

#225 "A Godly Confidence"

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There is nothing wrong with being a confident person; however, it does matter what or Whom we put our confidence in. Either our confidence is ultimately in God or in ourselves. One is faith and the other is arrogance, pride, and conceit. We need only look to one of the most powerful men ever to walk the earth to discern the difference, for it is a lesson he himself had to learn.

Daniel 4:28-30 says,

"All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of 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 and for the glory of my majesty?'"

Here we see Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, in all his glory and pride. His confidence was in what he himself had built, and he gave no credit to God for giving him the kingship and the kingdom. He believed that he built this great ancient empire by the might of his own hand and for his own glory. In his mind, there was no need to glorify God or thank Him because he was the center of the universe and the source of his own benefit. It can be very difficult to recognize dependence upon God and to give Him all glory, not just some for "helping." Either God is our all in all and the only sufficient One, or He is not. For Nebuchadnezzar, God wasn't even deserving of some glory, and he gave Him none.

God had a purpose for Nebuchadnezzar, and He knew that Nebuchadnezzar could and would praise Him if only he had his eyes opened. However, for a man of such great pride, it would take a great fall. Daniel 4:31-33 says,

"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, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and 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.' Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws."

Even before Nebuchadnezzar had a chance to finish his arrogant sentence, God passed judgment on the king. He took away the throne and took away his sanity so that he was like an animal, eating grass like cattle. All his peers saw what happened to the king, and a more humbling scenario couldn't have been conceived of. This lasted seven years until he realized that God was King and that he was merely a steward of God's earthly creation. Even his throne was a gift and blessing of God, not something he deserved or merited. It was God's ordaining, not his dictating, that held ultimate sway.

Daniel 4:34-35 says,

“But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward 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, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'”

It is interesting that Nebuchadnezzar was able to praise God first and then his reason returned to him. If he was totally mentally gone, he wouldn't have been able to pray. So even though he was acting like an animal, there was enough going on inside his head to still call out to God. God left him with enough mental capacity to understand and appreciate what it was like not to have the ability to release himself from this seven year bout of crazed behavior. When he was finally ready to acknowledge God as having all power, God let him have his sanity back. He learned that he couldn't dictate things to God and that there was an Authority higher than his own. He realized that he was nothing compared to God in terms of all possible aspects. He recognized a greater kingdom than his own, and he finally understood his dependence upon God, even for his own sanity, let alone for his throne. He understood that he was but a man and that God deserved his praise and worship.

Daniel 4:36-37 says,

“At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

There was no reason that the king's peers would allow him to rule again, but they did by God's grace. His counselors and nobles began to seek him out, realizing that he had great wisdom even if they didn't realize that it was God who was adding surpassing greatness to him. But Nebuchadnezzar realized just Who it was Who was giving him favor. He learned that God is just and not cruel, teaching him a lesson out of love for His glory so that he would glorify Him. The most important thing he learned was what he said last, that God is able to humble those who walk in pride. This is what separates those who are confident in God and those who are confident in themselves. The prideful and arrogant are wicked because they don't believe or acknowledge that God is able to humble them. They don't fear or respect Him, let alone glorify and worship Him. It is very tough to be a haughty, pride-filled person when being fully aware that God could make us bound up in a shell of insanity at any point should He see fit. He could take all our possessions away or afflict us with ailment after ailment. Because God is just and holy, He won't harm people for no reason. In ordaining these events for Nebuchadnezzar, God actually reached out to Him in extravagant mercy, laying it on thickly for seven years. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar repented and turned to God. If we need humbling as God's children, if we wrestle with believing that

we are fully dependent upon God, or if we struggle to submit our ways to Him, He will gladly show us the truth. The process may not be pleasant, but the end will be.

Confidence in self is always a phony confidence because the foundation is mere dirt. That, after all, is what man is made from (Genesis 3:19). Godly confidence, on the other hand, is an assurance not of one's own ability but of God's power working in and through His faithful and obedient children for His glory and not for our own. It is a boast not in man but in God, thereby giving Him all the glory. Nebuchadnezzar was confronted with this kind of confidence once before by Daniel, who stood in his fiery furnace unfazed by his commands. This minion, about to be executed, had more confidence than he did because of his God. That which had previously stirred Nebuchadnezzar to wrath (Daniel 3:19) now moved Him to worship. Indeed, there is a God who is more powerful than the king (Daniel 3:15).

May God rid us of any confidence that comes from the wrong place, for such is sin and glorifying only to self. May we be confident people because we are confident in our God. As Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge."