

Daniel 4: What Have You Done?

Standing Firm with God series

by Chris Famisaran

Good morning, everybody. Let's begin with a word of prayer. God, as we now take a moment to continue our series in Daniel 4, lead and guide us in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, as been our practice, you want to do a little yes, no, maybe? Yes, no, maybe? Those of you who believe yes, just say yes, I agree. If you don't agree, close your fist, I do not agree. And if you're uncertain, maybe. Act like you're waving like the Rose Parade, okay? Number one, I expect you to be very honest with me. Everyone but me in this room has issues with pride. I'm the only humble person here in this room. All right, more serious question. God does not want us to be comfortable and content. OK. God has placed all of our current political leadership in power. Alright, God brings times of trouble into our lives, if necessary. Finally, God will remove you from positions of power if you try to take credit for God's blessings. Mmm. Food for thought. All right.

How many of you believe you can land a plane? Actually years ago when I was in college, my Uncle Charles, I was in college and I was visiting them, I think it was over Thanksgiving break. He's a pilot, he had access to a plane and he said, you want to go up? I said, of course. And guess what? He let me land the plane. Now, he also had his hands on the other controls. Not the point. But for the most part, I had control of the plane. Now it was a very small plane, like a Cessna, or a little Piper, Piper Cub. And I thought, this is way easier than they say it is. But it's one thing to land a small little plane instead of a 747. Now. There was a study done because people think they can do more than they really probably should. But imagine yourself comfortably cruising in an airline. You're going wherever, Hawaii, Tahiti, Florida, Italy. When all of a sudden a flight attendant's voice breaks the silence, ladies and gentlemen, our pilots have become incapacitated. They are no longer able to fly. Does anybody else know how to fly a plane? Because at this point, the plane is on autopilot. How many of you internally are starting to scream, mercy, Lord have mercy on us? And somebody says, I can fly a plane, and

you hope and pray they can fly a plane, amen? Now, there was a survey done recently of 30% of adult Americans actually believe they could safely land a passenger aircraft with the help of air traffic control. Let me leave that caveat. And amongst the male respondents, the confidence rose to nearly 50%. Guys, come on, guys. And we've heard stories of how some people, the pilot, they have a heart attack or whatever, and they were able to land the plane. You may be able to get the plane on the ground, but can you do it safely? And the truth is, you know, it's not that simple. Now in 2022, Darren Hansen, he managed to land a twin engine aircraft. The pilot had passed out, but that's a small plane. The big airlines, the big plane. The landing is complicated. It requires precise control. How many of you, I love watching videos of people landing planes. Particularly, I forget there's this guy that I watch. He's based in Florida. I want to become a pilot one day. OK. And. and you see them, you think they're handling controls, it's so easy, but it's not. It takes precision, it takes practice. You have to be able to land the plane at the right speed. Also at the same time, managing all of the gears and the flaps, making sure that you're not gonna bump somebody before or behind you in the line of landing the planes. Also completing maybe an actual paper checklist, as well as a digital screen. You have buttons, you have things flashing at you all over. Sounds complicated, right? Sounds like being a drummer. And yet both takeoffs and landings are also very quick. It takes intense concentration, what we would consider super, super intensive. And if you've never learned how to truly fly, it's not as easy as you think it is. And yes, some people have the idea that their ability supersedes everyone else. I can do this. pride, self-confidence, and self-exaltation. How often do we get that? How often do we allow that to get in the middle of our lives?

Today I want to go through and continue our series on Daniel chapter four. Daniel chapter four, okay? In Daniel chapter four, we find King Nebuchadnezzar is about to have a dream. Scholars say this is probably about maybe 30 years after the incident with the statue in King Nebuchadnezzar. So roughly about 30 years, Nebuchadnezzar was at war and then there was a brief period in his rule, maybe, well, a third of it, one third of his rule, let's say maybe 10 years where he had some peace finally and prosperity. And again, towards the end of his rule, he had to go back to war.

Let's go to chapter two, I'm sorry, chapter four. Chapter four, okay? All right, here it is. Let's begin. You ready? King Nebuchadnezzar to the nations and the peoples of every language who live in all of the earth. May you prosper greatly. Who's this letter addressed to? And who's writing it? Who's writing it? Is it Daniel? I hadn't thought about this yet, have you? King Nebuchadnezzar is writing chapter four. And as you read it, you realize it's in the first person. He's writing to everyone in his kingdom, okay? To the nations and the peoples of every language, all who live on the earth, may you prosper greatly. And I love, because this is a typical greeting, okay? At least Nebuchadnezzar says right off the bat, it's me. How many of you get an email and you have to look at the very bottom to see who wrote it so you could know how to read it? Is this somebody that I like, somebody I don't like? Is this the annoying boss? Is this your aunt? Whatever, right? Because we all read emails or texts in a certain way based on our relationship to people, right? It continues on, okay? But one thing to note, Chapter 4 is the only chapter of the Bible written by a pagan. And when I say pagan, that's not a derogatory term. I should say maybe this is the only chapter of the Bible written by a non-Jew. Okay? Keep that in mind. He's writing the first person.

It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and the wonders that the Most High God has performed for who? For me. How great are His signs? How mighty His wonders? His kingdom is how long of a kingdom? an eternal kingdom forever. His dominion endures from generation to generation. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. I had a dream that made me what? And as I was lying in bed, the images of the vision passed through my mind and terrified me. So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. And when the magicians, the enchanters, the astrologers, and the diviners came, I told them the dream. but they could not interpret it for me. And finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream, he was remember called Belteshazzar, after the name of my God and the spirit of the holy gods is in him. Now, what is the response compared to chapter two when he has a dream?

Okay, in chapter two, did he tell everyone the dream or did he want them? You tell me, right? Because he felt like, are you sure you all been lying to me, telling me the truth? Telling him what I want to hear? Instead, he actually breaks that and says, no, I'm going to tell you. And look how his demeanor has changed. Because

we find in chapter one, he's going on a rampage to break people down. bring back slaves, tear all of the nations up. He wanted to rule everything. In chapter two, he has a horrible dream, doesn't know what it's like, what it's about. He wants to know, and he has a, if nobody can tell him, kill everybody, I'll do what I want, because he thinks he can get away with everything. And then chapter three, we find that he wants to make an image, right? and he makes everybody bow down to this image. And what does he respond with? If you don't bow down, you'll what? You're going to die. OK? A lot of thoughts and a lot of bad thoughts in King Nebuchadnezzar's mind. Remember, he's the king. He can do anything he wants. And it's here we see that he's content, he's prosperous. He says, though, that there are many miraculous signs. God has spoken to him, done wonderful things. And then he tells them the dream.

OK, now Daniel says, sorry, he says to Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that my the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream. Interpret it for me. Verse 10. These are the visions I saw while lying in bed. I looked in there before me, stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and it's tough. Touch the sky. it was visible to the ends of the earth. Does this ever sound familiar? Maybe is there anything that we can find in Genesis that sounds familiar? Tower of Babel? Same, roughly the same place as well. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on the fruit food for all. Under it was all the wild animals that found shelter, and birds lived in its branches. From it every creature was fed." So it seems like there's this tree that is strong. It feeds people, it's protected, it's good. And in verse 13 it says, "In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked and there before me was a Holy One, a messenger, coming down from heaven. And he called, cut down the tree. Trim off its branches, strip it of its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots, bound with irons and bronze, remain in the ground and the grass of the field. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man, and let him be given the name, the mind of an animal, till, how many times? Seven times. before him. This decision is announced by messengers. The Holy Ones declare the verdict so that the living may know that who the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms and on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and

sets over them the lowliest of people. This is a dream that I, Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can. because the Spirit of the Holy Gods is in you. Meaning, I have faith in you, Daniel, to tell me what I need to know.

How would you feel at this point if you were Daniel? Well, King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel could have said anything. And yet, when he responds, it's interesting how he responds. But I think at this point, he probably had some sense of a relationship with him. Through the first couple of chapters, just remember he's a rampaging king, and he acted like he could do anything that he wanted. Pride was a challenge for Nebuchadnezzar. Pride stinks. Y'all deal with people who have pride. You know what pride is. Mike Winger describes this very well. He says, pride is like body odor. You can't smell it, but everyone else can. All right? I was with some friends and one of them who speaks in sarcasm says, we were with this guy who, let's just say he, He thought very highly of himself. One of my friends said, you are the greatest promoter of all time. Because everything he would do, I did this, I did that. Look at all the things that I have done. If you've done well though, and if you truly are faithful to God, do you need to tell people what you have accomplished? You don't. Because you feel secure enough to know that no matter what God is going to help protect you, lead you, and guide you. The challenge with this guy was he called himself a Christian, but it sounded like he got all the credit and God got a little credit. much like Nebuchadnezzar here. He got all, he did well in his eyes, but who really allowed him to do everything that he did? God.

Daniel though is a little hesitant so he says Then Daniel, also called Belteshazzar, was perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream or its meaning alarm you. Daniel is showing concern for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's response to the dream is concern for Nebuchadnezzar. He says, my lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries. Think about Daniel, though. He could have said anything to Nebuchadnezzar. He'd been taken from his home. He was in exile. He could have gotten revenge. He could have felt, this is awesome. But no, he responds with concern. And he says, verse 20, the tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to all the earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit providing for all of you, giving shelter to wild animals and having nesting places in its branches for the words. You, Majesty, are what?

You are that tree. You've become great and strong. Your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. And essentially, Daniel goes on and he says, cut the tree down, leave the stump, let him be drenched. You're going to be changed. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him live like an animal until seven times passes by. Basically, it's a warning to King Nebuchadnezzar. At this point, God is showing his sovereignty, because up until this point, King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was the greatest thing since sliced bread. He could do no wrong. And he was probably enabled by the people around him, because they probably feared for their life. Oh, yes, King, go do this, go do that. But who allowed King Nebuchadnezzar, for instance, to take over Judah? It wasn't him. It wasn't by his might. God allowed it. God could have easily destroyed Nebuchadnezzar. But he didn't. And we find later Nebuchadnezzar's life is going to change.

If you go to verse 27 though, okay, it says, Daniel pleads with Nebuchadnezzar, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice. Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to who? The oppressed, it may be by then that your prosperity will continue. See, God sees what Nebuchadnezzar is doing. In order for Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom to continue to grow and flourish, what did he need to do? Well, how did he manage to maintain running his kingdom? When he went and conquered people, did he just leave them there and take all the plunder? He robbed them of everything that they had and he took their people and they became slaves. much like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Just seems like they got a better, easier job. But who maintained? Who did all the grunt work, the hard work? And was King Nebuchadnezzar kind and a benevolent dictator to them? No, his people were harsh. In fact, scholars say that within the first 10 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, people were trying to rebel. There was hand-to-hand combat. And how did he deal with that? You snuff him out. You show power. You show strength.

And God says, listen, you think you are the greatest thing. But remember, I am sovereign. So he warns them. And for about a year, maybe Nebuchadnezzar realizes, I need to change. It's OK. But in verse 28, all of this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. In verse 29, 12 months later, how long? 12 months, one year, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, it said, Is not this the great Babylon I have built as a royal residence by my power and for the glory

of my majesty? Who do you think built that palace? Who do you think helped to enable to get all of that beautiful setting? Well, God allowed it, but who built it? The slaves. And instantly Nebuchadnezzar's life is changed. Even as the words were on his lips, a voice from heaven says, this is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar. Your royal authority has been taken from you. Grass, you will be driven away from the people and will live with wild animals. You will eat like grass, like an ox, and seven times will pass you by for until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign for all the kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes, immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like an ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails grew like claws of what? A bird. Now there's a technical term that we diagnose this with. King Nebuchadnezzar was suffering from boanthropy. Let's all say that, boanthropy.

All right, thank you. How many times did Nebuchadnezzar live like this? Seven. Seven years. His body had to adjust, I'm sure. Because remember, his hair got matted. And he had like feathers of an eagle, and his nails also grew like claws of a bird. And it wasn't until seven years later that he was finally restored. I wonder sometimes. Well, who ran the kingdom? And you would think this would be a perfect time to stage a coup. The king is crazy. Let's take over. Maybe he had loyalties. But there's an even deeper thought that scholars say as well that the people believe that Nebuchadnezzar was being controlled by a demon during this time. And if you try to usurp and take over, that same demon will also go after you and potentially kill you. That's one explanation. Regardless, I think as well, though, that God's sovereignty plays into this. So acting like an ox or acting like a bovine, as it says, for seven years, that's a long time. But then as when he comes back in verse 34, at the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was what? Restored, and then I praised the Most High. Nebuchadnezzar, after four chapters, in chapter four, recognizes who God is. I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion. His kingdom rules. His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases. With the powers of heaven and the power of peoples of the earth, no one can hold back his hand or say to him, what have you done? And at the same time that my sanity

was restored, my honor and splendor was returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisors and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne. and became even greater than before.

So he comes back, he's fully restored. And it says that his kingdom became even greater. Had Nebuchadnezzar finally learned and realized who God truly has suffered? Absolutely. One thing as well I think that we can take as believers is to see, you know, maybe the exiles, the other exiles who had been taken away at the same time, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they'd lived that long, they realized for a king to be taken, they knew what was truly happening, that God was truly in control. I'm sure that had probably given them some sense of courage, some sense of hope that God is truly sovereign and in control. Now we can look at Nebuchadnezzar and see he had a challenging time, not quite understanding what is going on. And I think sometimes that also happens to us as well. So do challenging times draw you closer to God or does it want you to push God away? Do challenging times draw you closer to God or push you away?

Sadly, unfortunately, I've had to officiate a few funerals in the last couple weeks. And as I'm there, I can see various reactions. I see a lot of anger. I see a lot of grief. C.S. Lewis, I lost my quote, but he basically says, he writes, I sat down with anger and called by my real name, grief. When we lose a loved one, sometimes it's easy to get angry and lash out, God, how could this have happened? Why did you let this happen to this person? Or God, I'm so angry. Why can't my relationship with this person be changed? You can convince them. You can change them. God, why did I lose my job? God, why did I get in this accident? God, I don't know how I'm gonna pay for this. I don't know how I'm gonna pay for my medicine. I don't know how I'm gonna pay for my rent. I don't know how I'm going to provide food for my children. There are many things that can come into our lives that challenges us. God, I don't feel right. What is happening to me? Maybe you get the diagnosis that you were afraid. And yet in that time, did God abandon Nebuchadnezzar? No, God did not. God promised and held His promise true. Amen.

We can look at other parts of the Bible, other stories and see that God, what seemed like unfortunate, horrible, ridiculous circumstances, God was still faithful and did not beef us. The last thing that I see here in verse 37 is that Nebuchadnezzar's response to all of this is humility and gratitude. We can say that

Nebuchadnezzar again was a prideful man that God finally humbled and put him in his place. But if you look at the story, how does this apply to us here in 2024? How do you deal with people who are narcissistic, prideful? not humble. And an even deeper, harder question is, in what ways am I prideful? Where could I be more humble? Is it wrong to have pride? Let me ask you that. Or is pride just evil? I don't think so, but I think we easily look at pride and say, oh, what an arrogant person. And yet when I see, I'm proud of, for instance, I'm proud of this church for what we've been able to accomplish in the last year. Have you seen the fellowship hall? Have you seen the fascia? You realize it's sanded down, it's been dusted, and yet there's other parts that have been repainted. Those of you who aren't aware, we're repainting the whole exterior. Did you know that within the last year, we will have spent \$150,000 by the end of this month? \$150,000. That's counting the roof, that's counting the painting, that's counting the flooding that we have, that's counting the new carpet, a bunch of stuff. All that, of course, we give God praise for that. Okay, I'm not discounting. God, you made that happen. But God also, in a way, used you to also be able to be a part of that journey. And so while we are humble, we are also grateful. I think we take pride in what God has done. Amen. I'm proud of people who make a difference. I mean, I see people as you've come to church, you've become part of the church, or people change, you grow. I'm proud of you. Pride, though, if we rely on ourselves and take credit, that's where we run into trouble.

So I want to encourage you, go forth with humility. Allow God to work in your life. See what God can do and recognize that God is truly sovereign. The takeaway is that God is sovereign and in God, anything is possible. Our present circumstances may not be great. Just like Daniel, he was forced into servitude to serve many, many years to kings and people who had overtaken his people, kept him away. And in spite of that, God placed him to be a vessel. work for God. There may be times in your life right now where you have people maybe who are influential over you. You may not like what they do, you may not like what they see, or what you see, and yet sometimes God will say, I need you to minister to them. There may be situations in your life where you feel like you do not have control, and yet just remember, God is still sovereign. So may you stand firmly with God, just as Daniel did.

This week, I want you to reflect, where has pride been a barrier to your relationships, not just with God, but also with your spouse, your children, your neighbor, your boss, your neighborhood, whoever.

And lastly, I want you to serve or be a blessing to someone in some capacity every day this week. It can be as simple as writing a note saying, hey, you did a great job on the presentation or go help mow somebody's lawn, whatever it may be. Go do something for the Lord. Next week, we've talked about King Nebuchadnezzar today, who had a bit of arrogance and pride in with him, thought he couldn't control it, and he couldn't.

Next week, we're going to look at another story, King Belshazzar, who also had some pride. And we'll see what was the outcome. We see the same two rulers, but different endings. So Bill's going to lead us in that story next week.

Let's go ahead and pray. Father in heaven, thank you Lord for you are good and your mercy endures forever. Forgive us Lord of our sins, our shortcomings. We pray that Lord help us in all that we do. Help us to be the faithful ambassadors you've called us to be, much like Daniel, Lord, wherever we go, wherever we live and wherever we serve. In Jesus name, everybody said. Amen.

Grace and peace everybody.