



Over the last two weeks, we've taken an up-close look at King Nebuchadnezzar's rise and fall. We've seen how God carried out judgment against Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and then how God restored him to the throne. This experience of God's judgment changed Nebuchadnezzar's heart and led him to praise God and give Him the glory He alone deserves. By the time we get to Daniel 5, Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar, is in charge. What follows is a tragic story of not learning from the sins of his father. Daniel 5 could be summed up as a lesson Belshazzar should have learned from the sins of another but didn't, and he eventually paid the price.

Throughout this series, our subtitle has been: "10 Commitments to Make When Life Closes In." Today's commitment will be very personal because it calls us to reflect on the lives of our friends, family, and coworkers. Today's commitment is: "I Will Not Repeat the Sins of Others."

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 5

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Looking back at your sermon notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?
2. What similarities do you see between the lives of King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar?

Daniel 5:18-23, "O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹ And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹ He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. ²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored."

3. It's easy for us to look at Belshazzar, shake our heads, and say he should've known better, but we often live the same way if we're honest. How would this story be told if it occurred today?

Northwest Arkansas is filled with people who are live with this purpose: "eat, drink, and be merry." If Belshazzar was a resident of NWA he'd have a great job, making a good amount of money, have 2.5 kids, a designer-dog, a nice house, and living with this singular purpose: eat, drink, and be merry.

It's an unfortunate truth that many Christ followers are driven primarily by the same aims in life, even if they would never admit it themselves. Many fail to honor God with their talents, bodies, and tithes.

1 Corinthians 15:32, "What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

4. How would you summarize the theme or big idea of the sermon? How have you seen this theme play out in your life, family, or workplace?

We should learn from the sins of others – seek not to repeat them ourselves.

Through chapters 1-4 in the book of Daniel, we get an up-close look at some valuable life lessons from King Nebuchadnezzar. (Lessons we certainly don't want to repeat in our lives!) Today, in chapter 5, we find a new sheriff in town. Belshazzar is now on the throne, and he has a choice to make regarding how he will rule. Would he learn from Nebuchadnezzar's mistakes? Or would he throw caution to the wind and repeat them – expecting a different result?

The mantra of our world today, whether it's ever said this way specifically is: Live with disregard for God. We certainly see this mantra lived out in the lives of many around us every day. As followers of Christ, we should make it our aim to glorify God and live with His purposes in mind.

Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."

Hebrews 34:6-7, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty..."

5. Sin is taking what God has set apart for His purposes and using it for your own. How does we this happen with Belshazzar? How does this play itself out in our lives when it comes to our talents, our body, and our money?

Talents:

Do we take what God has set apart for His purposes and use it for our own? Every talent you have been given is meant primarily to glorify God and serve His purposes. Keeping your talents to yourself and using them for your purposes alone is no different than Belshazzar using the consecrated vessels for his drunken party.

We see an example of this principle in Jesus' parable about the three servants entrusted with different amounts of talent (Matthew 25). Two go out and invest them in things that bring a return to their boss. One buries it because he doesn't want to take the chance of losing it. Do you remember what Jesus called this last person? He says, "You wicked servant." That's significant because it tells us that wickedness isn't just doing bad things; it's also not using what God has given us for His eternal purposes! Are you using your talents for these purposes?

Body:

Perhaps it's been a while since you considered what God says about our bodies. In 1 Corinthians 6, our bodies are called "a temple of the Holy Spirit," which means we should see our bodies the same as we see our talents – set apart for the glory and purposes of God. In other words, our bodies belong to God and should be used accordingly. The Holy Spirit dwells within you if you are a born-again follower of Christ. So, our bodies are consecrated vessels, or in other words, holy. So, the question becomes, "Are you using your body to honor the Lord or are you using it for things that are not pleasing to Him."

We could go into quite a bit of detail here regarding sexual immorality, drunkenness, the food we consume, where we decide to go, the words that come out of our mouths, etc. Unfortunately, we don't consider our bodies through this consecrated lens as much as we should. We often think, "Are these things such a big deal?" Why would God put so many boundaries around our bodies? Quick answer, your body doesn't belong to you.

Are you using your body to bring glory to God? Are you using your body for God's purposes or your own? What changes should you consider making when you view your body as a vessel of the Holy Spirit?

Money:

All over the pages of the Bible, we see God calls us to be generous with our money. We should use our money as we use our talents and bodies – for His glory and purposes. This means we should give generously to further God's mission in the world. This includes helping meet the needs of others and supporting the work of your local church.

In the Old Testament book of Malachi, God accuses His people of robbing from Him because they were not using their money for His purposes and glory. The people ask God, "How have we robbed you?" And God responds, by not giving your tithe to me. As Christians, we are called to give Him at least the first 10% back for His glory and purposes.

6. What does the sermon passage reveal about God and what He wants you to believe, do, or resist? What would the results be in your life if you ignored or obeyed these matters?

Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Romans 12:1-2, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

2 Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

7. Is there anything you should praise God for or confess to Him as a result of the sermon?

In Daniel 5:27, Belshazzar is told that he has "been weighed in the balances and found wanting." Let's put ourselves on the divine scale this morning. Is there any pride in your life? Do you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength? Are you using all He has given you for His glory and purposes?

How do you measure up when it comes to using your talents, your body, and your money for the glory and purposes of God? Are you living like Belshazzar? Without consideration for what God says about your talents, body, and money?

8. What's one personal takeaway you can focus on applying in your life this week?