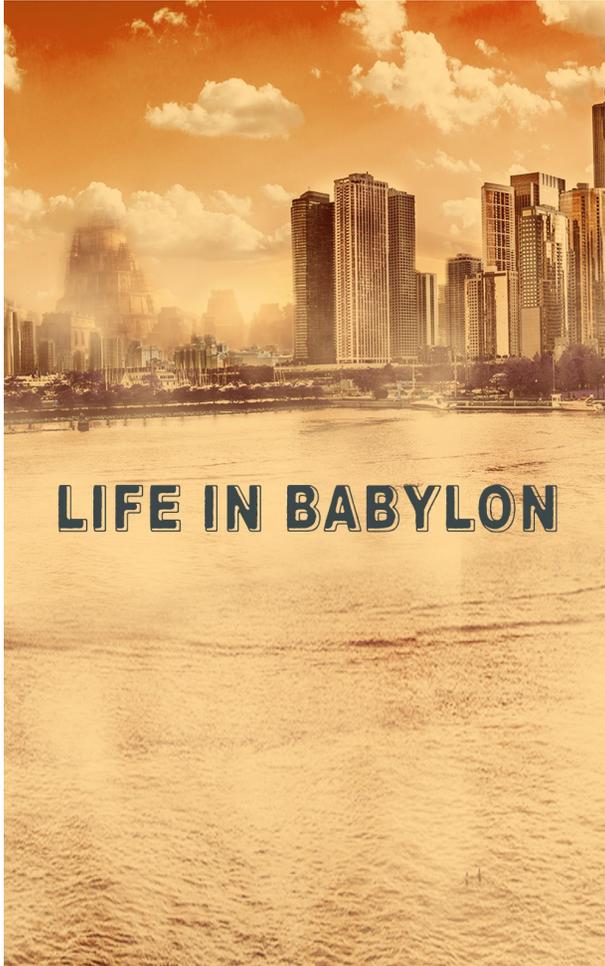




take it home



The Blindness of Success

Daniel 4:1-37



Daniel 4:1-9

An “In” With God

King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. Daniel 4: 1-2 ESV

Success. Achievement. Glory. Aren't they appealing? Don't you want them? King Nebuchadnezzar certainly did. He built the greatest empire and the greatest city adorned with the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. He looked to secure the favor of whatever gods were supposedly out there to further his success. When confronted with the only true God that had delivered three men from the fiery furnace, he thought best to give Him glory. But how easily it becomes all about him, not for God's glory.

Do we ever like to think that maybe we're a little closer to God than other people? Can we view God's favor as perhaps just a little “earned” on our part, an indication of another success in our lives? Do we blind ourselves to His gift of unfathomable mercy to a poor sinful being? Jesus praised the humility of the tax collector over the pride of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. God wants to transform us.

Prayer: Father, I confess those times when I begin to think that I have earned your love. Thank you Father, for the saving gift of your beloved son Jesus Christ. May I come before you all the days of my life in His righteousness alone. Amen.

Daniel 4:10-18

Subtle, Isn't It?

The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. Daniel 4:10-11 ESV

A mighty tree reaching to heaven. That's how King Nebuchadnezzar sees himself. Providing shade for all. Seen to the end of the earth. Feeding man and beast. Self-esteem certainly flourished in the king's mind. But wait. Isn't self-esteem a good thing? Isn't it a key to success? Without self-esteem, won't we fail in life? Once we have a little success, we build our self-esteem and then strive for the next accomplishment. But what happens when our self-esteem is threatened by a furnace of failure or criticism. We lash out, rationalize or just plain ignore it.

Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love yourself because you were bought with a price. Your Lord and Savior died - for you. Love your neighbor because Jesus died for them, too.

As for self-esteem, thank God for the skills and abilities He has given you to use for His glory, for His Kingdom -- not for yours. If you start thinking that those gifts are being used for your own measured success -- beware. Your idol is you!

Daniel 4:19-27

A Different Way

...this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that 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. And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.

Daniel 4:24-26 ESV

Do you ever think of God like a mom with a wooden spoon? Sin. He raps your knuckles. Repent before bed time. Do better tomorrow. The battle against our sin nature is certainly daily and ongoing. Today, however, we see how God deals with sin differently.

Nebuchadnezzar, worshiping his own success, is told he will be driven from among men, dwell with beasts, eat grass like an ox, and be wet with dew. God's judgment is dramatic - ripping away the false foundations of our lives. His judgment will last seven periods of time, a number denoting perfect completeness. He plans a long, measured period of judgment to lovingly bring you to Him. In Nebuchadnezzar's case "until you know that the Most High rules". He leaves a stump of roots from which you can grow closer to Him. He will never give up on you.

Have you given up on someone? Renew your determination, patience with God's grace. Bear with them during their seven periods of time. Be present when they need God's

Daniel 4:28-33

Swift and Shocking

All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and 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?" While 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," Daniel 4:28-31 ESV

Life can change in a minute. When we are at the height of our "success", feeling like we've made it, crediting ourselves for our hard work, creativity, strong character. God's judgment can come in a minute. Nebuchadnezzar had been warned specifically by Daniel to repent. Perhaps he tried. But after 12 short months, he's completely forgotten the warning. He basks in the glow of his success, certain that it has been built by his power for his glory. He can't even finish his sentence and God takes away his kingdom.

Has this ever happened to you? The phone rings--she's dead. The doctor's visit--an unexpected diagnosis. A bond of love--broken. Your nation--under attack. God, in His great love and mercy will sometimes get your attention in a flash. When that time comes, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith. He will never leave you -- never!

Daniel desires another life for his king (4:17), a life that recognizes God. Who do you desire that for? How does that desire shape your daily prayers? How does that desire fuel your relational connections with that person?

Daniel 4:34-37

Restoring Our Sight

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; all 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?" Daniel 4: 34- 35 ESV

In receiving God's harsh judgment, swiftly, in God's perfect timing, Nebuchadnezzar grew to learn more about the one true God. He is everything. The power of people is nothing. He does according to His will in heaven and on earth. No one can stop Him. No one can put Him on trial in the court of their mind. Nebuchadnezzar praised God, extolled God, honored God as right, just and capable of humbling the proud. He had learned who God really was. So will you. Now He invites you to a life of faith in your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... a life that shares the Good News of God's love with others.

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" Matthew 16:24-26 ESV