

# Pride Goes Before a Fall

by Denis Lyle

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*The sermon explores the dangers of pride through the story of Nebuchadnezzar and emphasizes the necessity of humility and reliance on God's sovereignty.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 16:18, Daniel 4:37, Philippians 2:10, James 4:6

**Topics:** "Gods Sovereignty", "Pride And Humility"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the story of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion, emphasizing how pride led to his downfall and how God humbled him to bring him to salvation. The sermon highlights the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty and the consequences of pride, using Nebuchadnezzar's experience as a powerful example of God's ability to humble the proud and bring them to repentance.

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## Transcript

Reading: Daniel 4:1-37 PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL It was December 7th 1941 when Mitsuo Fuchida a proud and militant Japanese Commander led the attack on Pearl harbour. But his brilliant military career ended with the defeat of Japan and the close of the war. Returning to his home village near Osaka he took up farming. One day Fuchida was summoned to Tokyo to testify in the war crime trials. As he got off the train he was handed a booklet. He was intrigued by the title. "I was a prisoner of Japan".

It was the story of Jacob De Shazer, the Doolittle raider who was converted to Christ in a Japanese prison camp while reading the Bible. Fuchida was aroused from reading the incident and he went to a bookstore and bought a Bible. When he went home he began reading it. "every night I read the Bible", he said. "I read while plowing in the rice fields. One night I read that Jesus died and that he prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,"I realised I was one of them for whom Jesus prayed."

At the age of 47 on 12th April 1950 Fuchida received Christ and began a new life. Though later asked to consider heading Japan's Air Force as Commander in Chief, Fuchida turned down the invitation and spent the rest of his life travelling in Japan, U.S.A and Canada sharing what God had done in his life. Now Nebuchadnezzar's conversion was no less dramatic. Here we have an official Babylonian document recording the conversion experience of Nebuchadnezzar who was one of the cruellest monarchs in of history.

Here was a man who came to know God in a personal way and who was so thrilled about it that he not only wrote his personal testimony but instructed that it be sent out to all the nations of the known world.

My, no one is beyond the reach of our Sovereign God. No man can shut God out of his life or put himself in a position where God cannot speak to his soul. Now in telling us about God's personal dealings with him Nebuchadnezzar speaks of his second dream. In (Ch 2) we have the dream of the image.

In (Ch 4) we have the dream of the tree. Let me give you a breakdown of it. In (4:1-3) we have The Introduction: actually its a Conclusion and we're going to leave these verse's to the end. Chronologically, these verses belong to the end of the chapter because they grow out of Nebuchadnezzar's experiences which are recorded in the following verses. From (4:4-18) we have the Revelation of the Dream: in (4:19-27) we have the Interpretation of the Dream: and in (4:28-37) we have the Consummation of the Dream.

Notice then: (1) THE DREAM RECEIVED This dream came abruptly, unexpectedly (4:5) and it frightened the king because it seemed to be an evil omen, it seemed to portend an impending catastrophe. Now there are several things I want you to notice about this dream: Notice: (a) THE PERIOD OF IT: Look at (4:4) The Hebrew word for "rest", means "to grow green, to be covered with leaves". This was a period of prosperity and peace for Nebuchadnezzar. He had subdued nation after nation, never lost a battle but now his battles were over.

His official affairs were running smoothly. He was in control of everything and he was totally self-satisfied. I mean who would dare rise up against this man (a) (b) THE PROBLEM OF IT: One night the eternal God sent into the heart of the king a dream that shook his peace of mind and security and the old king was never the same again. If you glance at (2:6-7) you will see the Problem REVEALED: Had Nebuchadnezzar not learnt from the past Had the king forgotten the events recorded in (Ch 2) The "wise men", of Babylon were not able to help him with the "dream image", nor are they able to help him with the "dream tree".

My, is the king's reaction not typical Old Nebuchadnezzar kept going to the wrong place to get the answers. Often men become troubled and in their fear what do they do They run to an unsaved psychiatrist or tune into a talk show host or consult a lawyer or politician, but they will not go to a true servant of Christ who can bring the Word of God to bear on their situation! "But at the last Daniel came in". (4:8) Now that's the Problem RESOLVED: Remember Daniel had been working for the king a long time.

He was a man of God who had won the respect of this pagan king. Probably Daniel had witnessed to Nebuchadnezzar through the years. But this king was too big for God. I imagine there were many times when Daniel prayed on his knees before God, "O God, I know it would be a miracle but do something for this wicked king that I serve. Somehow get hold of his heart and save him. Lord, what a testimony it would be if Nebuchadnezzar got saved". Vance Havner the U.S.A preacher used to say that some of his messages were like time bombs... sometimes they didn't go off until a long time later.

My, one of Daniel's time bombs was about to go off, one of his prayers was about to be answered. You see, when Daniel came in the king told him that he knew the spirit of the holy gods was in him. Three times in this chapter we are told that (4:8, 4:9 4:18) That was just a pagan way of saying that God was evident in Daniel's life. You see, if the Lord is evident in our lives people will know it. We won't have to tell them, we won't have to wear a sign claiming that God is in residence.

The king recognised that Daniel was God's man, one who knew how to get hold of God in prayer! (a) (b) (c) THE PARTS OF IT: For this dream had two main parts. (1) The Hugh Tree: in (4:10-12) and (2) The Heavenly Watcher: in (4:13-16) Can you see 1. The HUGH Tree: \* The SITE of this Tree: "the midst...

earth". (4:10) \* The SIZE of this Tree: "height was great". (4:10) \* The STRENGTH of this Tree: "was strong". (4:11) \* The SUSTENANCE of this Tree: "meat", (4:12) \* The SHELTER of this Tree: "beasts... it". (4:12) So if you can picture a Huge Tree that is big: beautiful and bountiful then you are beginning to see what Nebuchadnezzar dreamed. (2) He dreamed also about: 2.

The HEAVENLY Watcher: Look at (4:13) This was an angel of God appointed to work in the kingdom of Babylon. (10:4-20) We never think of the angels when we come to worship do we But they are looking on. Indeed this is one of the reasons why Christian ladies ought to have their heads covered in public worship. Paul says in (Eph 3:10) that God is using the church as an object lesson for angelic beings both good and evil to teach them something of His manifold wisdom. We never think of the angels when we come to worship do we But they are watching us and when a woman comes into a gathering for worship with her head covered she becomes to the angels an object lesson of submission to Divine Headship.

God is showing the redeemed community to the angels. God is saying, "I will show you in another company that I have redeemed headship in action". But lets back to Daniel and notice what this angel is doing! \* The ADVENT of the Watcher: (4:13) \* The ANNOUNCEMENT of the Watcher: (4:14) The tree was to be cut down. It was destined for a fall! Its stump however would be preserved, the tree would come back to life. There would be a restoration. Now do you see what struck terror into the heart o...

Giveth... Setteth... "Now this is a restatement of the great theme of the book of Daniel, the Universal Sovereignty of God. "There is a God in Heaven... the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men". My, God is still on the throne! (2:28 4:25) On the morning of the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was describing to his commanding officer his strategy for that day's campaign. He said, "We'll put the infantry here, the cavalry over there, and the artillery in that spot. At the end of the day, England will be at the feet of France, and Wellington will be the prisoner of Napoleon".

The commanding officer responded, "but we must not forget that man proposes and God disposes". With typical arrogance, the little dictator pulled his body to its full five feet two and replied, "I want you to understand Sir, that Napoleon proposes and Napoleon disposes." My, from that moment Waterloo was lost, for God sent rain and hail so that the troops of Napoleon could not manoeuvre as he had planned and on the night of the battle it was Napoleon who was prisoner of Wellington, and France was at the feet of England.

Do you know why "There is a God in heaven... the Most High ruleth... "God is Sovereign. God is the final authority. This is the Universal Sovereignty of our God. (1) (2) THE DREAM PERCEIVED For God gave Daniel understanding as to the meaning of this dream but it was not a simple matter for God's servant to reveal the interpretation to the king. For the context of: (a) THE PAINFUL CONSTERNATION: Daniel is dismayed, indeed he is silent for one hour. Look at (4:19) Can you imagine the thoughts that were coursing through his mind "How will the king react when he hears this dream is a prophecy of judgement upon himself What about the kings spiritual need" My, it is quiet evident that Daniel loved this king, but now God had revealed to him the future of this king, through this tragic, terrible dream and Daniel was undoubtedly troubled when he said, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries".

So for one solid hour Daniel stood before the king and said nothing. Can you imagine a preacher standing before a congregation and saying nothing for a full hour My, Daniel was concerned and burdened for the kings soul! Are you concerned for souls without the Lord Many years ago in London there was a large

gathering of noted people. Among the invited guests was a famous preacher of his day, his name was Caesar Milan. A young lady played and sang charmingly and everyone was thrilled.

After her performance Milan went up to her and graciously but boldly said, "I thought as I listened to you tonight how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefited if your talents were dedicated to His cause. 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 can cleanse you from all sin." That young lady was so angry with that preacher that she stomped her feet and walked away. As she was leaving he said, "I mean no offence.

I pray that God's Spirit will convict you". Do you know what happened That young lady went home, but she could not sleep. The face of the preacher appeared before her and his words rang through her mind. About two o'clock in the morning she got out of bed, took a pencil and piece of paper, and with tears rolling down her face, Charlotte Elliot wrote these words, " Just as I am without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me And that Thou bidst me come to Thee O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Charlotte Elliot came to Christ, because Caesar Milan had a love and burden for souls. Away down there in Babylon Daniel was concerned for the king for there was his painful consternation, that was followed by: (b) THE FAITHFUL EXPLANATION: My, Daniel gives us a superb pattern of how to preach the judgement of God to people. It needs to be done with a true concern, a broken heart, pointing out the consequences with mercy. Do you see what Daniel was experiencing He was experiencing what every true servant of the cross experiences.

My, there are times when God lays a joyful message on your heart, its a joy to preach on heaven, on the Lord's return, on the happy day of reunion, but there are times when God exercises our hearts and stir's our souls to preach on judgement: on hell on current issues like ecumenism, the Romeward trend, the charismatics. Times when we must come down hard, and some believers don't like it, thats why some preachers fear their congregations and water down the truth. W. P. Nicholson said to a young preacher, "Don't give away one inch of the Truth for its not yours to give away".

My, Daniel was faithful for here he faithfully explains the dream. Notice he does three things. Firstly: 1. The TREE is IDENTIFIED: Now often in the Bible "tree's", symbolise various things. For e.g.; a tree can represent Christendom (Matt 13:31-32) Judgement: (Gal 3:13) a Man: (Ps 1:3) But look at (4:22) My, there was no possible way for Nebuchadnezzar to miss this. These words are so reminiscent of Nathan's words to David, " Thou art the man". (2 Sam 12:7) Daniel's five words must have shook the world of the king, "It is thou O king". (4:22) 2.

The TREE is NULLIFIED: Look at (4:23,25) Now do you recall Nebuchadnezzars first dream Do you recall that in (Ch 2) the judgement of God is to strike the Dream Image, will here in (Ch 4) the judgement of God is to strike the Dream Tree and the king was that tree! He must be cut down and left in the field until "seven times", (4:23) or seven years have passed. Now don't miss what God is saying to Nebuchadnezzar, He's saying, "because you have not recognised that it is I the Most High who really rules over human affairs I am going to turn you into an animal.

You are going to have the heart of an animal and your lifestyle will be that of an animal". Did you know that are mental disorders in which an afflicted person thinks he becomes an animal The illness is known as Lycanthropy, and it gives rise to all kinds of legends such as "The Werewolf". What an experience the king was going to have. He would actually cease to live like a man and would live like a beast for seven years! So 1. 2. 3. The TREE is GLORIFIED: Look at (4:23) God's judgement was not going to be total, for the

tree was going to be banded about with iron and brass.

In the ancient world this was done to keep a felled tree from splitting, thus making it possible for the tree to grow again. My, God still had a purpose for Nebuchadnezzar. This was judgement, yes but it was mingled with mercy. How very like our God, for even in "wrath He remembers mercy", and some of us would not be here this... but for the mercy of God, indeed it "is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed". (c) THE NEEDFUL APPLICATION: (4:27) This is good preaching is it not Do you see what Daniel is saying "Stop sinning, live righteously, show mercy to the poor".

Daniel was simply saying, "O king you need the Lord in your life". Now let me pause here to show you the great lengths that our long-suffering God goes to, to bring a sinner to Himself. Do you recall Elihu's words in the book of Job (Job 33:14-24) God spoke once to Nebuchadnezzar in the matter of the image (Ch 2) Then God spoke twice to the king, showing how easily He could overthrow his purposes in (Ch 3) but now God speaks a third time to the king! In (Ch 2) God speaks Straightly to the King!

In (Ch 3) God speaks Sternly to the King! In (Ch 4) God speaks Severely to the King! For the Lord brings him right to the dust! My, will God have to do that with you Do you think that you can fool about with the Lord and get off with it This king didn't for notice: (3) THE DREAM ACHIEVED The things Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about were fulfilled. Look at (4:28) Yet God was long-suffering, for did you notice (4:29) The Lord waited one full year before executing judgement! The Bible says, " God is long-suffering to usward not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance". (2 Pet 3:9) Yet at the end of 12 months the kings heart is still unchanged for can you see here: (a) THE PRIDE OF THE KING: Look at (4:30) Humanly speaking there was every reason why the king should take pride in Babylon.

Its Size: its Splendour: its Security had to be seen to be believed! The city was surrounded by a system of double walls, comparable to a six lane motorway, these walls were 85 feet high, comparable to an eight story building. The top of the wall was used as a roadway for chariots. Eight gates named after the gods of Babylon gave access to the city. The famed Ishtar Gate opened onto the Processional Way, an ornamented street leading to the temple of Marduk, one of fifty temples within the city.

The palace of Nebuchadnezzar also adorned the city and was proudly called by the king, " The Dwelling of Majesty". Within the palace area were "The Hanging Gardens", considered by the Greeks to be one of the seventh wonders of the world. Finding satisfaction in a job well done is certainly legitimate, but the kings response to the beauty of Babylon was something else. For he spoke with pride, arrogance that amounted to a defiance of God when he said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built" In his heart there was no willingness to acknowledge that the God of heaven had given him all he had.

My, did you know that pride is number one on God's hate list "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him... a proud look". (Prov 6:16) The book of Proverbs hits the issue of pride hard. " Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord". (16:5) " Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall". (16:18) " When pride cometh then cometh shame". (11:2) If we summarise all the Old Testament proverbs, we could easily do it with one key verse from the New Testament, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble". (James 4:6) My, are you filled with pride With a sense of your own importance Or do you acknowledge freely that you have nothing except what you have received from God (1 Cor 4:7) God hates pride, and pride goes before a fall for look at: (b) THE PUNISHMENT OF THE KING: " The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon

Nebuchadnezzar...

"(4:33) My, when God wants to humble a man He can do it quickly and thoroughly! Why did God do it To teach humility! God brought him low that he might look up. In the palace he was Looking Around like a fool, in the field he was Looking Down like an animal, but now at the end of his days he is Looking Up for salvation, (4:34) what a finale, saved by good looks for do you notice here: (c) THE PRAISE OF THE KING: Do you see those three words in (4:37) "praise, extol, honour...

"they are active verbs indicating continued action. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar continued praising God long after his restoration, and that would hardly be the action of a pagan. Now lets back quickly to the opening verses. The king is converted so what have got in (4:1-3) 1. A ROYAL PROCLAMATION: Here's an official Babylonian document recording the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar! It almost reads like a Pauline epistle "Peace be unto you... " Do you know what happens when God blesses and saves a man That man becomes evangelistic!

I mean the king wants to tell everyone about the Lord's dealings with him. My, how awful it would be if an angel saw you and Nebuchadnezzar in glory and that angel said, "You with all your light and privilege, didn't not tell people about the Lord as Nebuchadnezzar did". Are you evangelistic Are you enthusiastic I do like a man who gets excited about God and His dealings with him. 2. A SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATION: Of what the Lord Jesus said in (Lk 12) "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth".

Life does not consist of the things we accomplish or the projects we complete. Why Because we not are in control. God is in control. My ... Nebuchadnezzar had accumulated more than anyone else in his world, more than a hundred Donald Trumps. But he learned that life does not consist of all of the things we have accomplished and accumulated! All of these things can vanish overnight! Tell me: where are you spending most of your time, energies, effort, creativity, and priorities Where are you spending that time John says, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever". (1 Jn 2:17) 1. 2. 3.

A PROPHETICAL REVELATION: For one day as this text seems to foreshadow all Gentile World Power will be humbled and brought into submission to God! Today our world in its pride does not acknowledge Christ, but the day will soon dawn when "every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord". (Phil 2:10) Until that day dawn may we dare to be a Daniel!

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