**The Fair Warning Against Pride**

**Daniel 4:1-27**

**Introduction**

“Pride is the only disease that makes everyone sick but the one who has it” (Source unknown). Benjamin Franklin said, “Pride is difficult to deal with. There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.” We all struggle with pride. It shows up in all places among all people of all ages. Preachers can be filled with pride. The relationship between husbands and wives is often hindered because of pride. The same applies to parents and their children. Displays of pride and arrogance have become common place among athletes. Performance and humility rarely go hand-in-hand.

In Daniel 4, we see clearly that world rulers struggle with the issue of P-R-I-D-E. This chapter contains an open letter from a man who learned all too well the humiliating effects of pride. King Nebuchadnezzar’s pride lifted him up to his downfall. He praised God for helping him to see this, and he wrote with the hope that others will take heed to his fair warning against pride. Although you are not ruling a kingdom, there is a lesson here for you. Pride threatens everything you hold dear. How can you avoid being lifted up to your downfall?

1. **King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream served as a warning that pride will lift you up to your downfall. (v. 1-18)**
   1. Nebuchadnezzar passed on an important lesson to all people. (v. 1-3)
   2. He explained that he was at ease. (v. 4) He was relaxing and living luxuriously in a place of contentment and security. Magnificent buildings surrounded him as symbols of his achievements. Peace was in the land. He did not feel any threats from outside forces. This king had it made…or so he thought.
   3. He had a dream that troubled him. (v. 5-9) His peaceful rest was interrupted by another dream. It is a wonder that the king ever tried to sleep, given his experience with dreams! He turned to his panel of spiritual advisors, but once again they were unable to help. Finally, he told the dream to Daniel.
   4. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a tree that grew tall in the midst of the earth. (v. 10-12)
2. The massive tree was situated as the center of attention. (v. 10) It towered above all the other trees.
3. It was strong and visible to all the inhabitants of the earth. (v. 11)
4. The tree produced beautiful leaves and much fruit. (v. 12) Its prominence and productivity were evident.
   1. He dreamed that a “watcher and an holy one” ordered the tree to be chopped down. (v. 13-17)
5. There was someone in heaven who was interested in what was taking place on earth.
6. It is noteworthy that no matter how gigantic the tree there was, the watcher and holy one came down!
7. This “watcher and holy one” is most likely an angelic being sent to deliver God’s message to the proud, arrogant king.
8. The holy one called for the tree to be cut down. (v. 14) The branches were to be cut, leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered. The animals would then run for food and shelter elsewhere.
9. They were to leave the stump and the roots. (v. 15) The reference to “bands of iron and brass” indicate that it was to be protected. The stump was to be wet with the dew that falls from the sky. It would have no protection from the elements. It would dwell with the beasts of the field.
10. The stump’s heart would be changed from a man’s heart to the heart of an animal. (v. 16) The metaphor changes from a tree to a man. The man would suffer a mental condition known as lycanthropy in which the person believes himself to be an animal. He would live like an ox eating grass and living outdoors. The “seven times” refer to seven years.
    1. The dream was sent from heaven as an object lesson against pride to all the inhabitants of the earth. (v. 17) Regardless of who is in power on earth, the most High rules in the kingdom of men. He gives the right to rule to whoever He chooses.
    2. King Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel to explain the meaning of his dream. (v. 18)
11. **Daniel explained the dream and offered the only hope in the situation. (v. 19-27)**
    1. Daniel was troubled when he heard and understood the meaning to the dream. (v. 19) He was astonished and unable to speak for one hour. He did not rejoice to see evil come on the king. He wished that the dream was intended for one of the king’s enemies.
    2. Daniel explained that the tree represented Nebuchadnezzar. (v. 20-26)
12. Nebuchadnezzar had grown in power and influence in the world. (v. 20-22) People depended on him for protection and provision. He ruled without acknowledging that his greatness came from God.
13. Daniel further explained that the king would live like an animal for seven years. (v. 23-26) His appearance and behavior would prevent him from living with people. He would remain in this condition until he acknowledged God’s greatness.
14. The reference to the stump indicated that he would be able to return to serving as king once he had humbled himself. (v. 26)
    1. Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar to repentance to avoid the calamity that would befall him. (v. 27)
15. Daniel counseled the king to break off (renounce) his sins by doing right and showing mercy to the poor. (v. 27)
16. Basically, he had to prove that he acknowledged God’s sovereignty.
17. Daniel was hopeful that the dreadful consequences could be avoid by humility. He gave the king fair warning.
    1. Unfortunately, a year passed without humility and the king would have to learn the lesson the hard way. Pride would cost him everything he held dear. We will learn more about this in a coming lesson. For now, we need to take heed to the warning against pride.
18. **Central Idea: The pride that lifted Nebuchadnezzar to his downfall could have been avoided by humbling himself before God.**
19. **Application: The pride that lifts you to your downfall can be avoided by humbling yourself before God.** 
    1. The signs of pride are noticeable in more than just power-hungry world rulers.
20. The pride that comes from being the center of attention shows up in the classroom, on the ballfield, and in the boardroom. We want people to like us!
21. The pride that comes from being seen or noticed often determines what people wear, what they drive, and what they post.
22. The desire to be stronger than others is clearly seen in little boys comparing their muscles, but it is also seen in the way they continue to show off their strength in the form of material possessions and positions.
23. The pride that comes from feeling important will leave you feeling threatened when others receive more attention than you or when they get the promotion you felt should have come your way.
24. The pride of performance will push you to make the best presentation, have the largest class, acquire the most trophies, make the most sales, and have the most likes.
25. Pride will keep you from asking forgiveness as well as extending it.
26. Despite all the warnings against pride, pride will keep you from repentance.
    1. God’s way to avoid the devastating and confusing effects of pride is to humble yourself. Are you willing to do so before its too late?