

HUMBLE YOUR HEART IN TIME

Daniel 5: 1-30 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Humility is a very tough lesson for us all to learn, even for those of us who already know Jesus. God designs that we keep on learning humility all our lives. Growing up in a home with normal, good parents, doesn't mean that we as their children always think, "How wise and wonderful my parents are! They are so amazing! How can I be so blessed!" No, sometimes we truly think our parents are mixed up, on the wrong track, behind the times, just plain mean, and the list of options goes on and on. I've yet to meet any young person who always agrees with his or her parent's decisions, rules, discipline and always says, "My parents are the greatest parents ever and they are doing such a great job of teaching me to be humble. Praise the Lord!" No, we all tend to be a bit more human than that, and often we can be very critical of the ones who love us the most. We tend to get cross-threaded with our parents because they see things a bit differently than we do; they have a different perspective. God wants to prevent us from facing far more difficult trials and stronger discipline out in the world. When we have been without discipline training at home, we may face severe humbling later in life. Humbling ourselves to receive discipline at home, strange as it may seem, is really a kind mercy of God, to keep us from becoming Belshazzars, having to learn humility the hard way—and sadly, perhaps, having to learn it in dying, too late to change.

When God leads us as Christian young people and adults through humbling experiences after we have left home, He often prompts us by His Spirit as He did with Elijah, the prophet. And now humbling experiences God ordains for us are much harder and much more difficult to understand than learning at home. The Lord asked Elijah to do a humbling thing. I Kings 17: 4 records God's command to Elijah. "You shall drink from the brook Cherith, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." Imagine the thoughts and imaginations of Elijah. "Lord, You are making me live out in the wilderness by the brook Cherith. There's water there, but who is going to feed me? Did you say ravens? Imagine Elijah thinking outloud with God and quoting scripture to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I don't mind You using birds to bring me food, but do you have to use ravens—those big ol' unclean black DIRTY evil birds of prey? Did You forget what Your Word says in Leviticus 11: 13-19. "And these you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, the kite, the falcon of any kind, **every raven of any kind**, the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind, the little owl, the cormorant, the short-eared owl, the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, the stork, the heron of any kind, **the hoopoe**, and the bat." Pretty humbling, having unclean dirty birds that have been feeding on

garbage at the dump, having them bring all your meals, not on wheels, but on wing. But learning discipline can get tougher. Moses had to humbly learn on the back side of the Midian Desert for 40 years, Paul had to humble himself on the back side of the Arabian desert for 3 years alone. Martin Luther had to humble himself to be hidden by his friends in the Wartburg Castle like the Jews when they hid in secret passageways and homes from Hitler. John Knox was chained for a time to the oar of a Spanish galley slave ship. He might have rather learned any humbling lessons back at home with his parents. Some young people decide going into the Army or Navy or Air Force or Marines or Coast Guard is the key to learning humility—not learning at home where your parents even discipline you at times by lovingly paddling your canoe. So off to the races many young men go and some young ladies too, only to wake up in basic training, wishing they could get out and go home to learn humility training there. Here is a direct quote from one recruit in Boot Camp. “Armageddon. That is the best description I’ve got. By the end of the first of nine weeks, if given the choice between a pit of hungry alligators and a room with our Drill Instructors, it would be no hard decision. A swimmin' and a slashin' we would go.” Don’t ever think humility training at home is where it’s hardest. To obey your parents or receive their discipline is the easiest way God could have ever designed humility training, treating us as sons and daughters.

The man whom we are going to learn about tonight, should have learned some wonderful humility from his daddy, King Nebuchadnezzar, but like the prodigal son, he had an addiction to wine and he was a drunkard: he had no fear of God despite what his father went through, being humbled by the Lord, and learning from the Lord. For whatever prideful reasons, Belshazzar never bowed his mind, soul, spirit, will or body to the Lord. Hear me when I tell you. Whatever humbling lessons God is out to teach you from, receive the lessons gratefully. Swallow your pride, receive discipline, and receive reproof now while there is time before God starts writing on your wall, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin/Parsin.” Tonight, I want us to consider what finally leads God to say, “Enough! You have rejected the way of humility, choosing the path of pride and mocking and boasting and dishonoring Me.” What finally makes God say, “Enough, since you won’t humble yourself, I am done striving with you.” In the days of Noah, before the world wide flood killed all but Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives, God said in Genesis 6: 3, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.” I see at least **five ways** any of us can fill up God’s anger and wrath, and spit on His mercy until He says, “Enough, that’s it—today is your last day. It’s all over now—all she wrote—prepare to die.” What are those five ways?

SEEK TO SIN WORSE THAN YOUR PARENTS, AND GOD WILL HUMBLE YOU. (I.) There is a saying that is sadly true. Whatever we do as

parents in moderation, our children often will do in excess. What we do once in a while, our children may do all the time.” What we do as parents in tiny bites like a ground squirrel, our children will chow down on like elephants. King Nebuchadnezzar captured many of the vessels of gold and silver vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, when he also captured Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar had the disrespect of robbing the house of God, but at least he had the warped respect to place those sacred gold and silver vessels in the treasury of his god. (Daniel 1: 2) It wasn’t enough for King Belshazzar to drink wine in front of a thousand of his lords. He wanted to look fearless and strong. He wanted to mock the God of Israel. When Belshazzar started to taste the wine, he decided to upstage his dad’s disrespect of God. There in his own palace, in front of his lords, his wives and his concubines—they were his “live in sexual partners,” he didn’t marry, he ordered the golden Jerusalem vessels be brought. Then in verses 1-4, Belshazzar led his people in drinking from these golden cups and goblets. They all followed him in drinking wine and praising their Babylonian gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. It was bad, it was bold, and it was blatant blasphemy. God said, “Enough! You’re history tonight, Belshazzar.” Secondly,

FORGET THE GOD YOUR FATHER TURNED TO WHEN HE WAS DESPERATE, AND GOD WILL HUMBLE YOU. (II.)

In Daniel 5: 5-12, God said, “Enough, and He wrote Belshazzar’s future on the palace wall. Belshazzar went from boasting and mocking and drinking to turning stone sober. He turned pale, started trembling and his knees started knocking. The king’s wife, the queen, reminded her husband Belshazzar that apparently, he had forgotten the man who turned his dad, Nebuchadnezzar’s life around. How could Belshazzar ever forget Daniel? We need to double back to Daniel 4: 19-37, and pick up a second dream Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar’s father. Listen to the story! “This is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.” All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell

a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time (7 yrs) shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will.” Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?” At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.” How could Belshazzar erase 7 years from his memory? How could he forget the Hebrew wise man, Daniel, who ruled his father’s kingdom? Belshazzar’s wife, the Queen didn’t forget. She remembered Daniel. Perhaps her words brought the name and character of Daniel back to light for her husband. God will not shrink from proving the truth of James 4: 6—“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” And as Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 4: 37, “Those who walk in pride, God is able to humble.” Thirdly,

THINK YOUR POWER AND POSITION ARE THE KEY TO YOUR FUTURE, AND GOD WILL HUMBLE YOU. (III.)

Notice verses 13-17, When Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, notice what happened to him in verses 5, 6. His color grew pale, his thoughts alarmed him, his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.” But his wife, the queen told him, in verses 10, 11, “O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. There is a man who can help you.” She knew who could interpret the writing on the wall, but she had no idea how desperate the situation was. Both she and Belshazzar thought Daniel could interpret the words, that Belshazzar could pay him richly—making him 3rd ruler in the kingdom, and life would go on as normal. Daniel wouldn’t be bought off. He promised to interpret the meaning of the writing on the wall, which the king’s conjurers and magicians couldn’t interpret, but he turned down the gifts promised to him. Humble people know that power and position and more things are not the key to life. Daniel was about to interpret this writing on the palace wall

that still stood there in bold lettering. Turning down the king's gifts may have sobered Belshazzar and made him wonder. I believe Belshazzar perhaps now was beginning to feel like Pharaoh did when he was inside the walls of the parted Red Sea and he saw the walls of water starting to fall back in. I believe the words Belshazzar was about to hear from Daniel were soon to take place. There was no exit from God's judgment. Power and position were losing their glitter. Fourthly,

REFUSE TO HUMBLE YOUR HEART DESPITE GOD'S WARNINGS, AND GOD WILL HUMBLE YOU. (IV.)

As Belshazzar heard Daniel tell the story of his father in Daniel 5: 18-23, he saw the curtains closing on his future. Don't ever go this long stubbornly, refusing to repent when God is warning you. Don't ignore the history lessons God puts right before your eyes. Belshazzar was self-sufficient, bold, brash, sinful, proud, irreverent, & blasphemous, Now Daniel had his undivided attention. There was no way out. There wasn't! Fifthly,

LISTEN TOO LATE TO THE DIVINE VERDICT ON YOUR PRIDE, AND GOD WILL HUMBLE YOU IMMEDIATELY. (VI.)

Notice Daniel 3: 24-30. That night Belshazzar heard the pointed message of the writing on the wall. He was found wanting with God, and the kingdom of Babylon was moments from being history. Belshazzar made the command to clothe Daniel with purple, put a chain of gold around his neck and proclaim him 3rd in the kingdom. That night, ever since the moment the Lord wrote His sentence on Belshazzar and on Babylon, the drinking, dancing, debauchery and hilarity were all over. Lords and governors and the king himself were soon to die. They died as Belshazzar did die. Time had run out for him to humble himself. God's Spirit that night quit striving with him. But how did it happen? Inside the mighty walls of Babylon, everyone was safe, weren't they? No one is safe when God says, "Enough!" They're as vulnerable to God's divine verdict as a mouse eating cheese from a set trap. The trap snaps when God says, "Enough!" Without humbling ourselves in time, God's verdict becomes an eternal verdict, as Jesus' words in Matthew 7: 21-23 are an irrevocable, irreversible verdict, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you." God's judgment stands. But how? There was no large-scale attack upon the city. Many within the city were not even aware at first, that the city had been taken. The city was taken by diverting the waters of the Euphrates River that ran through Babylon under its huge walls. This allowed armed forces to wade under her huge thick defenses without a fight: The city fell by complete surprise. Half of the metropolis was captured before the rest of it was "aware" of the fact, according to Herodotus. The Medo-Persians diverted the waters of the Euphrates and by night entered the city through the dried up channel. Darius the Mede took the kingdom. Humble yourself now. Don't wait too late to humble yourself before God.