

(Daniel: The Man God Uses #4) Fragrance of Christ

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life filled with Christ, which becomes a fragrance that permeates among men and is an overflow of ministry to God.

Duration: 1:14:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 2:14

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the testimony of King Nebuchadnezzar from the book of Daniel in the Bible. The preacher highlights how Nebuchadnezzar, the king of all the earth, openly shares his experience of going insane for seven years. The preacher emphasizes that this testimony is significant because it shows a change that occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's life. The preacher also mentions that the story in Daniel chapter 4 and 5 provides clear pictures that can be understood when one knows what to look for.

Transcript

Daniel, Tape 4, Chapter 4, Fragrance of Christ We can trust your holy spirit. By your grace, our eyes might be opened afresh unto our Lord Jesus. Deliver us from our own ideas, and we pray through your word we might see the Lord.

We thank you in advance for the light that you're going to give us. You've promised that you would sow light as seed is sown. And so we just pray for a great harvest of light tonight.

And we ask it in the all-prevailing name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. Okay, I'll ask you to open, please, to Daniel, Chapter 4, if you would.

Good evening. Come on in. Where we have been and where we're going, we're looking at Daniel, the first six chapters.

But I remind you again, we're not studying the book of Daniel. If we were studying the book of Daniel, we'd have a different emphasis, and we would spend more time on some of the details that we're jumping over. But we're looking at the first six chapters in order to see the man Daniel.

In fact, not only the man, but the men. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In the book of Daniel, there are three things that, no matter what your system of theology and what your background, anyone who studies the book of Daniel must see these three things because they're so prominent and they're so often repeated in the book.

You can't study Daniel and not realize that God is doing something in the book. And what he's doing, it's almost in every chapter. He's making himself known.

He's making himself known. I really believe that you have in picture form one of the greatest books on evangelism, missions, soul winning, right here in the book of Daniel. Because Daniel covers the whole age of the Gentiles from the time that he wrote all the way until the Lord Jesus comes again.

And during all that time, God is saying, I'm going to be doing something, and what I'm doing is making myself known. The second thing that Daniel emphasizes is history. It's a book of history.

When you read Daniel, you're reading about the Babylonians, and the Medes, and the Persians, and Greece, and Alexander the Great, and Antiochus Epiphanes, and Rome. And then you look down the corner of time until you see ten other nations, and Antichrist, and Exalted Horn, and all the rest, until the Lord Jesus comes again. It's a book of history.

And what I think God is saying is this, all through history, and on the platform of history, I'm going to be making myself known. That's what God does, he makes himself known, and he does it in history. The history of individuals, and the history of nations.

That's all that's going on now. God is making himself known, he's using history. Then it seems like the Holy Spirit homes in, in these six chapters, on four men.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And it's as if God is saying, I will make myself known. I will make myself known in history, and I'll always use men like these.

They're special men. They're quality men. They are the instruments that God uses.

And so what we've been doing is homing in just on them. What kind of an instrument is this? Through whom God will make himself known in history. I've suggested that the chapters go in a progressive order.

In other words, the first characteristic is in chapter one. The second characteristic is in chapter two, and it follows the first characteristic. You can't put chapter two first.

You've got to experience chapter one, in order to experience chapter two, in order to experience chapter three, four and five I think go together, in order to experience chapters four and five, and then finally it climaxes in chapter six. So everyone builds on the next. So far we've looked at the first three principles.

Let me just get those before you, and then we'll move on to our new material. The first principle is in chapter one, verse eight. Daniel purposed in his heart.

And the literal there is Daniel set his heart. And the three Hebrews with him. The first principle, the secret of their lives, as instruments of God was this, that one day they set themselves, not to be defiled, but just to please God.

They set themselves, they put their wills on the believing side, and they said we decide, we choose. The only thing that matters anymore, is that God is happy. You see why that comes first.

That's the very beginning. That is the most cardinal, the most fundamental, the most basic thing in any instrument of God. That's the ones God looks for.

He's looking for a people who will set their heart just to please Him. Then in chapter two, after your heart is set, then what? Chapter two, remember, was the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which was really the word of God. And in that dream, God unfolded the revelation of Christ.

Remember the dream? It was about an image, about a stone, about the wind, and about the mountain. The image represented this world system, with a golden head, and silver shoulders, and a brass belly and thighs, and iron legs, and iron and clay toes, and so on. This world system, the flash.

And then the Bible says a stone, made without hands, came out of heaven. A little stone. And it struck at the foundation of that image, this world system.

And striking at the frail foundation, that whole thing began to topple. And as that began to topple, the wind began to come and take away the debris, blow it all away. And then that little stone, the Bible says, began to grow and it grew, until it became a rock, and the rock became a hill, the hill became a mountain, and the mountain filled the whole earth.

And the message of that dream was so simple. It's New Testament. It's the message of grace.

That the Lord Jesus Christ must replace this world system. That's the message of it. And the way He's going to come in the nations, is the way He comes into our heart.

So the principle is the same. The Lord Jesus comes in, He breaks down the old, He blows it away, and then He grows. And that's the message.

And so God looks for a people who will set their hearts first to please Him, and to that people, He begins showing Himself. And then the transformation. The old falls down and blows away, and the new begins to grow.

Until pretty soon Christ, the little stone, has grown and fills the whole landscape of the life. It's the Christ-filled life. Chapter 1, Christ is chosen.

Chapter 2, Christ is revealed through the Word until He fills everything. Last week we looked together at chapter 3, illustrated with the fiery furnace. And I suggested that the message of the chapter is Christ manifest.

See, Christ chosen, chapter 1, Christ revealed, chapter 2, Christ manifest, chapter 3. God was dealing with Nebuchadnezzar. He's making Himself known. He's always making Himself known.

How is He going to reach Nebuchadnezzar? Something turned His head. Something got His attention. Something arrested Nebuchadnezzar.

It wasn't the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That's how we generally study this chapter. What great faith they had.

That didn't impress Nebuchadnezzar. He thought they were stupid to have faith like that. It wasn't their surrender that impressed him.

He thought they were dumb to yield their bodies, to be burned. But something caught his attention. The Bible tells us what it was.

It was their liberty. You see, when He tied them up, that was the last hold this world system had on them. And when He saw that they were free, the Bible says Nebuchadnezzar was astonished.

He was looking in that little peephole and he was looking in that furnace. And he saw that they were free. And Christ began to manifest when He saw people not in bondage to this world system.

And then the second thing that turned His head was when He saw them walking in fellowship with the fourth man. That always is how God reaches the heathen. Now, I remind you again, these three men in the fiery furnace, those godly men were just living.

The last thing on their mind was evangelism. The last thing on their mind was soul winning. They weren't trying to be used by God.

They weren't trying to evangelize and win Nebuchadnezzar. They didn't even know God was working in Nebuchadnezzar's heart. All they knew is they had chosen to please Christ.

Christ had been revealed as the little stone and was changing them. And He was growing and blowing away all the dirt from their lives. They knew that they could walk in liberty and in fellowship with the Son of God.

That's all they knew. And they didn't have an idea that Nebuchadnezzar was looking in that little people and God was dealing in his heart. God was using them to win this man.

All they knew was they were enjoying the Lord. Well, that's missions. That's outreach.

And in most cases, you're not even going to be aware of it. Alright, that brings us tonight then to the next principle which in one sense is an extension of the manifestation of Christ. But there's a difference.

It's sort of a broader look at the same principle. You see, the manifestation of Christ, whether you're here in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, usually expresses itself in a crisis experience. In other words, in a furnace.

Some dynamic experience. You watch a Christian in the furnace and you can add your own furnace, whatever it is. But you watch a Christian when he suffers loss, for example.

The loss of a loved one. Or some personal loss. Or when his creature's streams dry up and his resources dwindle to nothing.

You watch a Christian in the furnace when circumstances begin to crush him. When he's sorely tried or persecuted. When he's under pressure.

You watch a Christian when he's ready to die. And in those crisis experiences, you say, wow, Christ is manifested. And usually it comes out like a full relation, a bright light, when there's a crisis.

When there's a trouble. When there's a furnace. But the principle we're going to discuss now, which flows from that and is really an extension of that, it's the same thing without the crisis.

It's the same thing without the furnace. In other words, what we're going to look at now doesn't need the accident or the storm or the disease or the tragedy or the trial, the trouble, the furnace in order to put Christ on display. I've suggested that the fourth principle is in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 illustrates it positively.

Chapter 5 illustrates it negatively, but it's the same principle. Now, before I state the principle, I'm going to tell you how I'd like to approach it. I think we've said it a number of times.

As you know, the Old Testament is exactly the same as the New Testament. Here's the difference. One gives the truth in story form, in pictures.

The other gives the truth in doctrinal form, but it's the same truth. It's exactly the same, except in the Old Testament you have it in pictures. I like to call it seed form, fully developed form.

The Old Testament is seed form. The New Testament is fully developed form. And I've noticed in my study of the Bible that sometimes it helps to see the picture first and then go to the doctrine and see it explained.

Other times it helps to get the teaching first and then to go back to the picture. And I really believe in chapters 4 and 5 It will help us to go to the doctrine first, to state it, and then go back to the picture. Do you ever see an artist's picture on display? Especially some of this modern art.

I don't know if you're into modern art, but sometimes I just have to scratch my head and wonder if the artist really knew what was happening. I don't know. But you look this way and that way and you tilt your head all kinds of ways.

You try to make something out of it. There's an eye over here and something else over there. And you try to figure it out.

Then somebody comes along and tells you what to look for. And then you say, Oh yeah, I see it. Once you know what to look for, then you look at the picture and there it is.

Well, I'm suggesting that Daniel 4 and 5 are clear pictures. And I think you'll see that when we get to it. But it's a lot easier to see that picture if we know what we're looking for.

So I'm going to ask you to turn to the fully developed statement of the same truth. It was interesting to me last week that Laura mentioned this passage at the close of our study. It wasn't surprising.

It was interesting, but it wasn't surprising because this is the counterpart of Daniel chapter 4 and 5. 2 Corinthians is actually the counterpart of the first six chapters of Daniel. 2 Corinthians chapter 2, if you'll turn there please. And you'll notice in the context that we're leaving chapter 3 because we'll be talking about the manifestation of Christ.

And we'll be entering into this new phase in chapter 4 and 5. I'm going to read in chapter 2, 2 Corinthians 2, from verse 14. I'll ask you to follow along please. But thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ and manifests through us, see there's the manifestation of Christ, the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. See we're talking about witnessing here. To the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.

And who's adequate for these things? We're not like many peddling the Word of God, but as from sincerity as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God. Now here you have exactly in doctrine what Daniel gives you in picture. I want you to notice several things.

Look at chapter 2, verse 15 please. It says, We are a fragrance of Christ to God among men. Now get that order.

It's important. You see the Apostle Paul describes the man God uses as a sweet fragrance, a sweet smell, an aroma. His life is filled with Christ.

With the beauties of the Lord and the merits of the Lord and the excellencies of the Lord. His character, His person. Everything about the Christian that God uses.

The one that set his heart on Christ. The one that's seeing Christ in the book. The one that's walking in liberty.

The one that's walking in fellowship. Everything about that person smells of Christ. That's the fragrance in his life.

So as in Daniel, the Apostle is teaching the Christian the same thing. The Apostle is teaching that the Christian in order to make Christ known has only to live. And his life becomes a blessing.

Now what's the direction? He's an aroma of Christ to God. He's not trying to minister to men. He's filled with Christ and that aroma is for God.

It's an aroma of Christ to God. He's not trying to fan the fragrance around the city, around the neighborhood, make sure everybody smells the fragrance of Christ. He's just living unto God.

And his life is filled with Christ for God. For nobody else. Just for God.

Verse 14 calls it the sweet aroma of Him. The sweet aroma of Him. It's an aroma of Christ to God.

But notice, it's among men. Verse 14 He leads us in His triumph in Christ and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every furnace. See it doesn't say in every furnace.

In every place. You don't need the furnace for this. You don't need the dramatic experience for this.

This is in every place. Every place the Christian goes the fragrance of Christ goes. And the fragrance of Christ is just rising up to God blessing His heart.

And all around you smell that. You see, it's to God, but it's among men. And so all ministry is indirect.

No such thing as a direct ministry to men. All ministry is indirect. You don't go and try to make a difference among men.

You don't go and try to make God known. Only God can make God known. Man can't make God known.

No man is a missionary. You won't find that in the Bible that men are missionaries. God's a missionary.

Men are missionary channels. That's not just words. That's another direction.

God is the missionary. And God uses men. But our ministry to men is always indirect.

And it's an overflow of our ministry to God. God is looking for people who will minister to Him. Whose hearts are filled with Christ for Him.

Just to satisfy Him. Then there's an overflow. And wherever they go, others see that life and they smell that life.

That aroma is detected by everyone in every place. Notice in verse 15 and 16. We're a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

To both. To the one, an aroma from death to death. To the other, an aroma from life to life.

Who's adequate for these things? This is the history of the man God chooses. The woman God chooses. He lives under Christ.

He lives Christ under God among men. Some men smell Christ and respond and live. And they say, praise God for such a life like that on the earth.

Oh, that fragrance. Oh, that aroma. Praise God for that person.

The others smell the same life and they reject it. And to them it's an aroma of death. With that in mind, I'll ask you to go back to Daniel chapter 4. Because I believe that's exactly what you have in chapters 4 and 5. We have now left the manifestation of Christ and now we're moving into the fragrance of Christ.

In chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 1, Daniel chose Christ. In chapter 2, Daniel saw Christ revealed through the Word. In chapter 3, Christ was manifest.

And now in chapters 4 and 5, the fragrance of Christ begins to permeate among men. In chapter 4, we have the story of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion. The fragrance of Christ that came through Daniel led Nebuchadnezzar to Christ.

In chapter 5, we have the story of Belshazzar's judgment. The judgment of Babylon. The same fragrance.

Same man. Daniel walks into one life and he gets saved. Daniel walks into another life.

Same smell. Same fragrance. And he's lost.

And I think that's what these two chapters are about. Together, they present that other characteristic, the next characteristic. We'll call it the fragrance of Christ.

Again, it's like the manifestation of Christ, but this is in every place. You don't need the furnace to show it for. Alright, let's look at chapter 4. Once again, I hope you've been faithful to read the chapters in advance.

That really helps because they're so long. And since we're not doing a book study, we're jumping over so much. And so if you can get those facts ahead of time, it'll help.

I'll try to select enough verses, though, to carry the story so that if you haven't done that, you won't be too lost. God is busy making himself known, and in chapter 4, God is continuing to strive with Nebuchadnezzar. Through the record, we found that he used men, like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

One watered, one planted, one plowed, but God's the one that gave the increase. You notice chapter 4 is written and told by Nebuchadnezzar himself. It's a testimony.

He's telling about the last 8 or 10 years of his life. So the whole chapter, if you don't understand it, you have to realize he's looking back on what happened to him. To what God did in his life.

You can tell he's a changed man already by the first words. May your peace abound? Is this Nebuchadnezzar talking? You see, the only record we have of him, it was anything but longing for their peace to abound. In chapter 1, he's threatening to tear them limb from limb if they don't interpret his dream.

He's going to pull their arms out. In chapter 1, he's going to take their heads off. In chapter 2, he's going to pull their arms out.

In chapter 3, he's in a rage because they won't worship him in his image, so they're going to throw him in a fiery furnace. And now he sounds like the Apostle Paul. In verse 1, To men of every language, all peoples, nations, may your peace abound.

What happened to Neb? What happened? What changed him? This cruel tyrant. Now he's so concerned over the people he once oppressed. Well, something did happen.

And something very wonderful. Nebuchadnezzar begins, verse 2. It seems good to me to describe the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. Underscore, if you don't write your Bibles, at least in your heart.

Verse 2. What the Most High God has done for me. Underscore that. For me.

Because when you read this testimony, you'll wonder why he said, Look what God did for me. If I were writing this testimony, I'd say, Let me tell you what God did to me. Because he really went through it.

The man went crazy. He lost his mind for seven years. Wandered around like a senseless animal.

Lived wild. Ate grass. Drank the dew of heaven.

You know a change come over him. One reason you know a change come over him. Remember, he's the king of all the earth.

And he's giving this testimony. Can you imagine President Bush giving a testimony like this? I want to share with the American public how I lost my mind for seven years. What kind of future do you think he'd have? And here's the king of all the earth, standing up, unashamed, saying, Let me tell you what God did for me.

Not to me. For me. He made me insane.

And for seven years I was crazy. And I lived like a wild animal. God did something wonderful for Nebuchadnezzar.

Something to him, in order to be for him. To his little world, his world system, his kingdom. The whole testimony is about this proud king, this worldly king, and how he was brought low.

Now, from the Bible record, you only get a few hints of how amazingly proud this man was. Ancient Babylon was one of the greatest glories this world has ever known. Some of the wonders in it are still amazing as people study them.

And almost all of it can be traced back to this man. See, Nebuchadnezzar had this idea. He was so proud.

He had this idea. Of course, Daniel helped him with that idea by interpreting some of his vision. But he had the idea, the whole world needs me.

Glance at chapter 2, verse 37. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, the glory. And wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, he's given them into your hand, has caused you to rule over them all.

You are the head of gold. And Nebuchadnezzar believed, and even in this chapter, where he's pictured as a tree, and the branches are reaching out and feeding and protecting and housing all the people of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar was so proud, he believed, the whole world needs me.

The whole world needs me. And they're going to bow down to me. When Babylon was finished, chapter 4, verse 30, he just stood there and gloated.

The king reflected and said, Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? Look at the pride. I did everything for the world, they need me. I did it for me, for my glory, my might, my pride.

Secular history has unearthed some writings of Nebuchadnezzar. I don't want to bore you a long time, but I've jotted down, there was an inscription found in 1862 by the banks of the Euphrates River, and it's presently in the British Museum. I'm not going to read all 619 lines, but here's a little piece.

Evidently, Nebuchadnezzar had a lot of these written and circulated. I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the mighty lord, the chosen of Merodot, the worshipper of Nebo, the king vicar, who judges without injustice, who has fought day and night for the rebuilding of the pyramid and the tower, has spread abroad the glory of Babylon. I am the minister of the gods, the eldest son of Nebopalazar, king of Babylon.

He himself created me, the god who begat me of my mother. Merodot is the great god who made me. Nebo, his son, sustains me.

Merodot, the firstborn, the highest of the gods, hears my prayers, accepts me. I have spread abroad his worship. I have changed inaccessible hills into roads for carriages.

I have punished the wicked. I have chastened the enemies of my country. I have captured them in great number.

I have divided the spoil of their cattle. I have heaped together before my god in the city of Babylon silver and gold and precious metal. And he goes on and on and he names all the gods and all that he did that no

one else could do to enrich his gods.

And it's an amazing thing. In other words, he was saying, here's his pride. He said, the whole world needs me.

I do this for me. Even the gods need me. And all I do is for them because they need me and I've enriched the gods.

That was his pride. Anyway, through the fragrance of the Christ that came out of the life of Daniel, God's going to reach this man. He tells his story, chapter 4, verse 4, I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.

Now, that was a dangerous situation. At ease in my house and flourishing in my palace. And he said, I saw a dream and it made me fearful.

Now, when he had the dream, of course, he didn't understand it. And remember, the dream is the word of God. God is reaching for this man.

God is striving after Nebuchadnezzar. Remember in chapter 2, when he had his dream, he required all the wise men to first tell the dream and then interpret it. He did that so they wouldn't lie to him.

He had come to the place where he said, I want reality. I don't want lies anymore. Well, now, chapter 4, verse 7, just glance at it.

He says, I related the dream to them. In other words, this time, he tells them the dream and all he wants is the interpretation. Looks like they've learned their lesson.

And they said, we don't know. They're not about to fake it. But God expects more from the man of God and so, according to verse 9, when he calls Daniel in, he goes back to his old ways.

He says to Daniel, you tell me the dream and the interpretation. See, he didn't require that of his own magicians. But he required that from Daniel.

Here's the dream, beginning at verse 10. Now, there were visions in my mind as I lay on my bed. I was looking.

And behold, it was a tree in the midst of the earth. Its height was great. The tree grew large and became strong.

Its height reached to the sky. It was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all.

The beasts of the field found shade under it. The birds of the sky dwelt in its branches. All living creatures fed themselves from it.

I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed. And behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows.

Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the birds, the beasts, flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

Yet leave the stump with its root in the grounds, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field. And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

Let his mind be changed from that of a man. Let a beast's mind be given to him. Let seven periods of time pass over him.

The sentence is by decree of the angelic watchers. And the decision is a command of the holy ones in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whom he wishes and he sets over it the lowliest of men. Then, I'm just saying it in my own words, first he saw a tree, bigger than any tree on the earth.

And have you ever seen a sequoia tree? I mean in person. Have you? I've heard of them. I haven't seen them.

Largest tree I ever saw was in Northern Ireland in the mountains of Morin, the cedar of Lebanon. And boy, that was massive. But the tree that he saw, the Bible says, rose up to the sky.

You might have saw a sequoia 300 feet high or something, but you didn't see one like this. Try to picture a tree that went all the way to the sky and its branches spread all over the globe, all over the earth, so that the branches were shade and provision for every living thing. That which is on the ground and all the birds of the air and so on.

That was his first part of the vision. A giant tree. Second part was scary.

In the second part of his vision, an angel descended from heaven saying, Chop it down. Chop it down. Chop down that tree.

Just leave the stump with its roots, but chop down the rest of the tree. And then there's a mixed metaphor. The image changes in the third part and the tree that was chopped down became like a beast of the field, an animal.

And for seven years, that beast was to live in the world eating grass and drinking dew. Its hair would grow like feathers and its nails would grow like eagle's claws. Now, Nebuchadnezzar didn't have a clue to what that meant.

All he saw was the tree. Chop it down. This tree becomes an animal.

The animal has to go out and live for seven seasons or seven years. What does it all mean? Step by step, God's man explains the vision. Verse 22.

The tree, it is you, O king. Chop it down. Yes, Nebuchadnezzar, you've got to be chopped down.

See, you're proud, you're independent, you're arrogant. The only thing that's changed from chapter 2 to chapter 3 to chapter 4 are the metaphors, the figures of speech. See, in chapter 2, the world system was this great image of gold and silver and brass and iron and iron and clay.

It was this world system. And the kingdom of God had to replace the kingdom of the world. And then in chapter 3, you had this golden image.

Same thing. It's the world system. And now in chapter 4, you have a giant tree.

But it's the same thing. Nothing's changed. It's this world system.

And just as the little stone had to destroy the image, now the angel with the axe comes in and says, I've got to take down the tree. Nothing's changed. It's exactly the same principle.

Before God can be known, the tree has got to come down. Before God can be known, this world system, the image has got to fall down. The old must be replaced.

Leave the stump. What does that mean? Well, of course, that's the grace of God. He's not going to take you all the way down.

He's not going to destroy you. You're still going to have a chance. But you better not play with that chance because there's a brass ring around the stump and they can pull it out at any time.

And he's saying, I'm going to give you another chance. I'm going to cut you down. But I don't delight in cutting you down.

I'm not cutting you down to cut you down. I don't smite in order to smite. God has salvation on His heart.

God's trying to save this man. And in order to save him, the tree has got to come down. And then Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar, since you're such a great tree, since you think you're something and the world needs you and God needs you and everybody needs you, since you think you're something, God's going to show you what you really are.

He's going to show you how much you depend upon Him. He's going to reduce you to reality. And you'll see that before God, you're just an unreasoning beast.

And you depend upon Him for food and drink. And you're going to have to go through that object lesson until you learn that you're just a creature depending upon God. For seven years you'll lose your mind.

Now remember, God's not humbling him below what he really was. He's humbling him to what he really was. A creature dependent on God for everything.

Daniel 2, chapter 4, verse 26. He says, Your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize it's heaven that rules. Well, if we could digest that principle too.

Your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize it's heaven that rules. God was planning to give him everything back. It reminds me of Ezekiel 17, verse 24.

It says, All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord. I bring down the high tree and exalt the low tree. I dry up the green tree.

I make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord. I will perform it.

After Daniel explained all these things, verse 27 says, Therefore, O King, may my advice be pleasing to you. Break away from your sins by doing righteousness. Well, the Bible says a whole year went by.

Verse 28, All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon. The king reflected and said, Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself

have built as a royal residence by the might of my power for the glory of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven saying, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared sovereignty has been removed from you.

You will be driven away from mankind. Your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle.

Seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever he wishes. A whole year goes by. Then seven years go by.

Finally, we read verse 34. At the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven. My reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him who lives forever.

Glorious day when he raised his eyes toward heaven. Then everything else made sense. He saw he was just a beast, a dependent creature, and God was everything.

Look at his testimony at the end. Verse 37. I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven.

All his works are true, his ways just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride. He should know.

Now let me back off a little. We've been talking about Nebuchadnezzar. You see, the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar is so great and so gripping, it's hard to get our eyes off Nebuchadnezzar.

See, in chapter 1, when I studied chapter 1, in order to know God, my heart cried out, oh, if I could be like Daniel and those three men. I want a purpose in my heart just to please him. Then I came to chapter 2, and I read about how God showed Christ to Daniel, and I thought, oh, if I could only be like Daniel.

If God could take this word and show me the Lord Jesus and replace the old kingdom with the new and blow all the trash away, that would be so wonderful. And I came to chapter 3, and I found myself reaching to be like Sadrach and Meshach and Abednego. Oh, I can only be like them.

Then I come to chapter 4, and I find myself identifying with Nebuchadnezzar. See, chapter 1, I want to be like Daniel. Chapter 2, I want to be like Daniel.

Chapter 3, I want to be like Sadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Chapter 4, I say, yeah, you're right, Lord, I'm a proud tree. I need to be chopped down.

I need to see that I'm just a creature. And that misses the point. We're not studying Nebuchadnezzar.

We're studying Daniel. And that's why I want to take you to the New Testament first, in order to get the principle, because Daniel is so low-key in this chapter, you almost don't see him. He almost disappears.

If you were looking for a passage on soul winning, on evangelism, there's a good chance you wouldn't choose this chapter, because he's so low-key. And I believe that that's one of the beauties of this chapter, because in this chapter, clearly, God's the missionary and not Daniel. Daniel's so incidental.

The most conspicuous thing about Daniel in this chapter is his absence. He's not there, hardly. So let's go back and let's look at this chapter in order to see the fragrance of Christ, and now may God give us eyes to see.

When did Daniel get involved in all of this? Well, clearly, when he was invited in. The king called him up and said, Hey, Dan, I've got some problems. I don't understand the word of God.

Would you come and help me? And so Daniel came in. How long was he there? I don't know, ten minutes? How long did this take, to interpret the dream? This is the tree. This is the chop.

This is the stump. This is what it means. This is the animal.

And this is what's going to happen. And Nebuchadnezzar, at that point, don't forget, he wasn't saved yet. And I don't think he invited Daniel to have tea.

I think he said, Thank you very much. Now you're dismissed. You leave.

In effect, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar the same thing he had learned himself. Things don't change. He said, Nebuchadnezzar, your kingdom's got to go.

I learned that Christ, this little stone, has to come in and take down the kingdom. Replace it with his own. That's got to happen to you.

What God told you in chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar, about the stone, He's telling you now about the tree. It's got to come down. It's all so simple.

I want you to see this. Daniel walks into his life, spends about 10 minutes or 15 minutes or give him an hour. I don't know how long.

And then he walks out of his life for the next 7 or 8 or 10 years. He's gone. No more Daniel.

May I suggest that in real ministry, the man God chooses is so often like that. He finds a man that fits his heart, that is seeing Christ, that's walking in liberty. And that man walks in the life of somebody and out of the life.

He's gone and the fragrance of Christ lingers. The fragrance of Christ is not gone. Daniel's gone.

But the fragrance of Christ is still there. And 8 years later, and that's why we have this testimony, Nebuchadnezzar reflected back and he's the one that wrote down, Oh yeah, Daniel. I remember Daniel.

Daniel walked into his life, spent 10 minutes in his life, walked out of his life for years. And that became the testimony. How much we can learn from this man Daniel.

I remember so many guilt trips that I went on because someone passed out of my life for years. Then I feel guilty. Oh my, I should write him.

You know, I should call him. Maybe I should get in contact with him again or somehow initially show him that I care or something. They just came in, they passed through, they went out and they're gone.

Or I came in and I met him and then it was like it's gone. And no more contact. I used to carry guilt about that.

Notice in the dream, there was a man with an axe. Man had to come chop down the tree, the angel of the Lord. The man with the axe had the responsibility of chopping down that proud tree.

And I remind you, it wasn't Daniel. Daniel didn't have the axe. I call attention to that because of so much emphasis these days in our soul winning and our witnessing and our helping people.

We get this idea that we have the axe. And we're the ones that are supposed to bring down the proud man. We are not.

God's the one that's got to bring them down. Daniel didn't try to chop Nebuchadnezzar down. Daniel gave the word, gave the warning and walked out of his life and stayed out for a decade.

I wish God would write this in our hearts that we're not co-choppers with God. That God's the one that has the axe. Somehow we think we got a nag on the sinner.

And we just got to constantly bug him and finger his sin and tell him how bad he is and try to humble him and try to bring him down. Daniel didn't touch the axe. Daniel didn't touch the axe.

Nebuchadnezzar's tree had to come down and Daniel knew only God could bring it down. Only God could bring it down. And Daniel just gave the simple truth in what I'm living.

Living in fellowship with God. I think it's instructive that Daniel didn't press Nebuchadnezzar for a decision. He didn't start naming many sins.

This was a wicked man. He could have gone in there and said, look Nebuchadnezzar, here's how it is. And he could list a whole catalog of sins that this man was guilty of.

I think it's interesting too that he didn't try to follow him up. We hear so much about follow up today. I think an awful lot of what man calls follow up, God calls follow up.

And we just follow him up rather than letting God do his work. Daniel didn't try to use the axe. Daniel didn't try to bring him low.

Daniel didn't try to cut him down. Now when you think of it, Daniel had quite an opportunity here. How many of us are ever going to get a chance to sit in the Oval Office with the king of kings? That's what he did.

And he sat down there and told him the truth. Wouldn't you think that Daniel would have called all his friends and said, now I really pray that I'll say the right words and that I'll have an opportunity to go back and all that and keep contact and follow up. Daniel wasn't paranoid about those things.

He just lived. And when he was asked, he answered. And when he wasn't asked, he went on.

All those years, amazing. Didn't try to ramrod anything down his throat. Didn't blast him for his idolatry.

Didn't try to convict him of pride. Just let God do his work. It's important to see Daniel in this chapter.

It's hard to see him because he's hardly there. It's important to see him. He's not some computer spouting off Bible verses to Nebuchadnezzar.

He wasn't some salesman trying to sign up a new client. When Daniel knew what Nebuchadnezzar was going to go through, Daniel was real. Now look at his heart.

Chapter 4, verse 19. He says, My Lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries. I'm sure that must have touched Nebuchadnezzar.

Boy, that's love. That's his heart. Remember, this is the man that made him a eunuch.

No bitterness here. Yes, he only has ten minutes in his presence. But it's genuine.

He said, you're going to have to go through some terrible things. You're so proud. God's going to have to bring you low.

And honestly, he said, my heart goes out to you because I know what you're going to have to go through. And I wish that would be on your enemies instead of you. I'm sure later, Daniel admitted like Nebuchadnezzar did.

I want to tell you what God did for me. Later, Daniel was glad that he went through that. There's some very proud people, and it's very moving to realize what they have to go through.

That doesn't keep us from loving them and feeling sorry for them that they have to go through that. And Daniel just showed his heart. See, this is all part of the fragrance of Christ.

Daniel was just a man who knew God and lived God, and when he was asked of a reason for the hope in him, he gave it. Daniel never initiated. Daniel never tried.

He didn't plow his way in. He didn't look for opportunities. He just lived.

And then he moved on and walked out of his life for many years. And at the end, Nebuchadnezzar looked back and praised God for Daniel. And praised God for the fragrance that came into his life.

Let me just give one little by-path here. The Lord Jesus told us this is how it would be when the Holy Spirit came into the world. He said, I'm going to send the Holy Spirit to you, and when he comes to you, he's going to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

And notice what he said. Of sin, because they believe not. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father.

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. What do you mean by that? He wants to think the Holy Spirit is going to come into my heart, and then use me to tell somebody he's a sinner, and tell somebody he's going to hell, and enable me to preach the gospel. That's not what he's saying.

He's saying when the Holy Spirit comes into your life, he's going to change you in such a way you're going to live by faith. And when you live by faith, others will see that and be convicted of unbelief. You're going to live a holy life, but you're not going to rest in your holiness.

And others are going to see you not taking any credit for your holiness, because you have the righteousness of Christ. And when they see that, they're going to be convicted of righteousness. They're going to see Satan's a defeated foe in your life.

The prince of this world is judged. And you're going to be walking in victory. And when they see you walking in victory, they're going to be convinced.

That's how he convinces. So when the Holy Spirit comes, we walk by faith. We embrace the righteousness of Christ.

We live in victory, and the prince of this world is judged in our lives. They see that. And that's the testimony.

I tell you, it's tremendous to see this fragrance of Christ here in chapter 4. How could Daniel witness to Nebuchadnezzar without gimmicks? How could Daniel witness to Nebuchadnezzar without special meetings, without a high sales pitch, or a clever presentation? Just a godly man walking through, that's all. That's how God makes himself known. The other day I went to the post office on Broadway.

I don't know who it was, but some lady was there before I was. I didn't see her, but I smelled her. She left her fragrance right in the pathway.

And I knew somebody had been there before me. That's how it is when there's a Christian. He just sort of leaves the fragrance of Christ.

In that connection, I love 2 Kings 4, 9, the Shunammite. Remember the Shunammite and her husband? They were looking out the window. In chapter 4, 9 it says, She said to her husband, Behold, I perceive that this is a holy man of God that passes by us continually.

You see, from where Elisha lived to the school of the prophets, he had to go right by her house. And all that man did was walk. He walked by her window.

And she kept walking every day. There goes that man again. He didn't even know he was being watched.

And she said, I perceive a holy man of God is passing by us. And so she got saved. She invited him in and she got saved.

Same thing in Acts chapter 4, verse 13. Remember when Paul and John got arrested there? It says, As they observed the confidence of Peter and John. They understood that they were uneducated and untrained men.

And they were marveling and began to recognize that they had been with Jesus. There's a testimony when you have been with Jesus. You can't walk with God and not leave a fragrance.

And I'll be honest with you, you can give spiritual laws all day long with no effect. And you can take them through Roman roads and every other road with no effect. But you can't live in an unbroken union with your God and not leave a fragrance.

That's what Daniel did. But as we noted, that fragrance was not always pleasant. To Nebuchadnezzar it worked out.

But to others, fragrance of death unto death. Very briefly, look at chapter 5. The story of Belshazzar, the great grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. This is the story of the same fragrance.

And yet this was rejected. To make it a little shorter, let me give you five facts from this chapter. And sort of take the principles of the fact and you'll see life as it is today.

The first fact is from verse 1. Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles. He was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. Tremendous party.

Notice verse 4. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. You notice those are the same elements that were in that image. Wood accepted.

In other words, they weren't about to have their world system come down. They had a great party. And they were living it up and praising the gods of this world.

This system. From that we get this truth. Life is a party.

That's the attitude that they had. Second fact. Illustrated from the next verse.

When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold, silver vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar's father had taken out of the temple, which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives and concubines, might drink from them. They brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God, which was in Jerusalem. The king and his nobles, his wives and concubines, drank from them.

Now I'm not making this up. That was a deliberate attempt to mock God. To take the vessels from the holy temple and drink wine out of them and bring them to this party.

And the reason I know that is because of verse 22 and 23. Daniel tells him that it was a deliberate attempt to mock God. Alright now, put those two facts together.

Life is a party. God is mocked. Fact number three, verse 25.

Now this is the inscription that was written out. Mene, mene, tekel, abharsin. This is the interpretation of the message.

Mene, God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. Tekel, you have been weighed in the scales and found deficient. Perez, your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and to the Persians.

The Bible doesn't tell us this, but history does. While this party was going on, the Medes and the Persians had already taken the Euphrates River and had diverted its waters. See, the waters went under the wall of Babylon, into Babylon, so they had this continual water supply.

That was part of the wonders that Nebuchadnezzar had done. The enemy had already taken the waters and diverted them, leaving an empty channel under the city. While this party was going on, the army of the Medes and the Persians were already in the city.

They were already there. The enemy was at the door, and within hours, Babylon was to be overthrown. Three facts together.

Life is a party. God is mocked. The enemy is at the door.

Right? Now it is today? That's exactly what you see here. Fact number four, verse five and six. Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace.

The king saw in the back of the hand that did the writing. The king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him. His hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.

Put all the facts together. Life is a party. God is mocked.

The enemy is at the door. And the handwriting is on the wall. Right? Nothing has changed.

This is exactly what it is today. Fact five, verse seventeen. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, keep your gifts for yourself.

Give your rewards to someone else. However, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. Life is a party.

God is mocked. The enemy is at the door. The handwriting is on the wall.

And only the godly understand. Only the godly know. I used to think that was some strange language.

You know, some alien language that God wrote on the wall. It wasn't. It was their language.

Aramaic. They understood that. They knew exactly what that said.

They just didn't know what it meant. That's always the problem. People read the Bible, they know what it says.

They just don't know what it means. And so life is a party. And God is mocked.

The enemy is at the door. And the handwriting is on the wall. And only the godly understand.

Once again, amen on Daniel. The fragrance of Christ. Nothing is different here than what was done for Nebuchadnezzar.

The same opportunity, the same man, the same fragrance, the same life passed before both men. For one it was a savor of life unto life, the other to death unto death. Daniel didn't crash the party.

Daniel didn't say, oh boy, I wish I could get to this party, have a chance to witness to some of these folks. He did exactly what he did at the other time. He just lived.

And then he waited until he was invited. He never initiates. But he's always ready to give an answer.

To those that ask of him, the hope that's in him. It always seems like they remember the man of God in a day of trouble. And they always seem to wait until the end.

Daniel is not impressed by his flatteries. Verse 14, verse 16, King says, I've heard about you. I personally have heard about you.

Verse 17 he says, keep your gifts for yourself. Give your rewards to someone else. Do you realize from Daniel's standpoint what Daniel knew? Here's a king, he doesn't know the enemies under the city.

He's only got an hour to live. And he stands there as the king, if you obey me, if you do this for me, I will give you, I'll exalt you in my kingdom. From Daniel's point of view, that's a laugh.

What are you going to give me? It's on fire tonight. You can't impress me what's going to burn up tomorrow. What kind of rewards are those? This man of God had lived all these years.

A godly life, laying hold, he just said, you take your rewards or give them to someone else. I don't care about these things that are going to burn up. Belshazzar is so concerned about what's written.

He knew the words, numbered, numbered, weighed, divided. He just didn't know what it meant. He's concerned with what's written.

Daniel says, no, that's the wrong thing. See, you're all, what's the writing, what's the writing? He says, don't be so stupid. Don't you want to know whose is the hand? Why are you so concerned with what's written rather than who's writing it? And he begins to call attention to the one that's writing it.

Verse 18. O King, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. And because of the grandeur which he bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations, and men of every language feared and trembled before him.

Whomever he wished he killed. Whomever he wished he spared alive. Whomever he wished he elevated.

Whomever he wished he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly. He was deposed from his royal throne.

His glory was taken away from him. He was driven away from mankind. His heart was made like that of beasts.

His dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized the Most High God as ruler over the realm of mankind.

That he sets over it whomever he wishes. Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart even though you knew all this. Get the impact of that.

He's saying you've had a fragrance in your life. You saw your great grandfather get saved. You knew it.

It was there. And it didn't affect you. But you've exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven.

And they've brought the vessels of his house before you. And you and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them. You've praised the gods of silver and gold and bronze and iron and wood and stone.

This system which do not see here or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life breath. And at that point it smelled of alcohol.

And your ways you have not glorified. He says stop worrying so much about what's written. And know who did it.

The God that has been trying to reach you. The God that brought in your father, grandfather and put that testimony before you. Your wife called me in because I had a reputation.

You said I've heard about you. This God in whom is your life breath. He holds your breath.

You have not honored him. History tells us after they dismissed Daniel, they went back to their party. Good illustration of the fact that fear is not salvation.

His knees were knocking together. That didn't mean he got saved. The enemy came in, overthrew him and he died.

Daniel was no different to Belshazzar than he was to Nebuchadnezzar. He just walked in when he was called. Gave the true testimony and walked out.

For one it was life, for one it was death. Some years ago I learned a principle. I'm still learning it but it's been real precious.

That was applied to our family. And it was worded in these words. No guilt, no glory.

I feel sorry for any first born in any family. And I felt real sorry for my first born. Because he's the experiment.

And we're going to learn how to be parents on him. And we're going to do it the right way. And I was determined to make a man of God out of my son.

And he's already forgiven me many times for this. But I really put it on him. And all of the standards, everything I found, my son had to do it.

And then one day God opened my heart and my eyes. Through a brother from South Carolina, James Hatch. To the truth, no guilt, no glory.

And what the principle is, is this. That God hasn't called me to make men of God out of my sons. Or women of God out of my daughters.

He's called me to be a man of God. That's it. He's called Lillian to be a woman of God.

That's it. If my children go bad, no guilt. God has called me to be a man of God.

If they go right, no glory. He that builds a house has more glory than the house. All God has called me to do is live before him.

No guilt, no glory. That's exactly the same in your ministry. No guilt, no glory.

God hasn't put on you the responsibility of eternal souls.

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