdom closer. I wonder if you notice the similarities between Daniel 4 and Daniel 5. Both chapters tell of a proud Babylonian king.

Both kings claim what belongs only to God. Nebuchadnezzar worship and Belshazzar the golden vessels that are intended for the worship of God. Both kings are sinful.

[29 : 12] Both kings receive supernatural warnings. Both turn to Daniel to interpret the revelation from God. Both hear from Daniel that judgment is coming and that their kingdom will be lost.

Both experience God's judgment. Nebuchadnezzar is struck with insanity and Belshazzar is drunk out of his mind.

So many similarities between these two chapters and yet there is one striking difference. God warns Nebuchadnezzar through his dream about the beautiful tree and then he gives Nebuchadnezzar how much time?

Do you remember children? How long does Nebuchadnezzar get? Audrey? One year. 12 months. God shows patience with Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar receives God's warning and he is dead before he goes to bed. What should we learn from this?

[30 : 27] In Luke 12 Jesus tells a parable about a very wealthy man and his crops are so abundant that he doesn't have room to store them all and so he says what am I going to do?

I'm going to tear down my little barns, my little silos and grain bins and I'm going to build bigger ones so I can hold all of my stuff. And then at the end of that he says look at what I have done.

Look what I have built. I have more than I could ever use, more than I could ever spend. Now I'm just going to relax and take it easy for the rest of my life. I'm going to enjoy all of the good things that I have earned with my efforts.

But God said to him, Luke 12 verse 20, But God said to him, you fool. This very night your life is demanded of you.

Sin makes you foolish and we need Jesus to teach us wisdom. How do we do that?

[31 : 49] How do we do that? We read this verse together in our call to worship. This is Psalm 90 and verse 12. Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.

Friend, do not presume upon the grace that God shows to others. You have no idea whether you have 12 months like Nebuchadnezzar or where you have just a few short hours like Belshazzar.

We just don't know. So teach me. Teach me to number days that I cannot count so so that I learn wisdom that I cannot live without.

How do we learn to number something that we can't count? This seems complicated, doesn't it? Like if you want to count something, you kind of got to know how many there are. You got to be able to see them all.

You can't count the stars because we can't put them all in one group. We can't count the sand on the seashore because it's too much to see all at one time. We don't know how many days we have.

[33 : 06] How is it that we can learn this? How is it that we can learn to number our days? Days that we cannot count.

Numbering your days means remembering that you are going to die. It means remembering that the God who held Belshazzar's breath is the same God who holds your breath.

Numbering your days means remembering I am going to die. Numbering your days means being mindful of what the rich fool forgot. That the one who dies with the most toys still dies.

So numbering your days means being mindful of eternity rather than being ignorant or negligent about eternity. Numbering your days means remembering God's words from Galatians chapter 6.

God is not mocked. So stop pretending that you can sin without God being right there present with you.

[34 : 24] That's learning to number your days. And when you do sin, learning to number your days means seeking God's forgiveness rather than wondering, maybe I've gotten away with it.

As though God didn't topple the head of gold and bring down Babylon the great. Numbering your days means developing deeper dependence on Jesus.

it means committing your circumstances good and bad more quickly and more completely into the care of the Father in heaven. Turning it over to Jesus even when you feel horribly humiliated, even when you feel horribly ashamed.

Remembering that God is present with you in that moment. Turn to Him. Run to Him for grace. Numbering your days means humbly acknowledging that you don't measure up to Jesus and you never will.

And yet God's grace is sufficient and His power is made perfect in all of your weakness. Teach me.

[35 : 44] Teach me to number days I cannot count. so I learn wisdom I cannot live without. Let's pray. Good Father, we are grateful to have Your Word.

Thank You that Daniel, under the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, chose to write down this story of Belshazzar Thank You for the things that we have learned from it.

There's so much more that we could think about and dwell on and focus into and yet You've given us this time and this much to draw our attention to the reality of sin and our need of a Savior, to recognizing that sin makes us foolish and we need to be taught wisdom.

Blessed Holy Spirit, would You please come and work in our hearts for a few moments as we are quiet before You. Give us courage to confess and to repent.

Please allow the grace of guilt to move us to the goodness of our Father. Father, Lord Jesus, we are grateful for Your cross that gives us this opportunity and this freedom, this glorious, wonderful freedom to repent.

[37 : 23] Father, we confess again what we have already proclaimed together at the start of our worship gathering. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

We claim that promise. We hold to it tightly because we understand that we are still people burdened, burdened with the old flesh inside and still very much need to turn over more and more of our hearts to the powerful control of the Holy Spirit so that His luscious fruit is produced.

Father, we also recognize that there are some who need to trust in Jesus, some who have never repented and believed for the very first time. Would you please, by the power of the Holy Spirit, draw near to them and grant life and repentance and faith so that a poor, hopeless, broken, foolish sinner responds to the preaching of the gospel, who repent and believes in Jesus and receives the forgiveness of their sins purchased for them by the bloody death of Jesus on the cross.

peace.