

The Hard Way

Daniel 4



Sermon Series: Finding True Courage

I. The University of Affliction

- Why do we have to learn the hard way?
- It is because of **pride**.
- Pride is about our glory instead of God's, and it puts us on the throne instead of the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 14:1-3 (NIV)

- ¹ *The fool says in his heart,
“There is no God.”
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.*
- ² *The LORD looks down from heaven
on all mankind
to see if there are any who understand,
any who seek God.*
- ³ *All have turned away, all have become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.*

The University of Affliction (cont'd)

- Why it is that no one seeks God?
- It's because of pride.
- Notice that God is looking down, but people aren't looking up.
- That's why no one seeks God on his own, apart from the working of God's Spirit.

II. Nebuchadnezzar's Tip-Off (Dan. 4:1-18 NIV)

- ¹ *King Nebuchadnezzar,*
- *To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth:*
- *May you prosper greatly!*
- ² *It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.*
- ³ *How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.*

Daniel 4:17 (NIV)

- ¹⁷ “‘The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.’
- Many biblical scholars believe that the dream described here in chapter 4 took place about 30 years after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the fiery furnace.

III. Daniel's Translation (Daniel 4:19-27 NIV)

- ²⁷ *“Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: 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.”*
- Daniel was a man of God, and men of God deliver the message of God-regardless of its content.

Daniel's Translation (cont'd)

- 2 Chronicles 18:13: *“As the Lord lives, what my God says, that I will speak.”*
- It isn't easy to speak God's words before your colleagues at work, your neighbor down the street, or the kids at school.
- Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. *It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die.*

Daniel's Translation (cont'd)

- It was John Trapp who said, *“Truth must be spoken however it is taken.”*
- Daniel had the courage to tell Nebuchadnezzar the truth-but Nebuchadnezzar didn't have the courage to repent.
- He chose to stay in his sin and to keep himself on the throne of his life.

Daniel 4:33 (NIV)

- ³³ *Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.*
- Nebuchadnezzar has had his opportunity, but it passed him by.

IV. Nebuchadnezzar's Turnaround

Daniel 4:34-37 (NIV)

- ³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.
- His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.
³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Nebuchadnezzar's Turnaround (cont'd)

- ³⁶ At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. 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.** And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Nebuchadnezzar's Turnaround (cont'd)

- Nebuchadnezzar emerged from seven years in the pasture glorifying God.
- That's the mark of a changed man.
- Thomas Watson said that glorifying God consists of four things: **appreciation, adoration, affection, and submission.**

Nebuchadnezzar's Turnaround (cont'd)

- There is a strong note in Nebuchadnezzar's mouth and heart that rings of deep submission to the sovereign God.
- The last line explains the necessity of those seven long years with the cattle. V.37, "*And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*"

Nebuchadnezzar's Turnaround (cont'd)

- One of the proofs that Nebuchadnezzar was genuinely humbled is also in v.37. Nebuchadnezzar stated that “...*everything he does is right and all his ways are just.*”
- There's no sense here of resentment or bitterness toward God. He fully accepts what God did to him.

Nebuchadnezzar's Turnaround (cont'd)

- Psalm 119:71: *"It is good for me that I was afflicted."*
- Psalm 119:67, *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your Word."*
- No bitterness, no seething resentment, just an acknowledgement that the good and sovereign God took him to the woodshed-and he's a better man for the discipline.

The Teachable Way

- Psalm 119:9-12 (NIV) describes the teachable way:

- *⁹ How can a young person stay on the path of purity?*

By living according to your word.

*¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.*

*¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.*

*¹² Praise be to you, LORD;
teach me your decrees.*

The Teachable Way (cont'd)

- A teachable heart is neither stubborn nor obstinate, and it refuses to argue with the Creator.
- Teachability is characterized by a quickness to hear and a propensity to listen.
- A man or woman without a teachable spirit is doomed-they cannot grow.

The Repentant Way

- Thomas Watson said, “By delay of repentance, sin strengthens, and the heart hardens. The longer ice freezes the harder it is to be broken.”
- The repentant heart is a heart tender to the things of God, responding quickly to the convictions and reproofs of the Holy Spirit.

The Obedient Way

- “Judas heard all Christ’s sermons.”
- Romans 7:15 (NIV), *“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”*
- There is a battle to obey because sin still lives in the believer.

The Obedient Way (cont'd)

- The key here is not to make a bunch of resolutions to live a moral life.
- The key is to call out to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to teach you obedience.
- And what happens if we fall short? He rescues us-time and time again.

Invitation

- Is there a sin you need to repent of today?
- Do you need to ask God to help give you courage to speak for him?
- Do you need to ask God to help you become more obedient to Him?