

FROM VAINGLORY

THE LESSON: DANIEL 4

From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness... Good Lord, deliver us.

Nebuchadnezzar was a Babylonian king who conquered Israel, looted the temple, and took Israelite captives back to Babylon as slaves in 605 BC. Among these captives were four young friends: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You've probably heard of these guys, and they are amazing examples of faith and devotion, but today we're going to focus our attention not on the heroes but on the villain.

Nebuchadnezzar was a despotic ruler. He demanded the impossible from his dream-interpreters and then ordered them all killed when they could not do what he wanted. Daniel intervened, making it clear to the king that God was the one who gave the interpretation. The king was pleased with Daniel, but this didn't change his heart.

Next thing we know, Nebuchadnezzar builds a gigantic gold statue and orders everyone to worship it on threat of being burned to death in a fiery furnace. So of course our heroes refused. Nebuchadnezzar was furious, saying, "What god is there who can deliver you out of *my* hands?" (3:15) Well, if you know the story, you know that God *did* intervene and miraculously deliver them out of the king's hands! After that, Nebuchadnezzar made a fine speech, but he still didn't change his ways.

Nebuchadnezzar had been shown the truth, but in his vanity and pride, he rejected God's claim on him. This "vainglory" is so common in our world! There are many examples of it in scripture and perhaps we have seen it in our own experience of life. But God keeps working, sometimes in very creative ways, to bring about repentance and restoration even where we least expect to see it.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Psalm 119:11 says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you". The At-Home Challenge during this unit is to commit a short passage of scripture to memory each week. If the suggested passage is too long, try picking out one verse or phrase that speaks to you particularly and commit it to memory. You will be amazed at how the words of scripture, stored in the heart, will return to you in the moments when you most need them.

JOEL 2:12-13: ¹²"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive: Receive our humble petitions; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us; for the honour of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen. (FROM PRAYERS & THANKSGIVINGS, BCP PAGE 58)

FROM VAINGLORY

DANIEL 4: **DELIVERED—THE HARD WAY**

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. ⁵I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. ⁶So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. ⁸At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream...

¹⁹Then Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, “Belshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! ²⁴...this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, ²⁵that 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. ²⁶...your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. ²⁷Therefore, 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.”

²⁸All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰and 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?” ³¹While 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, ³²and 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 shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” ³³Immediately 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.

³⁴At 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 honoured him who lives for ever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵all 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?”

³⁶At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendour returned to me. My counsellors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. ³⁷Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour 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.