



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-13-2015 @ 0900

"Recognizing the Supremacy of God"

Daniel 4:10-33

Change My Heart, O God!

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true! Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!
You are the Potter; I am the clay! Mold me and make me; this is what I pray!
Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true!
Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

Daniel 4:10-33

"While Your Majesty was watching, an angel came down from heaven and said, 'Cut the tree down and destroy it, but leave the stump in the ground. Wrap a band of iron and bronze around it, and leave it there in the field with the grass. Let the dew fall on this man, and let him live there with the animals for seven years.' This, then, is what it means, Your Majesty, and this is what the Supreme God has declared will happen to you. You will be driven away from human society, and will live with wild animals. For seven years, you will eat grass like an ox and sleep in the open air, where the dew will fall on you."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever "taken stock" of all your efforts, or "made measure" of your accomplishments, judging your "worthiness" or "worth" on the basis of "worldly status", title, or influence?
- Did you find yourself taking unjustified pride in your family or your "collection" of friends and acquaintances, as if some of their achievements "rubbed off" on you?
- Do your material possessions "define" some of your "worth"? (You know, the car you drive, the electronic devices you use, or even the home and neighborhood in which you live?)

Individuality used to be a luxury. More often than not, communal effort was necessary for survival! As more and more "labor-saving devices" and "conveniences" crowd our culture, we can do more and more "on our own". So we can get a sense of "independence" that leads us to make increased use of words like "I", "me", "myself", and "mine", rather than "we", "us", "ourselves" and "ours". Words like "you", "your", "yourself", and "yours" are even more rarely used. And yet, those are the very ones we must employ when dealing with God, and reflecting on all the gifts we receive daily, even "minute-by-minute"! Now, as we consider the lives, trials, and witness of Daniel and his three young friends, we need to ponder prayerfully Who it is who brings every "good gift" into our lives. Throughout the Book of Daniel, teaching after teaching highlights the wonders of God's Care, Grace, and Mercy, yet many "believers" in our age still boast of "our ministry", "our church plantings", and "our" rallies, revivals, and outreaches. God's "credit" seems to come late, if it's remembered at all. Spiritually speaking, "the tail is wagging the dog!" We may need a "wake-up" as potent as King Nebuchadnezzar's... He was the most powerful and richest king of his day, yet he failed to appreciate his "true Source". He believed all his power, prestige, and privilege was "owed" him because of his own personal abilities, efforts, and brilliance. Even though he had witnessed God's interventions in the lives of his Hebrew servants, he still needed the "nudge" Daniel described in today's verses before he would commit himself in a personal way to the God they served. God, grant us the Grace of True Vision! Help us "know Who we owe" for every Grace and Blessing. When we are tempted to take credit or accept accolades we don't deserve, remind us of Your total awesome commitment to us, manifested in many wonders we must learn to appreciate with wisdom and celebrate with joy! Glory is properly Yours alone!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-14-2015 @ 0900

"It's God Above All – Or – Take Your Chances!"

Daniel 4:25b-27

Change My Heart, O God!

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true! Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!
You are the Potter; I am the clay! Mold me and make me; this is what I pray!
Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true!
Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

Daniel 4:25b-27

"Then you will admit that the Supreme God controls all human kingdoms, and that He can give them to anyone He chooses. The angel ordered the stump to be left in the ground. This means that you will become king again when you acknowledge that God rules all the world. So then, Your Majesty, follow my advice. Stop sinning, do what is right, and be merciful to the poor. Then you will continue to be prosperous."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever "scooted right on through" a traffic light, knowing it was going to be red before you made it through, knowing the traffic law states it is illegal? How 'bout passing on the right?
- Have you even gotten mad at a police officer who gave you ticket for breaking such laws? Were you ever grateful to one to "let you off" with a warning?
- How do you do with "God's Warnings"? (Those are *Commandments*, not "suggestions", you know!) Have you regretted ignoring them in the past?

Authority's tricky...there's only room for one "at the top"! If Mom says, "Clean your room, or you will be grounded", or Dad tells you, "Get in on time, or you won't see the car keys for a month," it is wise to take the hint! Such statements carry a certain amount of weight. After all, when Mom's not happy, *nobody's* happy! When it comes to "toeing the line", Dad is *Dad*, and can make good on his words. In any case, we have an "option", don't we? We can obey and do what we're told, or we can disobey and take our chances...believing "she'll get over it", or "he's not all that serious". Now, dealing with God really "ups the ante"! He's revealed "Divine Will", as is His Right. We can choose to "go with it" and find happiness, or "ignore it" and know utter misery. This is right where the king found himself. God provided him with "dream-sight", giving him a chance to finally come full circle, from the blind paganism that didn't even know God, to the point of personally recognizing God's supremacy, even over himself and his realm. Like many of us, the king has been "taking some steps" in the right direction. He honored Daniel and Daniel's God, as his earlier dream was revealed and interpreted. When confronted with the faith of the three youths, and the deliverance God provided, he has praised God for his faithfulness to those who worship him. He has even declared that there is no other God who can deliver like He does. But he has yet to surrender fully, and devote himself totally to God by the way he rules. Like many of us, he still wants things "his way". God, grant us the Grace of Real Insight! As we take our "little baby steps" toward fully believing in You, teach us to "let go" of our own self-centered agendas and selfish desires. Train our "inner vision" to appreciate Your Guidance, and accept Your Direction gracefully. Show us how to follow gladly where You lead, 'til we become the best possible versions of the people You intend us to be. As You have gone "all-out" for us, make us ever more willing to go "all-in" for You in genuine surrender, and truly fruitful testimony!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-15-2015 @ 0900

“So You Think God Has Forgotten”

Daniel 4:28-33

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true!

Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

You are the Potter; I am the clay! Mold me and make me; this is what I pray!

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true! Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

Daniel 4:28-33

“All this did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Only twelve months later, while he was walking around on the roof of his royal palace in Babylon, he said, ‘Look how great Babylon is! I built it as my capital city, to display my power and might, my glory and majesty.’ Before the words were out of his mouth, a voice spoke from heaven, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, listen to what I say! Your royal power is now taken away from you. You will be driven away from human society, live with wild animals, and eat grass like an ox for seven years. Then you will acknowledge that the Supreme God has power over human kingdoms and that He can give them to anyone he chooses.’ The words came true immediately.”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever met old acquaintances after many years, and had them remind you of debts you hoped they had forgotten, only they hadn't? How did you “make good” on them?
- Were you ever upset to find people you trusted to tackle a task or complete a process had just “blown it off”, acting as if you would forget, or at least wouldn't care whether they did it or not?
- Did you ever try a “back-to-nature” experience? What did it teach you about yourself? Your “place” in the world? Your “standing” before God?

God's “Grace” is truly amazing: unmerited, beyond price, and lavishly generous. But it's just as odd to notice our tendency to expect that Grace to manifest for us whether we “do our part” or not. Have you ever turned something in late to one boss you would have never turned in late to another one, because you knew the first one was more lenient than the other? When punishment is delayed, or retribution is slow in coming, we often interpret this as having been completely “let off the hook”. Far too often, we “fudge” our total commitment to God like this. We continue to commit our “little sins”, and engage times of “mild disobedience”, and “nothing bad” has happened yet, therefore God must not really care all *that* much. Notice what we are being shown in this passage of Scripture: “Only twelve months later...” that is an entire year. This means the king had plenty of time to comply with Daniel's warning. God is dealing with each one of us in one way or another. We know what God has required of us, and yet we keep delaying and putting off what we know we should be doing. In the meantime, “nothing bad” has happened, and we interpret this as “we still have time”. Now notice what happened: “Before the words were out of his mouth, a voice spoke from heaven...” Time was up! Have we been playing for time? Has God been giving us our chance to finally go “all-in”, and we have simply been putting it off, so we could continue “doing our thing”? Have we been guilty of thinking somehow God has “forgotten the issue”? The king played this “waiting game”, and it cost him “big time”! God, grant us the Grace of True Understanding! Ancient Babylon's king required an eight-year period to “come around”; do not let us “live blindly” for a year, and then take another seven to “awaken”. We seek Your Wisdom to appreciate what “delay” might cost us! Teach us to “know who we owe” for the Grace and Mercy that blesses us all. Let today be the day we quit “playing around” at discipleship, and go “all-in” for You, eager to glorify You as Your eternal Love deserves!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-16-2015 @ 0900

"God Still Hasn't Forgotten"

Daniel 4:34-35

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true!

Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

You are the Potter; I am the clay! Mold me and make me; this is what I pray!

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true! Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

Daniel 4:34-35

"When the seven years had passed," said the king, "I looked up at the sky, and my sanity returned. I praised the Supreme God, and gave honor and glory to the One who lives forever. He will rule forever, and His Kingdom will last for all time. He looks on the people of the earth as nothing; angels in Heaven and people on earth are under His control. No one can oppose His will or question what He does."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever suffered "major reverses", and taken "large steps backwards", only to find yourself coming back "good as new", though much to your surprise, because *you* didn't do it?
- Have you ever found certain "learning curves" to be "steeper", more difficult to climb, and more painful to endure, due to your own personal "pride", stubbornness, and inflexible thinking?
- How did you feel when "the clue light came on", and you perceived clear "Divine Direction" with a willingness to "go with it"? Did your "path" grow "smoother, and make more sense?"

When life goes "sour", we may feel as though God has forgotten us. In the midst of trials that "rock our world", God can seem so "far away". Some of these "tests" can take us completely from our "known quantities", "familiar factors", and "friendly environments". In such situations, we can begin to feel "it's all over", and that we will never "regain lost ground" or repair broken relationships. We yearn to get back to where we once were. We need to notice that our "tough time" was just a "test". God designed a world that could use that moment to move us where we need to be in our relationship with Him. Notice how the king comes out of this "time of trial" praising God, and giving God all glory and honor. Instead of turning him against God, this trial "awakens" Nebuchadnezzar to a deep truth about God, in whom he lives, moves, and rules. Before "the trial", the king thought he was the foundation of his rule and kingdom, that he was the most important "element" of them both. AFTER the trial, he affirms his new certitude that God "will rule forever, and His Kingdom will last for all time." Finally recognizing the sovereignty of God, he proclaims, "angels in Heaven and people on earth are under His control. No one can oppose His will or question what He does." Each of us must realize this. Otherwise, we fight and claw for some "position", "title", or "status" we think will give us a measure of recognition or sense of importance. We need to realize instead that God is the One who actually operates sovereignly in everything and everyone. Once the king finally gets this, God returns him to his throne, now aware his kingdom stands or falls at God's "say-so"! In the normal function of royal politics on earth, some "opportunist" or "climber" would have secured the throne in those seven years, seeking to ensure that Nebuchadnezzar never came back. But God shows Nebuchadnezzar who is really "King in Babylon"! God, "remember us"! Lead us and guide us in Your Way, so we "remember You" as well. In You we live, and move, and have our being. Even in our times of test, trial, and exile, we need to realize You would never "forget" us. Prepare us for our "work" in Your Realm, and keep us humble in Your service, true to Your Word, and grateful for Your Presence and Providence.



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-17-2015 @ 0900

"Even Greater Than Before!"

Daniel 4:34-35

Change My Heart, O God!

Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true! Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!
You are the Potter; I am the clay! Mold me and make me! This is what I pray!
Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true!
Change my heart, O God! May I be like You!

Daniel 4:34-35

"When my sanity returned, my honor, my majesty, and the glory of my kingdom were given back to me. My officials and my noblemen welcomed me, and I was given back my royal power with even greater honor than before. And now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, honor, and glorify the King of Heaven. Everything He does is right and just, and He can humble anyone who acts proudly."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever heard someone say, "Awesome! It doesn't get any better than this!" As you think about that, does it dawn on you how much "limit" that puts on life? On us? On God?
- Can you remember a vacation, surprise party, date, wedding, or any other event that was so wonderful you were sure nothing else in your life could ever match it?
- Does God's Goodness, Grace, and Mercy still surprise you? How often do you notice the "Work of the Lord" in your life? What's your "usual" response?

King Nebuchadnezzar believed he had the best of everything power and money could buy. He had no idea how very wrong he could be! With God as the "Foundation" of his heart and soul, life and rule, his life could actually be far better than he had the ability to imagine! But he did have a steep "learning curve" to climb. For the proud and stubborn to learn the most basic lessons of reality, it seems sometimes life must "turn upside down". King Nebuchadnezzar found this out the hard way. At this passage, he has been through a very dark "time of testing", which lasted for some 7 years. During this time, he lost everything he had, all of his prestige, all of his power, all of the luxuries he had grown used to, and even his mental health. God loves us enough to allow such testing in order for us to learn in truth who He really is, and just how great He is. Once we learn our lesson well enough, we can recognize that he is not just "a god", or God of a particular system, and not really even GOD of all the reality we know, but ONE WHO IS far more than we can possibly imagine! When we let this Reality reach our hearts and transform our minds, God "comes in", renewing and restoring us from "inside out", not just "back to business as usual", but "raising the bar" "til the life we experience gets even better than before. The king reported, "and I was given back my royal power with even greater honor than before." (We can easily assume we are doing "pretty well on our own" when God has so much more He would love to show us, if only we would allow Him to open our eyes to His true Glory, Honor, and Power.) God, grant us the Grace of Authentic Openness! Help us to see with new eyes the Love You shower on us from hour to hour. Make us hear the melodies of Your Mercy and Fidelity with grateful ears. As much as we may imagine "gifted life" on our own terms, You have so much more in store for us. Train us in the humility and trust that will enable us to believe You for all You have promised. Use us, Lord, to reveal Glory beyond all we could fathom or expect!