

Tell It Like It Is
August 10, 2014
Allen Power

Daniel Chapter Five

Opening discussion: **Show of hands, how many have ever done something dumb even though you were warned not to do it? Where did that habit of going against warnings start? What causes us to tend to ignore warnings? Do you tend to give a warning when you see a situation, or just stay out of it?**

Big Ideas: If God lays it on my heart to warn someone of the consequences of sin, how can I do it humbly, lovingly, but firmly? How can I share the grace of God in a way they'll receive it? How can I humbly receive warnings myself, when I need them? How does the way I live day to day make a difference in all this?

Daniel 5:1–6 (ESV)

1 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.

- **Who was Belshazzar? Anyone have a note in a study Bible?**
- While Belshazzar was having an orgy, the Medes and Persians were at the city gates!
- **Why do you speculate he would party under these conditions?**
- Some historical “back story...”
 - Babylon was thought to be absolutely invincible. It was surrounded by double walls, one of which was three hundred fifty feet high and eighty-six feet wide.
 - The city had been under assault by Cyrus. In anticipation of a long siege the city had stored supplies to last for 20 years.
 - The Euphrates River ran through the city from north to south, so the residents had an ample water supply. Belshazzar had a false sense of security...[that river would be their downfall. The Medes and Persians diverted the water. As the water] level receded the soldiers were able to enter the city by going under the sluice gate.

(Jon Courson's Application Commentary; and The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Warren Wiersbe comments:

So confident was the king that his fortress city was impregnable that he laughed at the invading armies. What a picture of our world today: judgment is about to fall, yet people are making merry and worshiping their false gods. “When they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them” (1 Thes. 5:3).

Matthew Henry reminds us:

Security and sensuality are sad [predictors] of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by judgments of God may expect to be wounded by them.

- **How does this story compare with our world today? What lesson might apply to us as individuals?**

2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.

- Let's talk about Belshazzar's sin. **First, how did he fail as a leader?**
- **How did he commit blasphemy against God? How was it DOUBLE blasphemy?**
- Verse six is almost like a cartoon. **If Belshazzar was so confident, how could he become so fearful so fast?**
- Someone look up and read Galatians 6:7-8.

Verses 7-15 (summarized):

- Verse seven: **Where did Belshazzar turn for help in response to the message?**
- He tried something else that many arrogant people resort to when they're in a jam because of sin. **What was it? How did all this work for him?**
- The Belshazzar's grandmother said, "Your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had this Hebrew official who could interpret dreams. His name was Daniel. He'll know!"
- Look at verses 11 & 12. **How did the grandmother describe Daniel?**
- Daniel was brought to the king.
- Question: **Why do you think God used Daniel to deliver this message? Why not just write it on the wall in words Belshazzar could understand?**
- When we see how God used Daniel, **what's the lesson for you and me? What gives us credibility to represent God to others?**
- Ironic that one minute Belshazzar is mocking and blaspheming the one true God and in the next he's calling for God's servant for help.

Daniel 5:16–17 (ESV)

16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.

- Verse 17 - **Why do you think Daniel declined the offer of a high position?**

- In verses 18-22 Daniel gives Belshazzar a lecture on the history of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar the king.
- Verse 18: **What does Daniel say about Nebuchadnezzar's greatness?**
- Verse 20: **What was Nebuchadnezzar's downfall?** V. 21: **What happened to him?**
- After Nebuchadnezzar hit rock bottom, **what did he finally acknowledge?**
- Daniel says to Belshazzar, *"You know your grandfather's story and YOU should have learned from it. But Belshazzar, you don't get it! You think you are greater than God... you've blasphemed Him...the very "God in whose hand is your breath..."*
- After the lecture came the message of judgment:

Daniel 5:25–28 (ESV)

25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN.

26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

- *"Belshazzar, the writing is on the wall: NUMBERED; WEIGHED; DIVIDED. Your days are numbered and your kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and Persians."*
- The story takes a strange turn here. **How would you expect Belshazzar to respond to this bad news? How DID he respond (verse 29)? What was THAT all about?**
- Let's compare Belshazzar to his grandfather King Nebuchadnezzar.
- Look back at chapter four and verses 34; and 36-37:

Daniel 4:34 (ESV)

Nebuchadnezzar Restored

34 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;

Daniel 4:36–37 (ESV)

36 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. 37 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.

- **What do you think? Was Nebuchadnezzar saved as a result of his confession?**
- Either way, **what immediate difference do we see between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar?**
- The enemy took Babylon without much of a fight, because the people were too drunk to fight.

- We're told, "the enemy came right into the banquet hall, and verse 30 tells us that very night Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede became the king. Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided between the Medes and Persians.

So, What's the Takeaway? Some questions...

- What lessons can we learn from this fascinating Bible account?
- **What is the lesson for someone who is as arrogant in their sin as Belshazzar was? We may be shaking our heads at him, but what's the lesson for US?**

Proverbs 29:1 (ESV)

He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck,
will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

- As followers of Christ, who may be put in a position of influence with those who are living a destructive lifestyle of sin, what can we learn from this story?
- **What gave Daniel credibility to warn Belshazzar about God's judgment of sin?**
- **How should we live every day in order to be used by God to speak into the lives of those living destructive lives of sin?**
- **What about our attitude toward those living in sin? What about our demeanor?**
- **If you know someone in a destructive lifestyle, how could you pray about that?**
- It's not easy to tell someone the hard truth and do it in love and humility.
- Finally, what if WE need a warning? Even as followers of Christ, there can be areas of our lives where we've become arrogant, proud, and dismissive of God's will.
- Will we be like Belshazzar and ignore the signs of destruction? Or will we see the "writing on the wall" and repent?